

TRANSCRIPT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Subcommittee

Inquiry into the retirement housing sector

Melbourne — 29 November 2016

Members

Mr Edward O'Donohue — Chair

Ms Nina Springle — Deputy Chair

Ms Margaret Fitzherbert

Mr Daniel Mulino

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Mrs Inga Peulich

Mr Adem Somyurek

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Participating Members

Ms Colleen Hartland

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips

Staff

Acting secretary: Mr Patrick O'Brien

Witness

Ms Aoife Cooke, Housing for the Aged Action Group.

The CHAIR — Ms Cooke, while you are coming to join us, I will just caution that all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege; therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. I invite you to make a maximum 2-minute statement.

Ms COOKE — Great. Thank you. I work with Housing for the Aged Action Group, so of course, because she is my manager, I concur with everything Daisy said. You have previously heard from my colleague Shanny Gordon, and I am not going to repeat any of that. I am just speaking on behalf of some of the residents of Central City Caravan Park in Bendigo. Mr Boris Tecic was due to come today, and he could not make it, which is why I am speaking instead, briefly.

Central City Caravan Park in Bendigo has 90 long-term residents, with 80 of those over the age of 65, some with a variety of complex needs and disabilities. The caravan park has announced after a 30-year lease that it is closing, and all of these residents have been given notice to leave within a year. The business owner is running a very successful business and is planning to move on and has many buyers for the business, but the landowner has not agreed to give a lease to the caravan park, and everything is therefore of course to shut down. This leaves quite a number of very vulnerable older people, many of whom are in their 90s, including late 90s, and in their 80s, in a very, very difficult position.

Of course homelessness is difficult for everyone, but for a lot of these residents, they are under the part 4A legislation of movable dwellings, so the situation for many of those people I would like to highlight specifically. All of these residents are now on the pension. Quite a few of them put the last of any savings they had during their lives into upgrading their residences — so, for example, two are a couple on the disability pension. They had some money prior to that and put it into upgrading their dwelling. Another man had put \$40 000 into his dwelling only last year. They are now in a position where they have too many assets for public housing and no way of selling the assets because nobody wants to buy.

The nearest caravan park — this is Golden Square in Bendigo — that will consider taking a few of these residents is in Bacchus Marsh, which despite not knowing Victoria very well I am pretty sure is not that close. The cost of breaking up, pulling down and removing the units is extremely expensive. One resident was quoted \$25 000 to break it up and an extra \$15 000 to take it to a tip. Residents are extremely distressed, and they are in a bit of a financial kind of bind in this situation.

The other thing I just wanted to mention is that for two residents of this park it is their third time each being evicted from caravan parks that are being shut down, and for another two residents it is their second time in this situation. So it is just really looking at the lack of security of tenure in these part 4A dwellings and the difficulty, as I am sure you are aware of at this stage, of an asset that is not functionally an asset in any real way. I just wanted to highlight that. I think that is it.

The CHAIR — Thank you so much for your evidence.

Ms COOKE — Thanks for your time.

The CHAIR — Thanks, everyone, for being part of the public inquiry process, and the committee stands adjourned.

Committee adjourned.