

# Association of Residents of Queensland Retirement Villages

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**No. 88**

**NEWSLETTER**

**November 2013**

## 2013 Annual General Meeting

Attendance of only 39 members at the 2013 AGM, held at Maroochydore on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September, was extremely disappointing, considering that 1,324 members live in the 55 villages on the Sunshine Coast! Notwithstanding that we have previously tried alternative locations for our AGM, (without significant improvement in the number of attendees), the 2014 AGM will be held at an appropriate Gold Coast or Brisbane venue, thus providing the opportunity of reduced travelling time for the many members in those areas, to attend.

That said, the 2013 AGM was a successful meeting. Highlights included:

- The conferral of Honorary Life Membership on Les Armstrong, for his significant contribution to the Objects of the Association.
- The rescission of our existing Constitution and adoption of the new Constitution. The new document has since been registered with and accepted by the Office of Fair Trading, and will soon appear on the Association's Web Site.
- Approval of an increase in membership fees to:  
\$20.00 for annual membership and  
\$125.00 for life membership.

[A membership renewal form is included at the bottom of page 5 USE IT, PLEASE!]

Election of the new Committee is reflected on page 6, showing members' roles. Since the AGM, we accepted with regret the resignation of Irene Ford, Membership Co-ordinator and Data Base manager. Her work for the Association as a member of the Committee has been much appreciated and we wish her well. Also since the AGM, one new member has been co-opted. Members are requested to note the

'corporate' email addresses, @*gmail.com*, and the revised areas of responsibility, and to direct their initial enquiries accordingly.

The Committee workload continues at a high level. Much progress has been made on the IT project, initiated several months ago. An article on this subject appears below and overleaf.

The Committee has set up a Village Constitutions sub-committee, which is working on a model village constitution, accompanied by useful Notes and Guidelines. Should members be interested to know more on this subject, Ernie Hatton, a former Committee member, is the Chair of this sub-committee (contact details on page 6).

In addition, involvement in the Ministerial Working Party on the Review of the Review of the Retirement Villages Act continues – see article on page 3.



## IT Restructure

“The Never Ending Story”? Not really!

There are three main components of the restructure: the Web Site, the Data Base and the Accounting Package.

## **The Web Site**

The new Web Site will have a different look. The home page will provide a “log-in” section for members and is designed to encourage visitors to the site to join the ARQRV. A STOP PRESS section will include items that need urgent consideration by members. The system will identify ARQRV Liaison Officers and ARQRV Committee members.

After signing in, members will have restricted access to information including current disputes, forthcoming meetings and visits to villages, a President’s page with video commentary, the current newsletter and a searchable archives area. Recognising that some members may have considerable expertise in web page development, our Web Master, Stephen Irving, would welcome suggestions from members on this subject (contact details on page 6).

## **The Data Base**

The Data Base stores information about each member and each village. The new system, using Magic Member, will streamline this process. All data will be stored in “The Cloud”; with access, via computer, available to authorized members. The Data Base is being refined to facilitate the following:

1. Streamline the renewal process for members, Liaison Officers and Committee members.
2. Allow Liaison Officers access to up-to-date lists of members in their village.
3. Allow individual members to renew their annual membership online.
4. Allow prospective members to join online.
5. Allow members to update their address, email address, telephone number etc. Life Members will be able to print their Certificates.

After these refinements have been incorporated, members will be able to access the Data Base through the ARQRV Web Site, using their user name and password – see below. This capability is expected to be available in December 2013.

## **User name (Membership Number) and Password**

Every ARQRV member will have a unique user name and a password, allowing access to the members’ area of the web site. The unique user name, or Membership number, will comprise a village code and a villa or unit number. For example, a member living in Unit 10 at Edenlea Retirement Village has the Membership number EDL10. Village codes will be published in the general public area of the web site. For the initial log-in, the member can gain access using the

ARQRV membership number and the default password of “arqrv” (omit quotation marks and note lower case). The member will be asked to change the password immediately to a password of their choice. For the next log-in, the Membership Number and the new password will be required.

