

Subject: Legal and Social Issues Committee Submission

To Hon. Edward O'Donohue M.L.C.
Parliament House of Victoria,
Spring Street,
Melbourne Vic 3000

Chairman Legal and Social Issues Committee
[REDACTED]

17th. April 2016

Dear Sir,

I wish to make the following submission to your committee enquiry into Retirement Housing under the following headings:-

- Road Safety
- Occupational Health & Safety General
- Occupational Health & Safety Internal
- Occupational Health & Safety External
- Appointment of an Ombudsman

- **Road Safety**

I submit that it should be mandatory that the speed limit for traffic passing any Retirement Village should be a maximum of 40km/hour.

In addition, warning notices indicating aged pedestrians should be placed on both sides of the road, either side of the Village exit.

If it is good enough to post speed restrictions and signs to warn about children, the same should apply to the aged members of the community.

- **Occupational Health & Safety General**

It is now recognised that Retirement Villages are an industry and I contend that they should be subject to regulation under the Occupational Health and Safety bylaws.

I submit that any Village Owner must take full legal, financial and moral responsibility for safety within the precinct of not only the village, but the individual units or dwellings therein.

- **Occupational Health & Safety Internal**

My particular concern is with the strength of towel rails installed in bathrooms which of course have hard ceramic floor tiles and are inevitably wet areas at certain times.

It is my contention that any towel rail should be of sufficient strength to support the weight of an adult, if grasped in an emergency. I was amazed to be told by the Management in my Retirement Village that it is not the policy of the Village Owners to install such rails when refurbishing Units on change of tenancy. The reason being that the presence of hand rails would be a deterrent to potential purchasers, as a reflection on their age.

In fact they are going so far as to remove hard (or grab) rails from shower recesses and toilets as well! Surely it is not a matter of age, senility, what you will; anyone of any age can slip and fall in a wet area. At the age of 20, I fell in a change-room after a gym session in a similar situation.

In addition, the floor tiles should be of a nonslip variety or have a nonslip coating.

- **Occupational Health & Safety External**

There should be a ban on tall trees in Retirement Villages, particularly white gums, commonly known as “Widow Makers”. They are notorious for dropping limbs and/or being uprooted in storms. I had a number on my farm in Emerald and have witnessed how treacherous they can be. They have no place in an urban environment, let alone a Retirement Village as occurs in my Village, where many have been planted close to or even overhanging dwellings.

I have had a great deal of experience on safety issues during my working life in the chemical industry. There, it is drilled into one that where-ever an unsafe situation is discovered, it is a moral as well as a legal responsibility to rectify the situation and “make safe”.

There are stringent regulations covering Occupational, Health and Safety issues in industry and I submit that these regulations should form a basis for insertion into the RVA as it covers the “Retirement Village Industry”. That would ensure that the residents residing in that “Industry” are fully protected, so far as safety is concerned.

One of the aims of the Federal Government with their programme of “Aging in Place” is the intention of providing a safe environment for seniors as they age. Thus the introduction of stringent safety provisions as in the OH&S legislation is a direct fit. Again, I stress the duty of care which is ultimately the responsibility of the Owners and Managers of those operators in the Retirement Village Industry.

- **Appointment of an Ombudsman**

I strongly support the move to appoint an Ombudsman to provide a more effective route to resolution of differences between tenants and owner/managers.

Yours Sincerely,

John Ide



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Appendix:- WHAT ARE HANDRAILS?

What Are Handrails?

A handrail is a wall fixture that allows for grip to provide support and stability. It is often a standard feature on a staircase but in the home of a senior, the positioning of handrails should extend beyond just a staircase. The purpose of a handrails is **to be able to bear the weight of a person** so that it can be used as a support or stability grip when walking, rising, bending over or even just standing.

Locations of Handrails in the Home

Handrails can be installed at any number of areas in the household, some of which may seem like unlikely locations. A handrail may be useful on the wall :

- above the bath tub
- **in the shower cubicle and just outside it**
- next to the wash basin
- alongside the bed
- within easy reach from a couch when seated
- in the kitchen near the entrance, by the stove and any work surface
- in the garage where it can be reached through an open car door

These are just some of the areas where handrails may be helpful to elderly residents and various other locations may be identified for the specific needs of a person.

Types of Handrails

Most countries have strict specifications about the strength of a handrail and it is always important to ensure that the brand and manufacturer are appropriately certified. Handrail framework may be available with :

- Wood
- Metal, usually aluminium

Due to strength and durability issues, plastic frames are not usually used. The wood or metal frame may be polished and veneered on the surface, or further covered by rubber and plastic. The outer coverings are solely for grip and not for strength of the railing. Rubber often provides the best grip but may not always have the desired cosmetic effect and durability. The grip should be circular in shape or near-circular in cross-section for an easier and more comfortable grip. Ultimately the type of handrail also depends on personal preference especially in keeping with the home décor and the affordability of a good quality handrail.

Handrail Installation

Ideally **handrails should be installed by professionals** – carpenters, builders and construction workers or handymen. Using the appropriate fasteners, like screws or bolts, with the prescribed length and strength into the right type of fixtures, like wall plugs, are crucial. Do-it-yourself (DIY) installations may be available in most home improvement stores and the instructions should be followed carefully and to the letter. It is also important to routinely inspect the handrail and its fasteners to ensure that wear and tear has not compromised the fixture.

Handrails Are Necessary, Not Optional

With bone diseases like osteoporosis being common, a handrail can prevent a lifetime of discomfort and disability. Handrails can at times be lifesaving devices for the elderly. More severe falls can even lead to serious injuries that may progress to death even with prompt medical attention. **A senior may be able to move around quite adequately without handrails, however, there is often no planning for its need.** Therefore handrails should be considered as a necessity in the home of a senior, who are at a greater risk of falls than younger adults

[REDACTED]

From: Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector POV eSubmission Form
<cso@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Saturday, 11 June 2016 2:17 PM
To: LSIC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector

Mr. John Ide
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I am a resident of a Retirement Village in Berwick, Victoria and wish to make the following submission to your Committee.

I think that it is generally accepted now a days that the Retirement Village community is deemed to nowAs such I submit that the Retirement Village Industry should be subject to all of the rigors of the law covering Occupational Health and Safety.

May I ask that that concept be incorporated in the final recommendations which your Committee reports back to the Victorian Parliament.

To enable Retirement Village residents to more easily make use of OH&S legislation I ask that the concept of a Retirement Village Ombudsman be established.

John Ide

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File1:

File2:

File3:

From: [Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector POV eSubmission Form](#)
To: [LSIC](#)
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector
Date: Monday, 27 June 2016 9:38:55 AM

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector

Mr. John Ide

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I am concerned about the safety of Senior Citizens residents of Retirement Villages with access to roads and streets.
The Vic Roads Regulations are very specific in protecting the safety of children around schools, but totally ignore any protection for elderly citizens accessing roads and streets from Retirement Villages.

I request that your Committee raise this matter with the Minister for Roads with the intent that protection for residents of Retirement Villages accessing public roads and streets be written in to the Vic Roads Regulations.

John A. Ide

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File1:

File2:

File3: