

Before the Independent Hearings Panel
Wellington

Under: the Resource Management Act 1991 (*RMA*)

in the matter of: Submissions and further submissions in relation to the
Wellington City Proposed District Plan

and: Hearing Stream 1

and: **Retirement Villages Association of New Zealand
Incorporated**

Statement of Evidence of **John Collyns** for Wellington Hearing
Stream 1 on behalf of the Retirement Villages Association of
New Zealand Incorporated

Dated: 28 February 2023

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REPRESENTATION OF JOHN COLLYNS FOR WELLINGTON HEARING STREAM 1 ON BEHALF OF THE RETIREMENT VILLAGES ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is John Nicholas Charles Collyns.
- 2 I am the Executive Director of the Retirement Villages Association of New Zealand Incorporated (*RVA*). I was appointed Executive Director of the *RVA* in October 2007, and have now been in the industry for almost 15 years. I have considerable knowledge and understanding of the aged population, and the retirement sector and its challenges. I have presented evidence for the *RVA* in a number of planning processes, including the Christchurch Replacement District Plan and Auckland Unitary Plan processes. We sought and successfully obtained bespoke planning provisions for retirement villages in those districts.
- 3 This representation briefly sets the scene to our submissions, including the background to the *RVA*, the aged care and accommodation crisis and what we need for the retirement village industry in the present process.
- 4 The *RVA* is a voluntary industry organisation that represents the interests of the owners, developers and managers of registered retirement villages throughout New Zealand. Today, the *RVA* has 410 member villages throughout New Zealand, with approximately 38,520 units that are home to around 50,000 older New Zealanders. The *RVA*'s members include all five publicly-listed companies (Ryman Healthcare, Summerset Group, Arvida Group, Oceania Healthcare, and Radius Residential Care Ltd), other corporate groups (such as Metlifecare and Bupa Healthcare) independent operators, and not-for profit operators (such as community trusts, and religious and welfare organisations).
- 5 The proportion of older people in our communities compared to the rest of the population is increasing. This is no exception for Wellington City. There are currently 11 retirement villages, including 5 villages that are currently expanding, or under development. Our villages are currently home to around 800 older Kiwis, which is 9.4% of the +75 demographic in Wellington City. We expect the region to grow, and with it, a continued demand for retirement villages.

- 6 Further, people aged 75+ are projected to increase in Wellington from 10,540 in 2023 to 23,940 in 2048.¹ Given around 45% of this age group require aged care beds, this growth will create a need for a minimum of an additional 6,030 aged care beds by 2048. Almost all of the new care beds constructed in recent times have been within a retirement village, rather than in a stand-alone facility.
- 7 However, as it stands, demand for retirement villages and aged care accommodation is rising faster than our industry can consent and build them. This trend has led to a growing retirement living housing crisis.
- 8 In our experience, older people want to stay in the communities in which they currently live, and have lived for many years, during their retirement. This is called 'ageing in place'. For these reasons, the majority of retirement village residents come from dwellings located in surrounding suburbs. The RVA members' experience is that sites in existing residential areas that are appropriate for retirement villages are extremely rare. This issue makes it important that sites are made accessible across the region and then able to be used efficiently.
- 9 RVA members are currently heavy users of RMA processes. Members rely on resource consents to authorise much needed retirement developments, and to provide for ongoing operational needs. However, as the RVA submission outlines, the RMA has caused a number of major challenges.² Wellington is no exception. Our members continue to face lengthy and uncertain consenting processes in Wellington, particularly due to the District Plan not being fit for purpose. Consent information requirements and notification issues have continued to be major and growing issues across the region.
- 10 Accordingly, the RVA and its members were greatly encouraged by the Enabling Housing Act. We see the present process as a significant enabler of accelerating housing intensification for the ageing population.
- 11 I note that the RVA is heavily engaged in Intensification Streamlined Planning Processes across the country. We are seeking consistent provisions in all the 'Tier 1' cities, which we consider appropriately respond to the relevant statutory directions. Consistency is very important for certainty and efficiency. I also note that the RVA has

¹ Statistics New Zealand, Subnational Population Estimates 2021 (updated December 2022).

² RVA Submission, see pages 11-19.

consulted heavily with its members to ensure the provisions we seek have unified support.

- 12 In Wellington, the key outcome we seek is to accelerate housing intensification for the ageing population. This outcome will be achieved through a consistent and enabling regulatory framework, which clearly responds to the needs of that ageing population and the unique features of retirement village activities. We also seek to remove undue planning restrictions, as required to better reflect the government's housing intensification requirements.
- 13 Ensuring the transport provisions are fit for purpose for retirement village residents is also key for the RVA. Age and mobility constraints for our residents mean retirement villages have a lower number of vehicle movements compared to other residential developments and different care parking needs. Our members' residents are also infrequent users of active modes of transport.
- 14 Dr Mitchell will address the details relating to the present hearing stream, and the RVA supports his evidence. We also note he will comment on the fact that retirement villages are a residential activity to address a comment from the Council officer in their s42A report. I strongly agree. The primary purpose of retirement villages is to provide permanent homes for the residents that live there, whether that be in higher care environments or in independent living. In the RVA's experience, people living in retirement villages would universally describe the village as their home. Retirement villages do provide a range of ancillary services, however those services are provided for residents only. These ancillary activities complement the residential function of retirement villages by meeting the particular needs of the older residents.

John Collins

28 February 2023