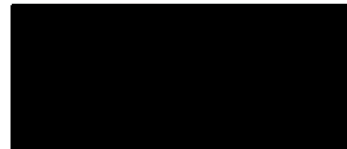


Retirement Villages Act Review,
Consumer Affairs Victoria,
GPO Box 123,
Melbourne Vic 3001.

5th December 2019

Please accept my submission, below.



Respect for residents.

Some background:

I live in an I.L.U. at [REDACTED]. It is administered by [REDACTED], under the name [REDACTED] which has recently become incorporated.

[REDACTED] administers three levels of age care: Independent living units; Low Care (formerly Hostel); High Care (formally Nursing Home).

I and most others in our village of [REDACTED] paid a large amount as an entrance fee or lease of our units. I paid \$350,000 in 2017 for a one bedroom unit. We all continue to pay a hefty monthly maintenance fee; in my case \$560.

There are four residents, who have a separate rental arrangement and, apart from their rent, pay nothing by way of a maintenance fee.

The maintenance fee is to cover regular gardening and building maintenance, water rates, as well as ad hoc repairs and other work as required.

Until now there has been a Residents' Committee, and since the 2018 AGM, a Social Committee. For this last year I was secretary of both committees. I decided not to nominate for the Residents' Committee at the recent AGM, as I'd felt that I had done all that I could.

I was overseas, and missed the AGM, where no one nominated for the Residents' Committee, so it no longer exists. The committee's purpose was to field any resident's complaints against another resident, or [REDACTED], and to consider any other matters affecting residents. These functions will now be left to individuals.

I, and the three other former members of the Social Committee renominated, and it continues to function successfully.

The problem:

My major cause for concern is that the [REDACTED] administration does not seem to be able to distinguish between the varying needs of care between the three levels of facilities that they administer. They are not treating the residents of our village – and possibly others – as independent living and thinking individuals who know what's best for them and want this fact respected.

There are instances where it has been inferred that we should be quiet and compliant.

There has been disquiet, even anger, amongst residents when we have found that major works or maintenance have been started without so much as a phone call, email or note in a letter box to advise us.

An example is that the annual window cleaning would commence, when the first that we knew of the work was a van in a driveway or a man on a ladder outside a bedroom window. This is totally disrespectful and symbolic of their overlord attitude towards us.

Another example: A resident saw [REDACTED] and another man, outside a unit, measuring the driveway, and discussing several other major works. [REDACTED] was asked what they were doing and why weren't we informed. This was the reply from [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This is another reply from [REDACTED] to a similar problem:

[REDACTED]

This perfectly illustrates his disrespect for us, whose home this is. This is what distresses us.

On another occasion, following an annual inspection of all units, every resident received a letter from [REDACTED] It is copied at the end of this letter.

On receipt of this letter, several of us gathered to discuss it. There were mixed emotions, including shock, disgust and anger. One of the comments was: "[REDACTED] is treating us like children". This comment has been made of other occasions, and really does sum up the problem.

We went through a mental list of all residents and could only find one, or perhaps two who may have had an axe to grind about something or someone.

[REDACTED] subsequently told us that five or more residents had made complaints, detailed in her letter. She also apologized if the letter had upset anyone.

We were unable to find any possible case of bullying, unless someone has found a new meaning for the word. In any case, if there was a sincere bullying accusation, why wasn't it dealt with personally instead of virtually accusing the whole village?

Why was the letter sent to all residents, including those who could not possibly have been involved? This caused much distress. We suspected that an underlying reason for the manner in which the letter was written and distributed was to divide the residents.

The letter was written hastily with little consideration of the voracity of the "complaints", or the consequences.

The letter also demonstrated the attitude of [REDACTED] towards the independent living/thinking residents here.

I nominated to the Residents' Committee after listening to the ongoing complaints, mainly about the gardeners and poor communications. These complaints had been going on for several years.

I was elected Secretary and set about inviting all residents to a meeting to express their concerns. The meeting was very successful with most residents either attending or submitting a written submission.

I summarized the submissions for [REDACTED] as residents asked not to be individually identified.

I then arranged for a meeting in May with [REDACTED] people representing housing, gardening and maintenance. This was a round table conference which seemed to be very successful, with promises made, indicating a better relationship. Following the meeting, some of us participated in a walk around with [REDACTED]

Since the meeting we have heard virtually nothing from [REDACTED], leaving some residents to comment that the meeting was a sham.

I had done as much as I could to help solve these ongoing problems, so didn't renominate for the committee, instead intending to raise any matters individually.

Another problem that we have is the amounts being paid for nearly all services, repairs, etc. We did manage to obtain the list of costs for 2017/2018 and several of them raised a few eyebrows as they seemed exorbitant for the small amount of work done. This detailed list of costs will not be available in the future, so we will be unable to scrutinize it. We feel that some contractors see our funds as a bottomless pot of gold.

In summary, my problem is summed up by the words of a few residents; "they are treating us like children".

As mentioned earlier [REDACTED] seems to have difficulty differentiating between the various levels of care that they provide and the needs of residents in each category.

They do not seem able to acknowledge that this is our home and should be treated as such.

Yours Faithfully,

Peter Wynd

[REDACTED]

Attachment - redacted