

Geraldine Vanderlinde

16 June 2016

The Secretary, Legal and Social Issues Committee.
Parliament House,
Spring Street, East Melbourne
VIC 3002

lsic@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Retirement Housing Submission – A Case of Bullying

I live in [REDACTED], a retirement village owned and managed by [REDACTED].

I am an 80-year-old widow. I have served on the residents' committee, which is known locally as the Residents' Council, for a total of 9 years.

The Council met on Tuesday 14 June 2016. Early in the the meeting, both [REDACTED] the Village Manager and the Chair said there was a matter of importance they wanted aired before dealing with the rest of the agenda.

The Chair read a prepared statement which, amongst other things, criticised two members of the Council who had signed petition.

I had signed, along with five other residents, a letter objecting to a proposal to increase the monthly maintenance fee by more than the adjusted CPI and asking residents to vote against the proposal at the coming budget meeting (a residents meeting called to receive the budget and vote on it if required).

I did not support the proposal to increase the service fee the Village Manager put to the Council at the April meeting. After the meeting, I read the proposal more thoroughly and found some errors. I advised the Village Manager of the errors and he called a meeting of interested Councillors to review my claims. The Village Manager put a revised proposal to the Council at the May meeting. I voted for the amendments.

The Village Manager looking directly at me said, amongst other things:

1. Members should be true to the Council and management
2. When Council has passed something, members do not have the right to send out material that opposes what management wants – that it is against Council rules (it is not)
3. That he could demand my resignation from Council
4. That he was directing his comments to me in particular, because it appeared I did not realise how serious my actions were

5. He would reconsider the outcome if we apologised

He was clearly very angry. His tone was nasty and aggressive and his manner was threatening and intimidating.

I apologised because I wanted to remain on Council, amongst other things to attempt to moderate his need to control the Council and residents.

I believe the Village Manager, by raking over prosecution of the matter, was out of order in a several ways:

1. The Council exists to represent residents. A Village Manager attends meetings as a guest. Accordingly, he or she has no right to direct proceedings. This Village Manager does not behave as a guest. He takes over our meetings.
2. He has no right to interfere in the way members go about trying to influence voting at residents' meetings.
3. He has no right to threaten to ask for my resignation
4. He has no right to demand I apologise.

I ask that you recommend measures to protect residents from bullying.

If I am protected from legal action by anyone I have mentioned, you may publish this letter and call me to appear before the Committee.

Yours faithfully,

Geraldine Vanderlinde