



3 March 2005

S05.14

Submission to the Retirement Commission on the Retirement Villages Act 2003: Draft Code of Practice

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 nationally organised societies. It has 33 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action.

NCWNZ is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this Draft Code of Practice for Retirement Villages as we have always taken a keen interest in the subject of housing for the elderly. We recognise the need for a Code of Practice to protect the interests of the elderly, and endorse its establishment.

B OPERATING STANDARDS FOR RETIREMENT VILLAGES

1. Staffing of Retirement Villages

1.1, 1.2

NCWNZ have found that there are distinctions to be found between Residential Villages that are attached to a Rest Home and those that operate entirely as a Retirement Village with Independent Living Units (ILUs) only.

Very often in the ILUs there are often only office and ground staff along with a manager, as these are designed for people who are able to care for themselves but have found it too difficult to maintain their home and have opted to have the security and community these villages offer. It would be advantageous for those working in these positions to have First Aid and CPR training, and an understanding of the needs of the elderly, but most important would be police security checks for the safety of the residents' physical, emotional and financial safety. People have chosen this type of accommodation for peace of mind.

If there is no staff available over night there needs to be a very good security system available that will respond rapidly when called. It also needs to be noted that many older people suffer falls, especially in bathrooms, so emergency buttons need to be placed so that they can be reached by someone on the floor. We know there have been cases where someone has slipped in a bathroom, broken their hip and could not reach the button to call for help. The security firm would have to have access to the units.

Where villages are attached to a Rest Home they usually have the benefit of enjoying the provisions made for the Rest Home. Night staff are usually available for emergencies but again, the systems need to be fitted within reach of someone on the ground. Rest Home staff usually have all the qualifications that we would want to see in place, such as Geriatric Nurses, and all staff trained in appropriate care methods for the elderly. These people should also have passed a Police Check.

1.3, 1.4, 1.5.

We agree with these as set.





2. Safety and Personal Security of Residents

Most of the concerns of the members of NCWNZ are covered in the clauses of this section, and so we endorse the introduction of these. One concern would be in Clause 2.2 (g) where the wording says “establish and maintain lighting in the Retirement Village that is appropriate to the size, location and layout of the Retirement Village, its Residential Units and Facilities”.

We would like to see that these establishments were monitored to make sure that the manager’s idea of appropriate is not lower than required standards. Residents need to feel safe if going out at night. Paths should be free from anything that could cause a shadow.

Our members also wished to see harassment from other residents addressed and for every resident to know what steps need to be taken if this occurs. We know this is one of the major causes of complaint for people we spoke with. We know that Human Rights come into this equation but both parties have Human Rights.

3. Fire Protection and Emergency Management

3.1 – 3.4

NCWNZ members were aghast that these measures had not already been considered as we had believed that these were minimum requirements. We felt strongly that no village should be registered that did not comply with these regulations.

3.5

NCWNZ membership felt, by and large, that as most establishments are operated as a commercial enterprise, the operator should be responsible for the insurance of the overall complex. If there is to be an excess paid by the resident then this must be clearly set out, and explained as part of the agreement, before any papers are signed.

3.6

Insurance on property covers reinstatement, and so we would fail to see what the limitations would cover. If it was that some modifications were to be carried out then the operator is the one who would benefit in the long run.

3.7

We would support the proposal that temporary accommodation should be the responsibility of the operator rather than the resident.

6. Complaints Facility

NCWNZ members felt strongly that the operator must take complaints seriously and deal with them with dignity. In general, NCWNZ members felt their concerns were addressed by the provisions in this section. With reference to 6.2 (e) which relates to the complaints procedure, that it “facilitate the fair, simple, speedy and efficient resolution of complaints,” some members felt that the word “speedy” is not specific enough and should specify the time frame for commencement of an inquiry.

7. Accounts

NCWNZ is in agreement with all the clauses in this section, and especially we would like to see 7.2 *Identify Charges*, strictly adhered to, as often elderly people can become confused and just pay as they do not like to be any trouble.



8. Maintenance and Upgrading

The health and safety of the residents is of the utmost importance, therefore it is necessary to have all routine maintenance, lawns etc, done regularly. Quick response is required for urgent work. The resident must be advised before work is carried out as to their responsibility (if any) there is for on-going maintenance. The residents must always be kept informed of what is planned, so that they know when people are going to be around their home.

9. Termination of an Occupation Right Agreement

Of all the clauses, this one seems to be the one where the most concerns arise. NCWNZ is very pleased that most of these concerns are covered in this clause. One point we would like to see included is that the resident, whether the outgoing or incoming, does not pay the Real Estate Fees but these are met by the operator.

Conclusion

In general NCWNZ supports the Draft Code of Practice for Retirement Villages, although we urge that once established, it be regularly monitored to ensure that the standards are maintained.

Christine Low
National President

Christine Rattray
Convenor, Social Issues Standing Committee