

Honourable Mr. Gary Humphries MP
Chairman, Senate Enquiry
Aged Pension Payments

5th February 2008

Dear Mr. Humphries

I thank you for this opportunity to bring my case, and that of many other aged pensioners, to your attention.

I understand you are looking for solutions, so instead of detailing our problem of skyrocketing rents at Carseldine Gardens Retirement Village, I have attached the letter I sent to the Honourable Mr. Robert Swarten, Housing Minister in Queensland last year. I will however just mention this so called retirement village is comprised of 143 one and two bedroom units all rented.

The short term solution very humbly suggested by me might ease the immediate stress many of us find ourselves in.

Until a year or two ago I considered the aged pension to be quite reasonable. I am single, in good health and live in a retirement village and what little savings I had enabled me to run a little car and enjoy the activities/classes of U3a and some Church groups and even visits to my family (not in Brisbane). And now all those activities have had to go and all my savings are rapidly being used up trying to survive, and the worry for me personally is whether Housing Commission will find me a place before the money runs out.


Many of the residents at this village are in their eighties and being forced out because the pension, including the rent allowance barely covers the rent. Housing Commission cannot provide housing (waiting lists currently running at approximately five years and nothing is being built), so my suggestion is that government give special needs financial assistance to keep these people in their homes until the Housing Commission can provide suitable housing for them.

The government is always telling us how much they are doing to help people to stay in their homes: cleaning, showering, home based healthcare, and even transport to do their shopping etc. so why not add special needs financial assistance.

I am one of the younger ones and find it very sad driving these elderly residents around some in poor health, trying to find a place to go. I am currently looking at a caravan park with one resident (aged 81) - \$200 per week and no internal toilet. She will have to walk up the road to the amenities block.

Please God you will come up will some assistance quickly to help my neighbours and then me within a few years.

Yours sincerely



Veronica Howell



Your Ref :

16 January, 2008

Carseldine Gardens Retirement Village

To the Residents
Carseldine Gardens Retirement Village
144 Dorville Road
CARSELDINE QLD 4034

Re: Carseldine Gardens Retirement Village – Accommodation Unit Rent Increase

Due to the recent and continuing interest rate rises, increases in various other costs and having regard to the high demand for rental accommodation units, I have been instructed by the owners of Carseldine Gardens Retirement Village to increase the weekly rental rate for lease renewals starting from 1 February 2008.

The new rental rate for a one bedroom unit will be \$265.00 per week.

The new rental rate for a two bedroom unit will be \$280.00 per week.

Despite the proposed rental increase, please note that the owners have not passed on the full cost of interest rate rises and other costs.

The rental increase is based on a 12 month rental tenancy agreement. The rent amount will be fixed for the 12 month period with no increases in rent during that period.

To help with renewals I have been instructed by the owners to offer one week's free rental which will apply to all lease renewals until you are advised otherwise. The bonus week's rental will show on your rent payment receipt as extending your current "week ending" by a further week.

As you are aware, your bond is held in trust by the Residential Tenancies Authority and the amount of the bond (held in trust) is or should be equal to four week's rental at all times. The owners have requested that on renewing your lease, \$80.00 is also paid to enable the bond moneys to be increased in line with the rental increase. The increased bond moneys will be paid to the Residential Tenancies Authority.

If you have any further queries in relation to the renewal of your tenancy agreement, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards.

Paul Predebon
Manager
Carseldine Gardens Retirement Villag

Honourable Mr. Robert Swarten
Minister for Housing
G P O Box 690
Brisbane Qld 4001

25th May 2007

Dear Mr. Swarten

We understand from the Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service that the State Government is currently reviewing the Tenancy Act and request that you include some protection for pensioners at least a ceiling % clause which lessors must adhere to.

I am a resident of Carseldine Gardens Retirement Village (Retirement Village only in name). They offer no services and have added two clauses to the additional Special Terms to our lease exempting themselves from the Retirement Village Act. So in addition to signing the standard RTA lease, we initial a General Rules page and two pages of Special Terms. Seven years ago they made promises to the first residents that we would have our own bus (we are not close to shops or transport unless you have a car): meals would be available from the Function Centre which is part of this Village. We did have a Doctor who had rooms here but he has been dispensed with – it would always be pensioner friendly etc, etc. None of this has happened. I have been here four and they had stopped making these promises by the time I moved in.

We have been advised that all rents will be increased to \$245 per week from the commencement of any lease due for renewal after 1st June 2007, which means that many of the long time residents will be paying an additional \$60 per week for a one bedroom unit and a similar amount for the two bedroom unit. For myself who will have been here four years I am up for the full \$60 – that is after an increase last year of \$20 per week, \$10 the year before and \$15 after my first year, which is a total of \$105.

I also believe that it is unfair that long time residents should be paying more than new residents moving in.

Examples:

1. New resident just moved in on two year lease at \$225 (I realise it is before 1st June)
2. Another resident, here less than one year at \$205 – their two year lease entitles them to stay on that figure for the full two years.

Very poor thanks for our loyalty! (Some have been here for 7 years).

Why are we signing leases after the first year? and required to pay penalties if we break the lease. For heavens sake elderly people move because we need to go into care or because they keep adding large increases to the rent, and both are problems beyond our control. We are not young people who might flit in and out of accommodation on a whim.

We had an incident recently when a resident committed suicide. It was well known in the village that he felt trapped – he couldn't afford to stay and he couldn't afford to move. There are others like him – costs money to move and energy to find a new place neither of which many elderly people have. Public Housing isn't much help when there is a five year waiting list in this area.

Many of us have signed a Petition, first of all requesting the Management review their decision and consider continuing with a \$20 per week each year and second that they waive the penalties for breaking a lease. I have also requested a meeting with the owners to personally put my case and hope it will flow on to all residents. Trying to be optimistic but don't have high expectations.

Hopefully this might be useful information for you when reviewing the Tenancy Act.

This is a copy of a letter which I have sent to our Local Member, Ms Bonny Barry.

Yours sincerely



Veronica Howell

P.S. My meeting with the owners changed nothing. Their argument was that it was not their responsibility to provide cheap housing for pensioners – that was the responsibility of governments.

Also we have just received a letter notifying us that there will be a further increase of \$20 per week (to take effect just eight months after the big rise of last year – copy attached.)