



To the Committee,
Inquiry into Retirement Housing,

To all Members,

My submission is about BASIC MISMANAGEMENT particularly in the NOT FOR PROFIT SECTOR.

I have lived in two Retirement Villages, [REDACTED] Retirement Village in Kilsyth managed for the [REDACTED] by a Committee of Management. This village was excellent. I wished, however to return home to Healesville and entered [REDACTED] Retirement Village 12 years ago.

I found the management back then was bad enough but since the take-over it has only got worse.

My Background:

On leaving school I trained as a Credit Authorization Officer before moving to Local Government. I then managed a private Hospital before returning again to Local Government. I left work to care for my Mother who acquired Alzheimer's disease in her fifties. I then worked in a volunteer capacity as Secretary to the Mental Health Auxiliaries of Victoria managing three hostels for patients leaving hospital. I am a foundation member of Healesville Inter-Church Community Care Inc. I'm a foundation and life member of the RRVV after which I became a member of the Committee of Management of HAAG. I was also appointed to the Board of Healesville & District Hospital where I served for about ten years. I studied Grief and Loss and ran a support Group and was involved in starting a Palliative Care Service in Healesville.

I thank the Committee for their efforts to improve what I see as a very disappointing situation for retirees in both sectors.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Ohlhoff

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO RETIREMENT HOUSING SUBMISSION

I would like to submit that [REDACTED], an agency of the Uniting Church, are derelict in their duty as Managers of Retirement Villages.

They are totally untrained in this area and show a complete lack of ethics and moral fibre in carrying out their duties. They have no understanding of the aging process, the vulnerability of ageing, the complexities of ageing or treating the aged with kindness, understanding and CARING. THEY HAVE NO EMPATHY!

I see in their submission that they say they have NINE VILLAGES. NO, THEY HAVE EIGHT! [REDACTED] was closed about two years ago.

All the residents were moved out at that time to other villages and as far as I am aware, it still stands empty. This is a good example of how the truth gets stretched to suit. Three of the residents were moved to [REDACTED] in Sandringham which is currently also being negotiated for sale. The distress of housing and financial uncertainty this must cause these aged residents is enormous.

On the financial front a financial report and budget are produced for each village every year, however, there is no way of verifying the contents and therefore there should be an independent Auditor appointed and residents given access to this person to verify anything that is of concern to them.

In this village a meeting was called of people on old contracts (prior to [REDACTED] taking over) who were asked to WILLINGLY raise their service fees to the same level as new contracts for people entering the village into newly refurbished units (more than double their current rate.

2.

Some of those with little knowledge and probably some fear as to their future did as they were asked. Surely this is exploiting the vulnerable aged? There was no offer of independent advice, financial or otherwise. Residents were visited individually by Management. This will mean their CPI rises each year will be considerably more because of the increased fees. These visits indicate to me that there was likely to have been a certain amount of intimidation. Finally, at the Annual Meeting ALL residents were asked to vote on the old contracts. It went through. IT CHANGED NOTHING! Although, it certainly divided the village.

At another of the EIGHT villages the Management asked residents to pay \$500 extra (not as a levy) for general painting maintenance which had already been costed in a budget. A vote was held and failed. Then a resident changed their mind (probably under duress). I understand another meeting has now been called for another vote so this anomaly can go through.

If this is how voting is carried out, we could change the Government on a weekly basis.

Residents Committees are another area that needs to be examined. They should speak for all residents equally and seen to be impartial. There should be more defining rules and education available for these committees most of whom have little or no experience in conducting such a committee.

These are all matters the Inquiry should be aware of and take into account because an Ombudsman is essential for a better life for RETIRED SENIOR CITIZENS OF VICTORIA MOST OF WHOM HAVE TO EXIST ON A PENSION.

3.

I believe that THE RETIREMENT VILLAGES ACT should be torn up and re-written as there are many aspects that are at odds with fairness, transparency and PEACE OF MIND for the vulnerable.

Helen Ohlhoff

