



## **President's Report to 2022 RRVV Annual Meeting**

This meeting's purpose is to report to you what RRVV and your committee achieved during the 2021-2022 financial year and on developments since the end of the financial year. At the end of this meeting, we will elect office bearers and committee members for the coming committee year.

RRVV's main activities are ensuring you are aware of your rights as residents and customers and helping you solve the problems that arise from living in a retirement village. We also promote retirement village living and advocate for reform of operator practices and the Retirement Villages Act. We want everybody in retirement villages to age well.

Requests for information and help continued at much the same levels as in recent COVID-affected years; however, there were some changes in the nature of the questions you asked and the problems you reported.

A considerable number of members across a variety of villages and locations expressed concern about the changing age profile of their villages. They noted that the average age of new entrants had increased markedly over recent years and that some people arrive with needs their villages cannot meet. They also said that finding volunteers to work on committees and organise activities was becoming increasingly harder. Several villages reported no longer having a residents' committee.

Early in the pandemic, as many businesses laid off staff, members reported that operators were able to hire a better class of village manager. This trend turned around abruptly this calendar year, and now more members say their villages have been without a manager and other staff for months.

Reports about maintenance not done, not done to the standard required, or done inefficiently spiked this year. Residents understand that tradespeople are hard to find, so they are less inclined to use the formal complaints procedure. Nevertheless, the situation has spotlighted maintenance processes and revealed long-standing weaknesses and inflexibilities.

Again, we could not make as many formal village visits as in pre-COVID years. We did restart the program, but the Omicron wave forced us to stop, not so much because of Government restrictions but because of local outbreaks and concerns.



Important as supporting individual residents and their villages is, the RRVV Committee also works behind the scenes lobbying both governments and retirement village operators.

RRVV stayed connected with various State politicians interested in retirement living reform throughout the year, irrespective of their party affiliations.

For some years, we have been concerned by what we see as a growing trend for village owners to focus on more affluent retirees. More affluent retirees are less price sensitive than the majority and, therefore, more profitable. Similarly, more affluent retirees are more likely to turn to private aged-care providers rather than Government-supported facilities. We are seeing more private aged care providers using the legal structure of retirement villages to offer largely unregulated aged care to affluent retirees.

More generally, we hear of some operators promoting a continuum of care model. The essential idea behind this model is that the village will care for you for the rest of your life. Some do this through Commonwealth-funded in-home aged care, by providing colocated Commonwealth-funded aged care, or both. Owners and operators see an additional profit. To many retirees, it seems like a great idea. Others, particularly residents of established villages, want to preserve retirement villages' independent living and mutually supportive nature. They do not wish their villages to become aged care facilities.

We continued to make representations to the Department of Justice and Community Safety on the Review of the Retirement Villages Act. Amongst other things, we gave feedback on the Department's Options Paper and took part in detailed examinations of specific matters the Department identified as requiring deeper exploration.

RRVV maintained contact with the Retirement Living Council and a cross-section of operators throughout the period. During the pre-vaccine period of the pandemic, we and representatives from the residents' associations from the other mainland states met regularly with representatives from the Retirement Living Council using Zoom. Recently we have worked directly with major operators more than through the Retirement Living Council.

We launched a new member management system in early April and upgraded our website. The member management system has reduced the time it takes to do bulk mailouts. For example, it cuts the time required to prepare for the mailing of newsletters by half and allows us to run more email campaigns. Selecting and installing the new system required a heavy investment by our office staff and



committee and a hefty financial commitment. The project team, led by Neal Robertson, did an amazing job.

Our financial year ended on the 30th of June 2022, but the hectic pace continued.

As usual, the annual meeting season increased calls seeking advice on what an operator must report and the voting rules.

Work with the Department on the review of the Act continued.

Last Saturday morning, the Government released the draft Bill to amend the Retirement Villages Act. The Government's decision to release the Bill for comment was partly because of RRVV's representations. We are gearing up to give feedback and have already commented on the short time allowed and the lack of a draft Act. We will email you further details shortly.

I thank my overstretched fellow committee members Neal Robertson, Charles Adams, Kaye Graham, Graham Seymour, and Pauline Niels for their valuable contributions. I also thank Jo Watkins, who served early in the financial year but later resigned for family reasons.

We thank the small army of Resident Liaison Officers who represent RRVV in their villages and without whom we could not function. Likewise, we thank the volunteers who stuff envelopes and critically review our submissions, newsletter articles and emerging ideas.

To all of you who have been lobbying State politicians, I thank you. Please keep up your magnificent work. We are going to need friends in Parliament over the coming year.

We thank Karin Veiser, our Office Manager, for her wisdom, efficiency and broad administrative support.

Julie King has tirelessly supported RRVV at the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Stakeholder Reference Group meetings. She has also generously contributed her public policy and legal skills. We thank her.

And in conclusion, I thank you for your attention and continued support.