After the changeover to the new Data Base and Web Site (hopefully in December), all members with email addresses will receive email advice regarding access and the need to use the Membership Number and the default password. Please read the article on page 6 re incorrect email addresses.

## **The Accounting Package - Xero**

The changes to the accounting package are now complete. The Association accounts have been transferred from MYOB to Xero, which stores all of its information in “The Cloud”. The Xero system now allows our Treasurer to manage our financial affairs via the Internet.



## **Water Subsidy**

A big thankyou to members (and non-members) in the nine Lend Lease-managed villages in the south-east Queensland shires where the \$80 Government Water Rebate was not passed on in a one-off deduction from the next payment of General Services Fees. Lend Lease was the only operator that refused to pass on that rebate, choosing instead to hold the money in the General Services Fund, thus facilitating a lower increase in fees for the current financial year, including for new residents not entitled to that benefit.

With help from our Liaison Officers and other volunteer residents, over 2,000 letters were delivered in those nine villages inviting them to sign and send, via the ARQRV office, letters to the Department of Energy and Water Supply (DEWS) and to Lend Lease. The response was impressive, considering how passive most retirement village residents tend to be. There were only three critical messages, and over 730 residents signed the letters – more than a 34% response rate. Interestingly, more than half of those respondents were non-ARQRV-members.

The Association now faces a stand-off, in that the DEWS response to residents avoided the specifics of the issue, citing half-truths and taking the easier line of accepting Lend Lease’s approach; despite the fact that this approach was contrary to the process agreed between the ARQRV and DEWS. Lend Lease

previously posted on village notice boards a letter criticising the ARQRV resistance to the Lend Lease procedure and, in an attempt to bolster their case, included many irrelevancies and half-truths. In particular, the letter inferred that the ARQRV had supported the Lend Lease proposal; and that residents were satisfied with the pro-rata distribution of the rebate, having been given the opportunity to discuss the issue either through the residents' committee or at a general meeting. The DEWS response, which supported the Lend Lease stance, obviously was developed around these serious mis-statements of fact from Lend Lease. The ARQRV has since responded to Lend Lease and DEWS advising of the correct circumstances.

A large number of residents have since sought the Association's support to continue this matter through the Dispute Resolution process. Notwithstanding the Lend Lease ethos as advised in a letter to our Association from Mr. Greg Little, Regional Manager Queensland, that we "*pride ourselves on our commitment to ensuring all residents are comfortable and happy with our retirement living products*", the Company continues to perpetuate the myth that "*residents supported our approach*". This is clearly nonsense considering that over 730 residents advised in writing that this was not so. The matter is not yet finalised.

### Retirement Villages Act – Review of the Review

The article in our August Newsletter (No. 87) on this subject said that we were awaiting the Working Party's Report .... We hope nobody was holding their breath!

Apparently, in communications between the Minister and the Property Council (PCA) representatives, the Minister had approved a late submission from the PCA addressing options for removing "red tape" from the legislation, which was received after the first Draft of the Outcomes Report had been published. Representatives from National Seniors, Leading Age Services Australia and the ARQRV were concerned that the PCA submission raised again a number of issues that had been resolved during the Working Party deliberations and addressed other matters not included in the original terms of reference for the Review of the Act. Other members of the Working Party were concerned that they had not been given a similar opportunity to retrospectively raise new issues. Consequently, the Working Party membership supported the ARQRV's position that the PCA's submission should be rejected.

The final Report is still under preparation, having been delayed because of the need for additional meetings of the Working Party. It is now not expected until early December. The initial Drafts of his Outcomes Report reinforced the ARQRV's previous comments, that the Operator Representatives on the Working Party were reluctant to accept that enhanced consumer protection would automatically generate a more viable industry, primarily because of the resultant anticipated increase in sales. Regrettably, some Operators still do not understand that happy residents enjoying a comfortable, stress-free lifestyle are the best ambassadors for the Village.



### "Northern Sweep" Visits

In the past, the ARQRV Committee has tried to visit each retirement village every two or three years. This is becoming more difficult, as more retirement villages are built across Queensland. This year, the Committee agreed on a "Northern Sweep" of visits to retirement villages from Bundaberg to Cairns, which was undertaken by Committee Members, Ann and Steve Murray, over a three-week period in September 2013.

