

ACT Retirement Village Residents Association Inc.

To: provide independent information, advice, advocacy and representation

ACT RVRA April Newsletter

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1. [RVRA Forum 2026](#)

The 2026 RVRA Forum “*The Transition into and Experience of Retirement Village Living.*” - 10 am Wednesday 13 May, Hellenic Club, Woden

As some members will be aware, the Association is holding its annual Forum at the Hellenic Club Wednesday 13 May. The Hon. Tara Cheyne, ACT Attorney General will open the Forum followed by an informative program of specialists in the legal, finance, human rights fields advising on key considerations relating to moving into, and living in, a retirement village. Also included will be a panel of residents from different Villages sharing their views on Village living.

As in past forums, a complimentary light lunch will be provided after the presentations, and it will be supported by information stalls featuring a range of organisations relevant to Village living. Places are filling up fast, but if you wish to attend, registration is essential. You can do so via email to enquiries@actrvra.org.au or by phoning 02 6179 6003, or by scanning the following QR code and registering via Eventbrite.



This year's Forum is proudly supported by Phillips Wealth Partners, KJB Law, Tetlow Legal, and the ACT Human Rights Commission. We are also very grateful to the Hellenic Club for their support.

2. Village Pet rules

Recently the ACTRVRA has been asked about policies relating to allowing pets in retirement villages. Section 78(2)(f) of the ACT Retirement Villages Act 2012 allows Villages “to make rules relating to the keeping of pets”. However at this point in time there is no legislation in the ACT specifically relating to whether or not pets can be allowed in retirement villages, and pets get no mention in the Access Canberra ‘Retirement Villages Handbook’. Primarily, therefore, it is up to the operator of the village what they put in their contracts. Obviously, however, ACT animal welfare rules apply to village operators and residents.

Of the Villages in Canberra, the Association is aware that:

- Some allow pets generally or with only basic conditions, particularly in villages that consist only of villas.
- Some Village operators, including apartment-based Villages, say their Village is ‘Pet Friendly’ and that pets, including dogs, may be considered. However even in those cases, approval is almost always on a case-by-case basis after you apply to the Village operator. In fact, some ‘Pet Friendly’ operators actually have quite strict criteria that must be met for a pet to be approved.
- Where Villages do allow pets, they often have a range of rules such as - no pets in the village café, dogs must be on leads in village grounds, or cats must be kept indoors. Some require the owner to have an emergency pet plan to deal with situations like the owner’s illness.
- At least one operator actually has a separate ‘dog exercise’ facility.
- Some operators allow a pet to come in with an owner, but specify that it cannot be replaced if it dies, or that a fresh pet application must be submitted, with no commitment that it will be approved;
- Some only allow pets like birds in cages, fish in tanks etc.; and
- It is understood that in at least one case, a pet owner has been told their pet is causing disruption and they were required to remove it.

So the basic rule is, if you want to take a pet with you into a specific Village, and to avoid disappointment, consult the Operator about it very early in the process. Existing residents also need to be aware that where their individual contract precluded them bringing a pet with them, that does not preclude the Village Operator from changing its policy in relation to new residents entering the village.

The Association is not aware of any Village that has a specific policy relating to specialist pets like guide dogs, companion dogs etc.

While the Association is not aware of any current pressure to amend the ACT Village legislation in relation to pets, Victoria has recently amended its legislation and from 1 May 2026, banning retirement village operators from "unreasonably limiting" residents who wish to bring pets with them.

[Note: In this and later articles, it is noted that they are general articles only and should not be relied on as formal legal advice.]

It's amazing how quickly an afternoon nap turns into a four-hour snooze and a missed episode of Home and Away.

3. Rules for the sale of alcohol in Villages

In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), many Village committees organise or endorse social events that involve the consumption of alcohol – either where Village residents' committees sells or provides liquor to residents, or as a BYO function. In these situations, they can usually do so without a formal liquor licence, but subject to specific exemptions, primarily revolving around either the number of people attending, or limiting the quantity and nature of the supply.

The key rules concerning exemption are:

- A retirement village residents' committee is exempt from needing a liquor licence if the number of people attending a function organised by it is less than 30;
- If the number exceeds 30, the supply of liquor must not exceed 2 standard drinks per person per day.

