

Media release

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COTA Victoria welcomes retirement house sector recommendations

The state's peak body for older Victorians today congratulated the Legal and Social Issues Committee on its report and recommendations for reform in the retirement housing sector.

COTA Victoria CEO Ronda Held said the Committee had today made 15 positive recommendations to improve transparency around retirement housing contracts and improving dispute resolution processes through a new or existing Ombudsman.

COTA also welcomed the committee's recommendation that the Retirement Villages Act be reviewed and the design of retirement villages and parks and training of staff be improved.

"The tireless work of older people in retirement villages campaigning for change has finally been heard," Ms Held said.

"Older people are often intimidated and reluctant to take up disputes through VCAT. The Committee recognised the need to provide low cost, timely and binding resolutions."

Ms Held said residents living in retirement villages and residential parks want greater accountability and skill levels by employees and owners.

She said recommendation for managers to receive training and accreditation is welcomed by COTA and other organisations working with retirement residents - including Housing for the Aged Action Group, Consumer Action Law Centre and Retirement Villages Victoria.

"People working within this sector need to have finance skills, an understanding of the legislation, dispute resolutions and respectful communication," Ms Held said.

"We are pleased to see recommendations that address complexity of contracts, greater disclosure of costs including deferred management fees and exit fees. Reforms to clarify timelines and responsibilities for repairs and maintenance are overdue.

"People want to age in place. The recommendation for aged care and disability design professionals to be proactively engaged in the design of villages and parks will support people to age well and with dignity.

COTA Victoria thanked all committee members for their hard work in considering the personal submissions and expert witnesses and urged the Victorian government to act on all the committee's recommendations.

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