In planning the trip, all villages with Liaison Officers, on the proposed route, were contacted and asked to assist in planning a visit. Villages without Liaison Officers were contacted through ARQRV-member residents. As a courtesy, village managers were advised of the intended visit.

The Liaison Officers were essential to the success of the visits as they undertook the on-the-ground organisation. In every case, the ARQRV representatives were met on arrival (generally by the Liaison Officer) and found everything set up as arranged. In almost all cases they were also introduced to the manager on arrival, as a courtesy, and in some cases a general discussion with the manager ensued about the ARQRV and the RVAct.

At each venue, a 40-minute PowerPoint presentation was given as well as a four-minute video of the Association's President, to provide an overview of the ARQRV and the retirement village industry. Following this, questions were invited and much discussion followed. The main intention at each village was to show the ARQRV flag and highlight

the support that the Association provides generally to all members and specifically to individuals as required. At most villages, many members renewed for 2014 or became life members; and in addition, many residents joined.

All of the villages that were visited had Residents' Committees, most of which supported the ARQRV visit and in some cases all members of the Committee were present for the presentation. Moreover, most residents generally recognised that the ARQRV exists to provide consumer protection for all residents.

### Summary Points

- 17 Villages were visited in Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Townsville, Mackay, Innisfail and Cairns.
- Good reception in all Villages from residents and manager/staff
- There are major differences in the type and extent of resources provided in each village: some have no leisure centre or any place to meet as a group of residents, while others have

extensive centres, fully-set-up auditoriums, pools, restaurants, etc..

- There are big differences in the cost to "buy" into villages, ranging from \$250,000 to \$450,000. Monthly charges range from \$250 to over \$500.
- The management service provided to residents varied considerably. All except one had a day-time manager (not always full-time) and some had a part-time assistant manager, with a sales role.
- Most Residents' Committees fully supported the ARQRV and in these villages, attendance was usually greater.
- Many residents renewed or joined during, or in the month following the visit.
- All villages said they welcomed the visits.

*We take this opportunity to wish members  
A Very Happy and Safe Holiday Season  
And a Healthy and Happy New Year*



**The ARQRV Quarterly Newsletter is available by email.  
You are urged to receive your copy electronically:  
it will reach you earlier, and it will save costs for your Association.  
Please give the email address clearly on the Membership Renewal form on the reverse.**

### **Annual Membership Fees Are Now Due**

**Please note that the membership year is January to December**

Please complete the form on the reverse and pass it, with your subscription, to your Village Liaison Officer, or post the payment and renewal form to:

**ARQRV Membership  
PO Box 1361  
Buddina QLD 4575**

Alternatively, you may deposit into the ARQRV bank account as listed below.

**Please be sure to forward the receipt and renewal form to the Membership Officer, as above. If you do not do this, it will not be known that you have paid.**

#### **Bank of Queensland**

BSB 124001  
A/C 20511301

#### **Commonwealth Bank**

BSB 064162  
A/C 10062890

## Life Membership Certificates

We apologise to our Life Members who have not yet received their certificates – these should be available soon.

## A Security Score

Recent advice received from Operations Management at Tall Trees Care Communities was that there had been a door-to-door sales company selling lifestyle products such as massage chairs and other leisure and lifestyle products, using in-house sales techniques to encourage residents to purchase their products and then putting additional pressure on the resident to give bank account details and access to personal information. The company is called C.V. Health Systems and trades under the name: Advanced Lifestyle International Retail.

The ARQRV appreciates that this is an invasion of residents' privacy and residents are encouraged to report any such activity to their village manager. We thank Tall Trees for alerting us to this problem.

## Membership Renewal

It's time for membership renewals. The membership year is from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December, but as our next Newsletter will not be out before February, we remind members now. Renewals and new memberships paid from now till the end of 2013 are current until the end of 2014.

As mentioned on page one, the fees have increased: (from \$15) to \$20 for annual membership, and (from \$100) to \$125 for life membership.

Details of how to renew are given below and the membership renewal form is at the bottom of the next page. Please complete the form and follow the payment instructions given below. Thank you!

