

ACT Retirement Village Residents Association Inc.

To: provide independent information, advice, advocacy and representation

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2024-2025

I have great pleasure in presenting the key events and activities of the ACT RVRA during 2024-25.

It has been a delight to serve as the ACT RVRA president this past year. One of the main reasons was the ACT Government's \$25,000 seeding grant, received in March 2024, which allowed the Association to focus on planned activities and take advantage of new opportunities without the need to focus on fund raising – for one year.

Our annual public Forum has now become firmly established as the Association's major event and annual calendar highlight. Since our first Forum in 2023, interest and attendance has steadily grown along with an increasingly relevant and informative program and a greater number of exhibitors. Two Forum events were held in 2024-25 to enable the costs of both events to be met by our funding grant.

The 2024 Forum held in July 2024 at the Charnwood Labor Club was attended by over 140 residents, prospective residents and members of the public. The second Forum was held 11 months later in June 2025 at the larger Belconnen Labor Club. Over 260 people heard 5 speakers present a varied program on Retirement Village living, relevant legislative changes and the new Aged Care Act. Several exhibitors were also in attendance. WIN News interviewed two speakers and broadcast the segment 24 hours later. We were delighted to also sign up over 30 new members. It was our most successful event to date and such success reflects the Forum's growing reputation as a most worthwhile and informative free event for seniors hosted by our Association. Slide presentations from both Forums are available from our website actrvra.org.au.

The annual COTA ACT Expo in September 2024 and the regular twice yearly Phillips Wealth/KJB Law seminars are the other public events we attend as an exhibitor to engage with prospective residents. At this point, I wish to acknowledge the ACT Council on the Ageing (COTA ACT) as an ongoing source of wise advice in guiding our efforts towards a more firmly established and influential organisation. In March 2025, we signed a letter of agreement with COTA to underscore our collaborative partnership.

Turning to our representative and advocacy role, the Association is the only member of ACT Government's Working Group review of Retirement Village legislation that brings lived experience to the discussion. At the meetings we advocate for new legislative amendments and give our view on other proposed changes. A number of amendments from that review were enacted in February and May 2025 to:

- require Retirement Villages to adopt an elder abuse policy;
- streamline residents' particular voting procedures; and
- provide for extension of resident committee executives' terms of office.

We continued to regularly meet with the ACT Retirement Living Council, a representative body of Retirement Village operators, to discuss matters of common interest and advocate for our matters on the Government's Working Group agenda.

Over summer, we met with the strata title Owners Corporation Network (a residents' representative body) on the issue of a new strata commissioner, and together were invited to meet with Fiona Carrick MLA. We put our view to the meeting that Retirement Villages

should remain outside the remit of a strata commissioner, and subsequently made a submission to the Assembly's Inquiry into the Management of Strata Properties. The reasons for our view are given in the May 2025 newsletter on our website.

In September 2024, ABC Radio Canberra asked us for an interview in the wake of two episodes of the ABC 7:30 Report that cast the entire Retirement Village sector in an unfavourable light. In her interview, Secretary Anne Caine challenged many of the ideas put forward by the ABC. While acknowledging the occasional poor performance of some ACT Retirement Villages, Anne asserted the vast majority of residents positively enjoyed Retirement Village living. In relation to contractual issues, Anne stressed the importance of incoming residents and their families obtaining expert legal advice before signing a residential contract. Anne's interview is on our website under the Archives tab.

To better communicate with our members, we commenced a quarterly newsletter in March 2025. We hope you find the articles informative, and invite your feedback or suggestions.

Throughout the year, we accepted invitations from 6 Retirement Villages to present on our role, achievements and plans to interested residents. These visits are a steady way to engender interest in the Association and increase our membership, albeit a few members at a time. Requests for advice are regularly received through our enquiries and telephone lines, not only from residents, but also from prospective residents and occasionally from village managers.

The November 2024 Annual General Meeting approved several changes to the constitution that incorporated relevant text from the former by-laws, included a new category of associate members, gave authority to the committee to set membership fees, and inserted windup provisions. Guest speaker Ms Joanne Twible, Principal KJB Law, spoke on the variation of Departure Fees, Upfront Fees and Membership Fees across the ACT Retirement Village sector and her slides are on our website.

Valuable zoom meetings with other state-based Retirement Village Resident Association office holders helped us gain a better understanding of issues affecting the sector in other jurisdictions and learn what can be achieved by sufficient volunteers and resources. As President, I attended the 2025 Property Council National Summit which discussed developments, issues and trends in the national Retirement Village sector. I presented on the latest trends in retirement living at our 2025 Forum.

Your 2024-2025 Committee was an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed group who met monthly and worked hard to progress the developments and achievements I have outlined. Unfortunately, Secretary Anne Caine is not standing for election this year, so I particularly wish to thank her for her proactive and resourceful contribution over the past 2 years.

The 2024-25 year started with a committee of 5, increased to 9 after the AGM, then settled to 7, which left 5 vacancies to year's end. While the work was rewarding and challenging, the current level of activity cannot be sustained by so few unless more residents are willing to fill vacant positions. Our membership is slowly growing and now stands at 250 but we lost 15% at fee renewal – and Association members represent under 5% of a growing Retirement Village population. We would be grateful if you could assist your Association to become the recognised champion it needs to be – by encouraging others in your Retirement Village to become members, and by giving consideration to joining the ACT RVRA Committee.

Janine Lewis
President