

EDITORIAL

At all stages of life, access to appropriate housing and accommodation is of paramount importance, and a basic human right. For older Australians, individual housing requirements may vary as lifestyle, social interactions, health and care needs shift throughout the ageing trajectory.

Retirement villages, the theme of this edition of the *Elder Law Review*, are a rapidly growing housing option of specific relevance to older Australians. Though retirement villages are typically promoted as settings of freedom, choice and flexibility of accommodation and support for people in the advanced stages of their lives, scholarship, media and other reports have also exposed a variety of challenges faced by residents of retirement villages, often providing suggestions for improvement.

In 'Retirement Villages in Australia: The Case for Commonwealth Intervention', Brittany Smeed calls attention to various financial, practical and other complexities faced by older Australians seeking to move into retirement villages, and highlights the limitations of State and Territory regulation of this form of accommodation. Smeed propounds the characterisation of retirement villages as financial products as a basis for robust regulation of retirement villages at Commonwealth level, and offers valuable recommendations as to potential legislative changes and a regulatory scheme to appropriately deal with current concerns.

Focusing on a more specific matter related to the practicalities of retirement village living, in 'My Animal, My Support, and My New Home in a Retirement Village: Disability Discrimination, Assistance Animals and Old Age', Dr Paul Harpur and Professor Nancy A Pachana consider the use of companion animals and disability assistance animals by older persons and the extent of barriers faced in continuing this use upon moving into a retirement village. The authors review the status of relevant legislation and argue that a broad reading of anti-discrimination laws would support the ability of persons to continue the use of their assistance animals in the retirement village context.

Transgender Victoria have also contributed a piece on the potential hardships faced by trans and gender diverse individuals in the retirement village and aged care context, and the approaches that can be adopted by retirement village staff and the general community to remain sensitive to such persons.

This edition of the *Elder Law Review* continues the conversation on a range of matters pertaining to retirement villages, drawing attention to areas of need and suggesting various means of improvement.

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