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Residents Gather to Rally for Reform

2/05/2017

We are currently at a crucial time when it comes to policies and law reform in retirement housing*. For a number of years, HAAG has been working with Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC), Council on the Ageing (COTA), Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV) and Justice Connect to push forward much needed reform in the retirement housing sector.

On the 7th of March 2017 the Victorian Government responded to our pressure with the 'Parliamentary Inquiry into the Retirement Housing Sector', which made 15 recommendations for change in the sector.

On the 1st of May, a group of 140 residents of retirement villages, residential villages, caravan parks and independent living units came together at a Retirement Housing Forum at Victoria University to ensure the inquiry recommendations are seriously considered and acted upon as part of future reform.

Fiona York from Housing for the Aged Action Group said "the forum was a great opportunity for people to work together on a strategy to ensure that the Inquiry recommendations are adopted by Parliament".

The group were addressed by experts in the field, Katherine Temple from Consumer Action Law Centre, Donna Swann from Council on the Ageing, Lawrie Robertson from Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria and Fiona York from Housing for the Aged Action Group.

After much discussion, the residents group decided which of the Inquiry's recommendations are most essential for the government to act upon. These were;
That the Victorian government introduce a Retirement Housing Ombudsman, that retirement village managers have proper training under the certificate system, that all retirement housing providers go through a process of accreditation, that the Victorian Government review the *Retirement Villages Act 1986* and make changes to protect consumers and that the *Retirement Villages Act 1986* defines whose responsibility it is to pay for repairs and maintenance and that a time limit is set for these repairs.

Fiona York (HAAG) noted, "We know from our years of action that we are more powerful when we work together, and it was great to see so many people attend to express their concerns, prioritise them and plan for the best way to influence change to improve the lives of residents of retirement housing".

The group hopes that the Government will act swiftly to make the reforms necessary to make living in retirement housing a safe and secure option for all older Victorians.

For more information contact HAAG, 9654 7389

* Retirement housing refers to Independent Living Units (ILUs), Not-For-Profit and self-funded retirement villages, caravan and residential parks and rental villages.