

Before the Independent Hearings Panel
Porirua City Council

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

in the matter of: Submissions and further submissions in relation to
Variation 1 and Plan Change 19 to the Proposed and
Operative Porirua City District Plan

and: Hearing Stream 7

and: **Ryman Healthcare Limited**

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

Summary statement of Matthew Brown for **Ryman Healthcare Limited**

Dated: 13 March 2023

Reference: Luke Hinchey (luke.hinchey@chapmantripp.com)
Marika Williams (marika.williams@chapmantripp.com)

chapmantripp.com
T +64 9 357 9000
F +64 9 357 9099

PO Box 2206
Auckland 1140
New Zealand

Auckland
Wellington
Christchurch



SUMMARY STATEMENT OF MATTHEW BROWN FOR RYMAN HEALTHCARE LIMITED

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is Matthew Glen Brown.
- 2 I am the General Manager Development NZ for Ryman Healthcare Limited (*Ryman*). I have held this role since March 2020. I have prepared this statement to provide a brief overview of Ryman and our interests in the present process.
- 3 Ryman is New Zealand's leading retirement village operator. Ryman was established in Christchurch in 1984 and now operates 38 retirement villages across New Zealand. Our villages provide homes for more than 13,200 elderly residents and employ over 6,700 people. Ryman is considered to be a pioneer in many aspects of the healthcare industry – including retirement village design, standards of care, and staff education. Ryman is not a developer. Ryman is a resident-focused operator of retirement villages, committed to providing the highest quality housing and care for New Zealand's elderly residents in its villages.
- 4 Widely published population statistics (referred to by Mr Collyns) strongly support a growing need for further development of retirement villages and care. In Wellington, our villages combined will provide a home for over 1,920 of the region's ageing residents, including approximately 80 residents originally from Porirua, and a further 290 Porirua residents on our waitlists.
- 5 Ryman was recently granted consent for a new comprehensive care retirement village at a nearby site in Karori, Wellington City. At the time of the consent hearing, Ryman already had a list of over 440 people who had expressed an interest in living in the village. This number has since risen to 706 people. This interest is without any official marketing. Ryman also experiences a similar level of interest for other villages in Kilbirnie, Khandallah, Waikanae Petone, and Lower Hutt.
- 6 This strong interest shows the desperate need for comprehensive care retirement villages. This need has been exacerbated due to closures of small, poor quality, aged care homes of the past, which are usually conversions of old houses that simply are not up to standard. Ryman has a large pipeline of units for development in the Wellington region over the next 4-5 years that may go some way to alleviate the short-term anticipated shortfall in the supply of quality aged care and living options in Porirua. However, further development of new villages, beyond the current pipeline and within Porirua, is needed to meet the longer-term shortfall.
- 7 The importance of providing more retirement accommodation and care in Porirua to meet the needs of an ageing population needs to be expressly recognised in all appropriate zones. In this regard, I disagree with the Council Officer's view that it is not necessary or appropriate to single out an outcome for the ageing population.
- 8 I also note that as Ryman residents move into a village, they sell their family home. Every new Ryman village will release approximately 300 to 400 family homes back

onto the market to be more efficiently used again by families desperate for homes, which will assist with the broader housing shortage.

- 9 We have extensive experience in RMA planning and consenting processes. Many of our recent villages have been through notified resource consent processes. In those processes, the needs of our residents, the social and economic benefits of our villages and functional and operational requirements for the layouts of our villages are not given sufficient attention. Instead, the focus has tended to be on neighbouring resident amenity interests and concerns. We have also found that district plans around New Zealand are inconsistent and often poorly provide for retirement villages. These two factors have led to major delays in providing much needed housing and care.
- 10 As with Mr Collyns for the RVA, Ryman is very encouraged by the new direction in the government's enabling housing legislation. We are hopeful that this process will allow the balance of considerations in consenting processes to be reset appropriately.
- 11 I acknowledge that Variation 1 and PC19 provide a degree of recognition for retirement villages. However, more is needed. There also appears to be some significant misunderstandings by the Council Officer regarding the nature and features of retirement villages.
- 12 Ryman has regularly faced challenges in consent processes where retirement villages are viewed as a mixed residential and commercial or hospital use – which also appears to be the view of the Council Officer. This leads to lengthy debates about activity status and assessment requirements and has generally increased the risk of Ryman obtaining consents.
- 13 As outlined by Mr Collyns, retirement villages are clearly residential in nature. They provide permanent living accommodation to residents. Our residents describe the villages as their homes. Any ancillary activities or facilities are for residents and their visitors such facilities are important as many residents are unable to easily travel to access amenities and services. Ryman considers it is of utmost importance that the District Plan expressly recognises that retirement villages are residential activities.
- 14 Although retirement villages are residential activities, their unique functional and operational needs, mean they often do not fit in with typical urban design rules for residential development. Because of the comprehensive care nature of Ryman's villages, all of the communal amenities and care rooms need to be located in a central village centre building to allow for safe and convenient access between these areas. Many of the shared amenities are indoors, which is more comfortable for older residents. And, many of our units are designed for specialist care, meaning they may not have kitchens and private living areas. These operational requirements result in a density and layout that differs from a typical residential development.
- 15 However, often communities (particularly neighbouring landowners) and council officers can have an expectation as to how sites are going to be used. Typically, that expectation is not for medium or higher density retirement accommodation that

zoning provisions allow for. In some cases, council officers may even attempt to redesign the village layout and focus on internal amenity issues which are best left to us as the specialist operator. This is partly because planning provisions have traditionally ignored the unique features of retirement villages. As a result, consenting of retirement villages has been unnecessarily complex and time consuming.

- 16 When consenting our Karori village, Ryman made a significant effort to produce a high quality architectural design which made a positive contribution to the surrounding neighbourhood. The proposed village has generous setbacks, and building forms which comply with height in relation to boundary controls, and which were thoughtfully stepped in height on sensitive neighbouring boundaries. However, many submitters still argued that there should be even greater setbacks and height reductions, well below the permitted thresholds of the relevant building standards. Dealing with these requests took up considerable hearing time and caused major delays.
- 17 These issues emphasise the need for fit for purpose retirement village provisions that recognise the unique features of retirement villages. I also record that I do not agree that these features result in more effects as suggested by the Council Officer. In my experience, Ryman's villages are good neighbours and fit in well with the planned character of the area. I also note we do not seek special dispensation from the plan's bulk and location rules that govern external effects on neighbours. We expect these to apply to our sites and we use them as a key guide when designing our villages.
- 18 In relation to our request to recognise the intensification opportunities provided by larger sites, this relief sought is in part due to the lack of suitable sites to provide for retirement villages. As Mr Collyns notes, they want to remain close to their families, familiar amenities and other support networks and want to "age in place". However, sites that are appropriate for retirement villages are rare due to size and locational requirements. Therefore, it is important to Ryman that retirement accommodation on all appropriate sites is encouraged and enabled.
- 19 I also note that large sites provide significant opportunities to internalise effects. For example, we can provide large setbacks and step building heights away from neighbouring boundaries and put service functions in areas that ensure minimal offsite disruption. These design options allow us to achieve medium to high density without impacting our neighbours. It is thus important that the District Plan expressly recognises the intensification opportunities provided by larger sites.
- 20 Ryman agrees with and supports the key outcomes sought by the RVA, as previously set out by Mr John Collyns and to soon be expanded on by Mr Luke Hinchey and Mr Philip Mitchell.