

BEDFORD HEIGHTS ESTATE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION INC.

4/16 Bedford Street

Box Hill, Vic 3128

Ms Ros Spence, Member for Yuroke

Chairman, Advisory Committee

Local Government Reform Act Review

PO Box 500, Melbourne, Vic 5020

Dear Ms Spence

Differential Rating for Retirement Villages

The quest for differential rating in Victoria has been in progress for many years, notably through Residents of Retirement Villages, Victoria. A number of villages and individuals have also made separate representations to their respective councils, with mixed success.

This Association made a submission to City of Whitehorse in 2014, on behalf of the residents in both this village and those at Fountain Court in Burwood. Our presentation was made in person to a Special Meeting of Council, and a copy of the text of that submission is attached.

The response from Council followed familiar lines, i.e. that facilities are provided effectively at a cost to all ratepayers and are available to all ratepayers for their use.

This response takes no account of three factors which are particular to retirement village living.

One is that retirement lifestyle inevitably relates to advancing age, which in turn relates to reduced mobility, reduced driving and reduced incentive to participate in activities away from the place of residence.

The second is that retirement village residences are generally small and each located on smaller than average blocks.

The third is a corollary to the shared facility argument. ***While we do have access to, and do use, publically available facilities we are, through rates, contributing to their provision and upkeep. By contrast, when similar works are required within the village we do not benefit from a contribution by others in the general community.***

Residents in retirement villages select this lifestyle for several reasons, but common factors are personal security, purpose designed residences with appropriate aids and trip-free environments and on-site availability of services such as emergency call systems. Because

such villages are almost exclusively privately owned, we are unable to call upon Council to remedy road deterioration which is in no small part due to the necessary passage of heavy vehicles for rubbish removal, furniture removals, emergency services, delivery vehicles, taxis and tradespeople.

Similarly we cannot call on Council to;

- . remedy footpath and crossover deterioration,
- . provide and maintain verge planting
- . provide and maintain road signage
- . maintain and cover the cost of internal street lighting.
- . provide road sweeping
- . provide and maintain open spaces

Again we are unable to call on utility providers for maintenance of power, water , surface and waste water collection within the village.

The costs of these works are covered by , in our case, a proportion of fortnightly service fees paid to the owner which also cover the salaries of staff whose duties include organisation of the above works.

We understand that this is common to all retirement villages in Victoria and it is the essence of our belief that a differential rating scheme would afford equitable compensation.

We support the current Minister's consideration of this matter, and respectfully request that it receive sympathetic support from the Review Committee and Parliament.

Yours sincerely



Derek Fern

Chairman, Bedford Heights Estate Residents Association

14th December 2015