Remember, if you pay direct into either of the Association's bank accounts, please send, with the form, a copy of the deposit slip or details of date and time the deposit was made and into which account. If we do not have that information, we cannot know that YOU have made that payment.

### APPLICATION FOR ARQRV MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL

Please pass the completed form to your ARQRV Liaison Officer or post it with your cheque to:  
ARQRV Membership, PO Box 1361, Buddina QLD 4575

Alternatively, you may deposit into one of the ARQRV bank accounts listed below.  
Please be sure to forward the receipt and renewal form to the Membership Officer, as above.  
If you do not do this, it will not be known that you have paid.

#### Bank of Queensland

BSB 124001 A/C 20511301

#### Commonwealth Bank

BSB 064162 A/C 10062890

Annual Subscription = \$20 per Calendar Year – 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December –  
Lifetime Membership = \$125

Please tick: Renewal  New Member  Life Membership  Newsletter by Email

Name/Names:	
Villa/Unit No:	Village Name:
Full Address:	
Postcode:	Phone No:
Email Address: (please check accuracy)	
Can you help with a donation? All donations gratefully accepted - Thank You    Amount \$	
I/We apply to join / renew membership of the Association of Residents of Queensland Retirement Villages (Inc.)	
Signature:.....	Signature:.....

## ARQRV Committee Members' Contact Details

**President: Les Armstrong**  
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**Membership: Ann Murray**  
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**Web site: Stephen Irving**  
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[web.manager.arqrv@gmail.com](mailto:web.manager.arqrv@gmail.com)

**Liaison; IT project: Steve Murray**  
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**Owen Williams – Ph. 3820 9482**  
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**Marie Milner – Ph. 5448 3363**  
[comm2arqrv@gmail.com](mailto:comm2arqrv@gmail.com)

### Other contacts

**Co-opted Chairman, Village  
Constitutions sub-committee:**  
**Ernie Hatton – Ph. 5412 1686**  
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**ARQRV Legal Advisor:**  
**David Wise: Ph: 0412 254 080**  
[dtwise@gmail.com](mailto:dtwise@gmail.com)

## ARORV Committee Vacancies

The new ARQRV Constitution allows for a Committee of up to 13 members. As you see, there are three vacancies. In view of the Committee's considerable work load, volunteers are sought to join us and help share that load. It is an interesting role.

The Committee is conscious that its composition is heavily skewed in favour of the Sunshine Coast, although two members travel from the Brisbane area and one from the Gold Coast, to attend monthly meetings in Maroochydore.

It is anticipated that, as soon as possible, our meetings will have a telephone hook-up facility, to enable Committee members who live too far away to participate actively in meetings. However, it may take another four to six months before that is "up and running".

If you are interested in joining the Committee and becoming more involved in its work, please contact the President or the Secretary.

## Residents' Committees

RV Act s127 gives residents the right to elect a committee to represent them, as prescribed in RV Act s129. Election of a committee is not compulsory, but it is very likely to be an advantage for residents to do so. But residents should not elect a committee and then abandon interest in what it does on their behalf. A committee does not have any authority save that which is delegated to it by those who appointed it – that is, in our case, by the residents. Obviously, a committee can't really represent the views of residents unless residents tell the committee what their views are, that's how democracy works.

But committees, too, should keep that in mind. They are far from autonomous; they are not decision-making entities and must seek the will of the residents they represent. Residents may delegate some limited authority to their committee to, say, spend minor sums of money without further reference to a residents' meeting. An important issue that committees need to remember (and especially pertinent to the chairperson), is the accepted protocols of meetings in Australia – how to run them. Chairing meetings is not something to be taken casually and it is worthwhile and rewarding to do a bit of reading on the subject.

## Incorrect email addresses

Are you wondering why you have not received your Newsletter by email recently? A number of such sent emails have bounced back as "undeliverable". Perhaps you changed your email address and forgot to advise us. If so, PLEASE email Ann Murray (details this page) so the data base can be updated.

If we do not have your correct email address, you will not be notified as to when the new Data Base is accessible to members via the Web Site.

