

NARI at major inquiry into retirement housing sector

Training retirement housing managers about understanding the needs of older people would go a long way to improving retirement living in Victoria, according to the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI).

Dr Sue Malta and Sue Williams, researchers from NARI, were recently asked to give evidence to the Victorian Legal and Social Issues Committee, which has started a comprehensive inquiry into the operation and regulation of the retirement housing sector.

Dr Malta said: “Our advice to the inquiry was to consider making training mandatory for managers so that they better understand the diversity of older people who are going into and purchasing retirement homes.”

NARI was commissioned by the Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria to conduct an independent survey of its 6,500 members. The survey, the first of its kind in Victoria, considered motivations for moving into retirement villages, experiences and concerns.

“Nearly 2,000 responses were received, demonstrating the level of interest among residents,” Dr Malta said.

The survey showed that while most new residents experienced no issues, contractual or otherwise, which needed resolving prior to taking up their residence, over 400 reported issues that were of significance to them, such as delays, building issues, availability of promised facilities and complicated or poorly written contracts.

“For 170 of these cases the issues were not resolved before moving in and were unlikely to be resolved in the near future,” Dr Malta said.

Once in residence, 70% of respondents reported a matter to their managers, 475 of which were not resolved to residents’ satisfaction.

“This is of concern to us and reflects the need for improving communication between village managers and their residents and learning more about the needs and expectations of older people.”

At least 90 per cent of those who responded to the survey were aged 70 years and older. Five per cent of residents had been in retirement villages for less than one year, and roughly 26 per cent had been in them more than 10 years.

“Motivations for moving into retirement villages were varied and included concerns for safety, the need to downsize, and their previous home being too large,” Dr Malta said.

The survey also revealed that respondents appeared satisfied with their life and their emotional health, and the majority rated their health as good to very good. Most respondents also regarded retirement village life as a generally positive experience and would recommend it to their family, friends or colleagues.

About the National Ageing Research Institute

The National Ageing Research Institute was established 40 years ago. It conducts independent research into the major health and social issues that affect older people, and uses this research to shape health promotion, service provision and policy development, recognising that Australia’s older population is diverse. Its mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of older people through research and evidence-based practice.

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