If a Residents' Committee sells tickets or charges money to exchange for alcohol, there is a "nexus" between the cash tender and the supply, meaning the 2-standard-drink limitation MUST be strictly adhered to, or the exemption may be lost.

- The exemption applies specifically to supplying residents of the retirement village or their adult guests.
- While Village Operators can sell or provide alcohol at Village functions, to come with in this exemption, the sale or supply must not be organized or conducted by the Operator (management) of the retirement village; it must be managed by the

Residents Committee. A member of the Residents Committee (or a nominee) must be present to supervise the sale/supply of liquor and the behaviour of attendees.

- There is no requirement for any permit or notification for events that are organised on a BYO basis. However if BYO liquor is served by a staff member, the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) principles need to be observed.
- In any event, alcohol must not be supplied to intoxicated persons nor be supplied to minors.
- The liquor sold or supplied at gatherings must be purchased on a retail basis.

NOTE: If a Residents' Committee wishes to run a larger event and exceed 2 standard drinks per person, or charge significant fees for alcohol, they must apply for a non-commercial liquor permit through Access Canberra for specific events. If a permit is needed, the people serving liquor must hold a valid ACT RSA certificate. A Risk Assessment Management Plan (RAMP) may be required for events where alcohol is sold in these circumstances.

4. Brighten your life – Spike Milligan

Smiling is infectious,
You catch it like the flu.
When someone smiled at me today,
I started smiling too.

I passed around the corner,
And someone saw my grin.
When he smiled, I realized,
I'd passed it on to him.

I thought about that smile,
Then I realized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine,
Could travel round the earth.

So, if you feel a smile begin,
Don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick,
And get the world infected!

5. Showing Movies in Retirement Villages

In managed or communal residences such as retirement villages, there is not always a clear line between a public and a private movie screening, and the Association has been asked about the rules relating to showing movies on previous occasions. As a practical approach, the less officially organised a screening is, the less likely it is to be in public and to require permission.

A licence will generally be required if the management, staff or Residents' Committee of a retirement village organises/facilitates a screening of a film for residents, as this is more likely to be 'in public', especially if shown in a common area (e.g. a lounge, common room, or cinema). Generally this is legally considered a "public screening," requiring a specialized public performance licence, *even if no entry fee is charged*.

The Big Studio Movie Licence specifically deals with such situations for retirement villages, providing the necessary legal coverage required to show films from Hollywood's biggest Studios in all common areas. [see its web site; <https://www.bsml.com.au> for more details.] Similarly, regular Netflix, Foxtel, or DVD purchases only cover private, home viewing.

To be clear, watching a film in a private apartment with friends is private, but showing a movie in a communal recreation room is a public screening requiring permission. Showing films without a licence can lead to legal action, as it breaches copyright laws. A yearly blanket licence is generally the easiest way for communities to screen multiple films legally. The licence enables legal, worry-free screenings of movies from major studios like Disney, Warner Bros., Sony, and Universal, and it protects against action for non-compliance and ensures artists are compensated. More information can also be obtained on info@copyright.org.au.



"I'm writing about all the things I ought to do before I die. It's my oughtobiography."

6. Is Your Village AED Ready?

[Article provided by Stryker Pty Ltd]

Sudden cardiac arrest isn't something most people think about day to day, but it's more common than many realise. Across Australia, around 32,000 people experience sudden cardiac arrest each year, and outcomes depend heavily on how quickly help arrives. In these situations, time is critical. For every minute without treatment, the chance of survival decreases significantly. While ambulance services play a vital role, the first few minutes are often managed by the people already on site. That's where automated external defibrillators (AEDs) can make a real difference.

AEDs are designed to be used by everyday people. They provide clear, step-by-step voice instructions and will only deliver a shock if it's needed. When used quickly, they can significantly improve a person's chance of survival.

But effective access is just as important as having a device.

To be truly prepared, an AED should be able to be retrieved, used, and returned to a patient within approximately three minutes. In larger or spread-out communities, this often means considering not just whether you have an AED, but where it is located and how accessible it is at all times.

