

Alexandra Holston



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

By email: [lsic@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:lsic@parliament.vic.gov.au)

7 June 2016

Dear Secretary,

**Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector – Retirement Housing Ombudsman**

I am writing to you as a concerned granddaughter to request the establishment of an Ombudsman to represent retirement housing residents. I have three grandparents currently living at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] – my maternal grandparents and my paternal grandmother who is a widow and recipient of a single pension.

While I would consider my family very attentive, I am concerned that there are no simple, safe mechanisms through which retirement village residents can raise concerns regarding their situations without the support of their families. I know through my own experience and anecdotally that our elderly citizens are often scared to raise issues that concern them out of fear of ramifications, or a desire not to cause any trouble.

It is our duty to ensure that the maximum protections are available for one of the most vulnerable groups in society, who have paid their taxes and contributed over many decades. I understand that the current processes are internal dispute resolution, then a VCAT application. It is unreasonable to expect retirement village residents to pass through a VCAT process, which can be a difficult, scary and expensive task – effectively preventing any actions to be taken.

A Retirement Housing Ombudsman would be a step toward resolving the imbalance of power that currently exists between operators and retirement housing residents. As such, I urge you to propose the establishment of such a body to aid in protecting the interests of our elderly citizens.

Kind regards

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Dear Secretary,

**Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector - Council rates in residential retirement villages**

I am writing to you as a concerned granddaughter to request the recommendation of a compulsory 25% discount to retirement village rates. I have three grandparents currently living at [REDACTED] – my maternal grandparents and my paternal grandmother who is a widow and recipient of a single pension.

As a 30 year old working full time, recently moved into my own home, I have no qualms paying my taxes and rates for the benefits my family and I enjoy, and to support our greater community. However, I am disturbed at the financial burden placed on our elderly citizens.

As retirement village residents, my grandparents pay a substantial fee for the maintenance of the infrastructure and facilities within the village. While I understand the necessity for the fee, my Grandparents are further required to pay full council rates by the City of Casey. They are essentially double-paying for these services, despite the majority of the burden being borne by the retirement village.

I understand that the current law allows the application of differential rates to retirement village units, but does not require this. As a result, some councils apply a substantial discount, reflective of the lower burden, while others apply none. For example, the City of Casey provides an annual grant of \$20,000 to [REDACTED], equivalent to approximately \$88.00 per unit, compared to 25% discount applied by nearby Knox Council.

Reflective of the lower burden placed on Council services and the financial vulnerability of our elderly citizens, I ask that the Legal and Social Issues Committee recommends the application of a compulsory 25% discount to retirement village rates.

Kind regards

Alexandra Holston