

22 March 2023

RETIREMENT VILLAGES OMBUDSMAN

ACT Labor MLA for Yerrabi Michael Pettersson today introduced a motion to the ACT Legislative Assembly calling for an investigation into the establishment of an ACT retirement villages ombudsman. The motion passed with tri-partisan support.

Many retirement village residents have reported to me that the options currently available under the *Retirement Villages Act 2012* to resolve disputes with big retirement village operators are not fit for purpose.

Despite being the first port of call for when a dispute arises, the internal retirement village disputes committee often fails to generate tangible outcomes for residents since the decision is not binding.

If a resident subsequently chooses to escalate the matter to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) or the ACT Supreme Court for enforcement, they often find themselves bogged down in a costly, arduous, administrative nightmare. As a result, very few seniors pursue the justice they deserve and give up altogether.

This isn't good enough. Residents of retirement villages deserve access to a binding and enforceable mechanism to resolve disputes with these massive multi-national businesses.

To address these issues, the motion I moved today called on the ACT Government to:

- investigate the establishment of an ACT retirement villages ombudsman that is non-adversarial and accessible with the power to make binding decisions to resolve disputes between a resident of a retirement village and the operator of the village, and
- advocate for the federal government to establish a national retirement villages and aged care ombudsman to further support and advocate for the rights of older people.

I think the ACT Government should always do more to support vulnerable residents. In recent times there has been a focus on renters, and while this is important, I want the large number of Canberrans who live in retirement villages to know that we've got their back too.

I appreciate that my Assembly colleagues joined me today in supporting a renewed focus on the complex issues facing retirement village residents. I look forward to reviewing the findings of the ACT Government's investigation by the end of September 2023.

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