

Submission to Review of Retirement Villages Act. 1986. Issues Paper

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Ann Threlfall

I am a member of Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV) and I fully support their submission.

I have a copy of the legislation and have read it on numerous occasions. I accepted the role of Resident Liaison Officer for RRVV at this village and have been working for 10 months on setting up a Residents Committee to improve communications with the operator [REDACTED]. Their management model is very confusing, and they are evasive about how it works. They are very difficult to communicate with. Many residents seem to think that they have a say in what is going on, but we don't.

I accepted an invitation to sit on the Interim Committee of Management but left after 12 months as I was told by the Village Manager "We've heard enough from you Ann!". This happened several times. The village is supposedly run by [REDACTED] and a Committee of Management (CoM). All are employees of [REDACTED]. When the village is full, in about 2 more years, 7 elected residents and 3 [REDACTED] employees will make up the [REDACTED] CoM.

I accepted an invitation to be on the Social Club [REDACTED] but resigned after being verbally abused in the kitchen and at a meeting. I had designed a matrix, where the job of catering officer was divided into five roles, to share the role, as the catering officer was resigning. I had the ok of the [REDACTED] President to go ahead with this plan and present it to the committee.

When ever I speak at [REDACTED] AGMs or [REDACTED] AGMs I am heckled. The men who ask questions are not heckled.

As you see, there is a lot of sexism in the running of the village, and among residents. There is gender disparity on all committees.

My experiences and opinions

Living in a Retirement Village

- There needs to be mandatory accreditation for village operators, so they are accountable for their managing methods.
 - As stated above, there are many examples of mis management, bad behaviour by managers and some residents at [REDACTED].
- Village managers should undertake certain training, and meet ongoing professional development obligations
 - One manager walked out after 18 months and the current manager is not up to it. They both were/are short tempered and yelled at residents

- Residents' Committees should be able to call meetings of residents and help resolve disputes between residents
 - Now we are getting a Residents' Committee set up, but it is difficult, with all the other problems here. I know several residents who are trained in dispute resolution and would contribute to this in our village if asked.
- Residents' committees should be able to approve above CPI increases in maintenance and services levy
 - There are several residents with the financial administration skills to understand and carry out a proper review of the levy. This year they have provided some cost cutting suggestions that were accepted by the CoM. Unfortunately, at those Special General Meetings, voting was one vote per resident, not one vote per unit.
- Residents should be able to ask questions and encourage healthy debates at AGMs of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] AGM, if the reporting requirements are not adequate
 - Those who run meetings have a responsibility to allow all residents (members) to ask questions and maybe initiate healthy debate on issues that concern them. Mandatory accreditation would help this take effect.
- RV Act should state clearly issues of 'responsibility' and 'timeliness' for repairs and maintenance in retirement villages.
 - At Cluster Group Meetings (lectures) this is said but does not happen. We are never given data from Village Manager about repairs and maintenance. CoM is not held accountable and many residents refuse to talk with the village manager, or go into the office
- Retirement Villages should provide privately funded care services.
 - After two and a half years here, I have never heard or read anything about providing privately funded care services
 - This is worrying as I'm getting a shoulder joint replacement next month and I will need some at home physiotherapy
 - When I moved into [REDACTED] there was a nurse here. Now her title is 'Active Health Coordinator" ???
- Retirement Village operators have an important role in ensuring the safety and welfare of their residents. Village residents are not subordinate, we are major stakeholders. 60 % of residents in [REDACTED] are women, and many of them are single.
 - For the first 9 months at [REDACTED] there were some men working around the place. The residents who had been there longer called them "The Destiny Boys". I felt unsafe with them wandering around my unit. I had been sexually abused by my elder brother as a teenager and was a victim of domestic violence by my former husband. It wasn't until I had children that I could stay in my home alone overnight. The village manager did not answer my questions about them when I asked at Interim Committee of Management meetings. After contacting [REDACTED] Operations Manager, she wrote me an email that loosely stated they were men who needed some help and they were supervised. That did not help me feel safe. On one occasion one of them walked past my front window and looked in. He was not supervised. It turns out the village manager and her husband, and the gardener were members of a local [REDACTED] Church, called [REDACTED]. The "Destiny Boys" were "free labour". They are all gone now, but I had to get over that fear, of someone attacking me in my home – all over again.
 - There is a "Blokes Happy Hour" happening here, where a group of male residents open the bar (did not get approval of Bar Committee or Social Club) and supposedly talk about their mental health. It takes over our community centre (where the mailboxes are), there are no professionals guiding what they do, and many women are against this. I've voiced my objection in several emails, sent it to a few stakeholder residents and managers responsible for this event. I provided evidence that research shows alcohol will make things worse and other alternatives that would be more effective. My email was put into correspondence at a Social Club committee meeting and one of the organisers of the Happy Hour wrote a scathing, insulting email about me. I read it 6 weeks later in the meeting minutes of the Social club committee. When I rang the Social Club Secretary, he said he couldn't remember that. I said that my email was not addressed to the Social Club so therefore it

should not be put up as correspondence. The next few days were very low for me. I felt that I was being used by men to get what they wanted, and that my voice was not heard.

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in this review. I am happy to provide evidence of these events happening at [REDACTED].

Ann Threlfall