There's also an important, and sometimes overlooked, aspect of readiness: maintenance. AEDs are not "set and forget" devices. Pads and batteries have expiry dates, and regular checks are required to ensure the device is ready when needed. Without this, an AED may not perform as expected in a critical moment.

For retirement villages, these considerations carry additional weight. Residents may be at a higher risk of cardiac events, and there is an increasing expectation from families and communities that appropriate emergency measures are in place.

We're also seeing a broader shift across Australia toward clearer guidance and regulation around AED deployment and upkeep. The focus is moving beyond installation, to ensuring devices are properly maintained, accessible, and ready for use at any time. For many Villages, managing this across multiple buildings or locations can become complex, particularly when tracking maintenance, consumables, and compliance requirements.

But at its core, the question is simple:

If an emergency happened today, would help be immediately available?

Being prepared isn't just about equipment. It's about having the right systems in place so that residents, staff, and families can feel confident that support is there when it matters most.

Sudden cardiac arrest can't be predicted. But being ready for it is something every community can plan for.

Introducing our sponsors

In our January edition of the Newsletter, we were very happy to be able to announce that we are getting sponsorship support. In this edition we would like to introduce you to the Firms and the Government Agency that are supporting us financially in various ways:

Phillips Wealth Partners. Phillips Wealth Partners are financial advisers, fully licensed to provide investment advice in accordance with Australian financial services regulations. Their aged care specialists are formally accredited, ensuring that you receive informed, compliant, and high-quality advice in this complex area. Phillips Wealth Partners is a privately owned and operated firm, offering a transparent fee-for-service model and holistic, goals-based advice. Their areas of expertise related to the Association include retirement planning and income strategies, including retirement living and downsizing. They also specialise in residential aged care planning. Beyond these specialisations, they also provide a full range of expert advice in investment portfolio design and management; superannuation optimisation; tax-effective wealth accumulation; and estate, gifting, and legacy planning.

KJB Law. KJB Law has been operating in the ACT for more than 40 years and is a past winner of both ACT *Business of the Year* and *Best Professional Services Awards*. While it covers the full range of legal services to families and individuals, it has special expertise in the legal aspects of moving into a Retirement Village. This is an area of special interest for Jo Twible, one of the Principals of the Firm. She is keen to ensure that clients looking to enter a Village get quality legal advice that takes into account the client's needs on an holistic basis. Her involvement with Village issues includes representing the Law Society on the ACT Government Working Group on Retirement Village Legislation.

Tetlow Legal. Tetlow Legal is a specialist law firm that has, over the years, crafted its niche in the Canberra legal landscape as leaders in the areas of estate, property and business law. It seeks to provide quality legal advice to individuals, families and small to medium-sized businesses who are looking for a firm that they can trust, who will work with them to protect their interests and achieve positive outcomes. A partner and co-owner of Tetlow Legal, Emma Bragg has extensive experience in Retirement Planning, Retirement Villages, Estate Planning and other older person concerns. Emma is an active member of the ACT Law Society's Elder Law & Succession Committee and current Chair of the Law Council of Australia's National Elder Law & Succession Law Committee where she has contributed

towards various local and national law reform projects for over 10 years. Emma has also assisted Government Advisory Groups in these areas and provides advice to the ACTRVRA.

The ACT Human Rights Commission. The ACT Human Rights Commission aims to improve service delivery and protection of ACT community members through the effective response to individual concerns and complaint handling, systemic investigations, submissions to parliamentary inquiries and effective engagement with key stakeholders. The Commission handles complaints about services for older people, discrimination, health services, disability services, mistreatment of older people and people with a disability, retirement villages, human rights and privacy complaints from Canberra community members. It provides a free, accessible and timely service to help people resolve concerns or complaints.

Their support includes enhancing education and outreach programmes to improve understanding of rights and promote a safe, diverse and inclusive Canberra. Its support of the Forums held by the ACT Retirement Village Residents Association is a clear example of that objective, and is an example of the support of Discrimination, Health Services, Disability & Community Services and Privacy Commissioner, Karen Toohey. Karen regularly visits Retirement Villages, presenting on issues such as elder abuse and complaint resolution.



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