

Retirement villages capitalise on aged care changes

AS AUSTRALIA'S ageing population continues to grow there will be an increasing need for appropriate housing.

Retirement villages are increasingly becoming one preferred housing option.

The 2015 Productivity Commission report on the housing decisions of older people found the popularity of retirement villages is increasing faster than any other age-specific housing option in the country.

Retirement villages are currently home to approximately 5 per cent of Australia's population aged 65 and over. Nationwide, around 184,000 senior Australians are living in a retirement village.

The retirement village industry landscape has changed significantly from its commencement of church and community-based housing for seniors.

Today, around 60 per cent of the retirement village sector in Australia



Dr Helen Barrie (Feist),
president of the AAG

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is operated by for-profit investors and 40 per cent by the not-for-profit sector.

Competition in the sector has begun to escalate in response to an ageing population and the financial potential this business offers.

More recently, reforms in aged care have piqued the interest of the Retirement Village Council of Australia. Its recent report, *Delivering Home Care in Retirement Villages*, highlights that “the retirement living sector is well placed to capitalise on these [legislative] changes through the delivery of home care services in their villages”.

With projected growth estimates at more than 382,000 older Australians wanting retirement village accommodation by 2025, this potentially makes retirement village owners and operators significant providers of community support and home care packages in the future.

This is something that retirement village developers and operators are clearly seeing the value and potential of.

While this may create a distinct advantage for the older individual, by streamlining both housing and care services and associated costs, we must ensure village residents can continue to receive their care from the provider of their choice, as the Commonwealth reforms intended.

This is certainly an area to watch with interest in the coming years. ■



Regulation should be firm but fair

THE AGED CARE industry takes its responsibility to ensure older Australians receive the highest quality of services very seriously. The number one priority for providers is the safety, wellbeing and quality of life of those in their care.

This year has seen increased public scrutiny of aged care quality and compliance, with a plethora of reviews into aged care regulation and care, workforce and elder abuse currently being undertaken. In addition, we are awaiting the review by David Tune into the Living Longer Living Better reforms, to be handed down in August.

These reviews are important to ensure:

- that the system and services are able to meet the needs of a rapidly ageing Australia;
- that the regulatory systems work as they are intended to;

- community confidence in aged care services.

Retaining focus on meeting the needs of older people throughout the development, reporting and actioning of such reviews is critical. While analysing and evaluating practices, systems and programs helps us to continually improve, identify and remedy our weaknesses, these processes must not impede the ability of the sector to do its job.

Providers need to be able to continue doing what they do best – providing quality services to their clients and residents.

We have seen a flavour in some of the reviews that have already reported of wanting increased reporting and regulation. Aged care is already a heavily regulated industry.

Reporting in and of itself does not ensure safety, better protection or quality



Pat Sparrow, CEO ACSA

outcomes. Before creating new regulations, we need to pause and consider an important question:

- Can they be realistically applied and implemented without compromising service delivery and quality, or do they look good and make sense “on paper”, but in reality create unintended consequences

and affect the industry's ability to provide quality care and services to older Australians?

The last thing the industry needs is a myopic focus on one aspect of the overall system.

We need a considered and coordinated response and approach to the recommendations and actioning of the various reviews.

All of the pieces must fit together into a sensible whole, which enables the provision of quality care and support with a firm but fair regulatory system, protecting older people while still allowing service innovation to flourish.

This is how we can ensure an efficient and effective system for current and future generations of older Australians. ■