

**GOVERNMENT MUST NOT LOSE MOMENTUM OF RETIREMENT HOUSING REFORM
SAYS ADVOCACY GROUP**

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Recent media has exposed many of the problems residents of retirement housing have been facing for a long time – complicated contracts, unfair fees and issues with management. Unfortunately, these are not isolated problems with one operator, they occur across the whole of the retirement housing industry and Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) are calling on the government to take action.

Housing for the Aged Action Group provide a retirement housing advice service and hear over and over again from residents who fear to speak out against managers and operators, and the difficulties they have in exercising their rights.

Margaret Scott Simmons (90) has lived in a retirement village for 22 years. “Finances is a key problem in our village and underlies much of the unrest but many residents, although unhappy, are unwilling to take action because they want to live in peace. Management may listen to our concerns but they do little to address them.” She says. “There is no excuse for elderly people to be harassed in any way and treated as if they could be easily dispensed with.”

Because of the lack of regulation and free and independent support for vulnerable older people, disputes between residents and managers are difficult to resolve

The Victorian Government has a unique opportunity to improve the retirement housing sector and make it fair for residents. A recent Parliamentary Inquiry into Retirement Housing proposed a number of recommendations which, if implemented, would go a long way to repairing the issues in this sector.

The recommendations include an alternative dispute resolution process such as an ombudsman, simpler contracts, better training and regulation for operators of retirement housing, and a review of the Retirement Villages Act 1986.

Shanny Gordon from HAAG says “This is the first time retirement housing has been so predominant in the public eye and it is important that this opportunity is realised. Residents and other stakeholders need to ensure the government responds appropriately to the needs of residents by taking action on the Inquiry recommendations to provide significant reform and improved protections within the retirement housing sector.”

Residents rights will not be adequate until the legislation is improved, providing more thorough regulation. Housing for the Aged Action Group urges the government to adopt these recommendations and act now to protect retirement housing residents.
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Housing for the Aged Action Group is a not for profit community group dedicated to improving housing outcomes for older people through service provision and policy development.