

TRANSCRIPT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Inquiry into the retirement housing sector

Melbourne — 26 October 2016

Members

Mr Edward O'Donohue — Chair

Ms Nina Springle — Deputy Chair

Ms Margaret Fitzherbert

Mr Daniel Mulino

Ms Fiona Patten

Mrs Inga Peulich

Mr Adem Somyurek

Ms Jaclyn Symes

Participating Members

Ms Colleen Hartland

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips

Staff

Acting secretary: Mr Patrick O'Brien

Witness

Ms Valerie Edwards.

Ms EDWARDS — I would just like to reiterate a lot of what Daisy said. I too was at that village. I found myself alone — —

The CHAIR — I apologise for interrupting you, Ms Edwards. Can I just caution you that all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege.

Ms EDWARDS — Okay. Yes, I found myself alone after 52 years in the one home in Oakleigh, and I was looking for a village. I visited a few. I could not afford a lot of them, and I came across Gardiner Lodge. I could afford it. It was in a wonderful position — Glen Iris, trams, and not far from where I had grown up — and I went in there quite excited. The first thing that happened was I was to sign my contract a couple of days in. People from UnitingCare Harrison were to come out and two people were to witness my signature. They came out and said the CEO could not come, so if I just signed they would take it back to the office and she could sign there, which I thought was a little bit unprofessional.

I also found out that in the contract my solicitor did not pick up the fact that the deferred management fee was 3 per cent forever. It was not capped at 10 years, like a lot of others were. I did not pick it up; he did not pick it up.

The other thing was there was a common room. The contract said that that was available to all residents, but we found out if you wanted to use it you had to ask the manager for a key, and you had to find the manager first. There is an office. She lives next door in a private house. There is an office there, which is never manned, and the phone is never answered; it is always an answering service.

As it went on, there were so many things like this. One time I found someone had been in the unit and left a receipt for me for the service fee that I had paid. I said, ‘How come you came into the unit?’. ‘Oh well, that is what we do. We came in because we think you might not be well or something might’ve happened, so we have that privilege’. The contract says they can only come in when there is some sort of an emergency.

I had a cat. We were allowed to have animals. Nothing was said that the cat had to live in the house the whole time, so the cat went out during the day and came in at night. Several of the residents near my place loved the cat — a very social cat — but I started getting nasty letters from residents down the other end of the village saying that the cat was fouling up their area et cetera. I soon found out that the manager did not like cats and did not want cats, so she loaded the gun and they fired the ammunition, and it was a very unpleasant place to be.

I am happy to say that I am now in a Lifestyle village — very happy. I have had to move out further to be able to afford it. You know, two-and-a-half years I was there, and I can say it was not pleasant. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Witness withdrew.