



Retirement Villages Amendment Bill welcomed, but older Victorians need more protections and supports

Melbourne, 29 November – Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) welcome the Retirement Villages Amendment Bill 2024 as a step toward a fairer and more accountable retirement village sector. However, more work is needed to fully support and protect older Victorians living in retirement villages.

The Bill's introduction of standardised contracts addresses longstanding issues of complexity and inconsistency for prospective residents, making contract navigation simpler and more transparent. It also commits to the development of a mandatory Code of Practice in consultation with the community and the retirement village sector, while strengthening regulatory powers for Consumer Affairs Victoria.

"Standardised contracts and increased regulatory oversight provide foundational improvements, but further action is necessary to ensure retirement villages fulfill their promise of safe, affordable, and supportive communities for older people," said Ben Rogers, CEO of COTA Victoria and SRV.

The Bill also includes reforms to dispute resolution processes, such as introducing an alternative dispute resolution service. While these improvements are important, it is critical that they deliver on the community need for support to address complaints of maladministration, unfair practices, and systemic issues.

"COTA Victoria and SRV will continue advocating for funded, independent, and expert support for retirement village residents," Mr Rogers continued. "This is not a fair playing field. Older Victorians need accessible and impartial supports to resolve complex disputes."

Beyond dispute resolution, financial protections for residents are a pressing priority.

“Provisions to cap exit fees and set clearer timelines for exit entitlement payments are positive steps, but the current 12-month maximum timeframe for payments falls short of fairness,” said Mr Rogers. “Reducing this to six months, as practiced in New South Wales, would better support residents and their families during times of transition”.

Mr Rogers also emphasised the importance of supporting the implementation of the Bill should it pass, saying, “the Victorian Government must fund programs to help older people understand their rights and obligations, empowering them to make informed decisions and navigate the retirement village system with confidence.”

COTA Victoria and SRV remain committed to working collaboratively with the Victorian Government, residents, and stakeholders to ensure these reforms achieve their full potential.

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Further information

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About us

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged over 50 in Victoria. For over 70 years, we have led government, corporate, and community thinking about the positive aspects of ageing in the state.

Today, our focus is on promoting opportunities for and protecting the legal rights of people 50+. We value ageing and embrace its opportunities for personal growth, contribution, and self-expression. This belief drives benefits to the nation and its states alongside communities, families, and individuals.

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) is a program of COTA Victoria and the only state-wide community legal centre dedicated to advancing the rights of older people and the early intervention into, or prevention of, elder abuse in our community.

SRV has a team of experienced advocates, lawyers, and social workers who provide free information, advice, referral, legal advice, legal casework, and support to older people who are either at risk of or are experiencing elder abuse. SRV supports and empowers older people through the provision of legal advice directly to the older person.