

From: Elizabeth Cross [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 7 June 2016 1:32 PM
To: isic@parliament.vic.gov.au
Subject: Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into Retirement Housing.

7th June, 2016.

Dear Panel Members,

Would you please address the inequities listed below:

Ombudsperson.

Answers to any queries we might have are only ever answered by the owners of the Retirement Village in which we live. They have a pecuniary interest and are not liable to answer in a way that adversely impacts on their bottom line. Who else do we talk to?

Take the subject of Exit fees. Even the solicitor I consulted before I finally made my decision to enter a Village shrugged his shoulders and smiled a rueful smile before attempting to explain the process - unsuccessfully. I understand that my children will never get back what I paid, after all I came here for the lifestyle, but I can never get a really definitive answer to my question of percentages and what each charge is actually for.

From what I can make out around one third of the selling price is deducted before my family gets the balance.

An Ombudsperson could explain it satisfactorily I'm sure.

Differential Rates.

The panel needs to recommend that the government legislate for every council to award differential rates to every person living in a retirement village, instead of the current legislation that granting the rates is at the discretion of the council itself.

Every year we follow protocol and make a submission as requested by our council. It has become a farcical (and demeaning) exercise in that we spend a lot of time preparing our submission, attending the hearing prior to the council budget being announced, and then get exactly the same letter as the previous year refusing our request. They add insult to injury by telling us we would be eligible for a special grant that they know – as do we who have tried – that we do not fit the criteria.

The worst part is that we pay for the building and upkeep of our roads, trees, lighting, and footpaths – and then pay exactly the same as other citizens for the council to do the same thing. It never happens inside our gates.

Double dipping in the worst possible way.

Rating of our Community Centre.

Our community centre is exactly what its title suggests – people do not live in the building – yet we pay over \$3000 per annum for the privilege of having it for our own gatherings. After we paid to build it in the first place this is a bit much.

This practice also seems to be at the discretion of councils, we know of one who decided not to award differential rates but rather granted \$5000 to the residents committee to spend on behalf of the residents.

Makes Geelong council seem even meaner than it is.

Please consider these submissions

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Cross,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Elizabeth Cross [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 10 June 2016 1:37 PM
To: isic@parliament.vic.gov.au
Subject: Submission to Retirement Housing Inquiry

Below please find a copy of a letter we at [REDACTED], send to the newly appointed Mayor of Geelong as an extra plea for fairness in rates for retirement villages.

I might add we have followed Council's own advertisement for applications for special rates known as differential rates every year is asked for; we subsequently present ourselves to the council panel. It is a macabre game council plays every year - and we get exactly the same worded letter in reply each time.

Cr. Darryn Lyons,
City of Greater Geelong,
PO Box 104,
Geelong. 3220

Dear Mr. Mayor,

Paying for goods and/or services that are never delivered is usually a case for the ombudsman or the fraud squad.

Yet that is exactly what happens to those of us who live in Retirement Villages - and we have absolutely no redress at all.

Every month we pay a maintenance/administration fee to Village management that covers village amenities and security; it also covers the care and maintenance of the roads, curbs and guttering, street lighting and tree trimming - services that are usually provided by local council.

The only service we get from City of Greater Geelong Council is a weekly rubbish collection, and for that service we have to trundle our bins into a convenient spot for the trucks to empty.

The units we live in are rated using exactly the same formula as people who live in large houses and apartments – people who do enjoy the services they pay for in their rates.

No matter how often or how we make submission to Council, they steadfastly refuse to give us the special rates legislated for by our State Government more than a year ago.

This situation is manifestly unfair, especially when the people being treated in such a cavalier way are retirees.

Most people worked at a time when superannuation was not on offer and they have struggled to provide for their retirement. Those who were not able to save enough, or whose savings have suffered with low interest rates and a share market crash, could well do with the break as legislated for by our State Government – Guidelines April 2013.

The Residents' Committee of Tannoch Brae Retirement Village sends an especially cordial invitation to you, Mr. Mayor, and our Austin Ward councillor Cr. John Irvine to meet with us to discuss this situation.

Please so not hesitate to contact the President Mrs. Lorraine Harrison in the very near future to arrange a date suitable for us all.

The Committee look forward to meeting and hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely