

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 John Collyns for the **Retirement
Villages Association of New Zealand Incorporated**

Dated: 13 March 2023

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF JOHN COLLYNS FOR THE RETIREMENT VILLAGES ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

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 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 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 areas.
- 3 I will briefly set 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 rapidly. In Porirua the 75+ population is expected to increase from 2,470 people in 2018 to 8,900 people in 2048.¹ This is a 260% increase compared to the general population increase of 21% in Porirua during this time period.
- 6 This growth, combined with more people seeking out the high quality care and amenities that retirement villages provide will lead to an increased need for retirement villages. The *RVA*'s experience and data shows that demand for retirement villages is outstripping supply, and that this trend will continue to worsen. This crisis is evidenced by the increasing number of the *RVA*'s members' villages that have waiting lists of two or more years.
- 7 The *RVA*'s members' experience is that older people want to stay in the communities in which they currently live, and have lived for many years, during their retirement. This

¹ Statistics New Zealand, Subnational Population Estimates at 30 June 2021 (provisional).

is called 'ageing in place'. It allows residents to remain close to their families, friends, familiar amenities and other support networks. It allows residents to continue to play an integral part in the communities that they helped establish. To allow older people to "age in place", it is important that district plans provide for retirement villages in all appropriate zones, including residential, commercial and mixed use zones.

- 8 RVA members are currently heavy users of RMA processes. Members rely on resource consents to authorise much needed retirement villages and their ongoing operational needs. However, as the RVA's submission outlines, the RMA has caused a number of major challenges.
- 9 Accordingly, the RVA and its members were greatly encouraged by the Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2021. We see the present process as a significant enabler of accelerating housing intensification for the ageing population.
- 10 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 consulted heavily with its members to ensure the provisions we seek have unified support.
- 11 In Porirua, the key outcome we seek is to accelerate housing intensification for the ageing population in a consistent and enabling regulatory framework which clearly responds to the needs of an ageing population and the unique features of retirement village activities. We also seek to remove undue planning restrictions, which are needed to better reflect the government's housing intensification requirements.
- 12 Variation 1 and PC19 have moved some way to addressing these factors, including by having a separate retirement village regime to typical residential housing. We are also encouraged by some of the proposed amendments in the section 42A report on residential zones, for example, acknowledging that the Plan's policies should provide for benefits of retirement villages, that residential design guides are not appropriate for retirement villages, and that internal amenity controls for typical residential units should not apply. The Council Officer also appears to agree in principle with many of the general themes of the submission, but thinks the Plan already adequately addresses these matters.
- 13 However, in the RVA's view, the regime is still not fit for purpose. And, it appears the officer has some significant misunderstandings about retirement village activities and their residents.
- 14 The section 42 officer states that retirement villages are not a residential activity. I strongly disagree. The primary purpose of retirement villages is to provide permanent homes for the residents who live there, whether that be in higher care environments or in independent living. People living in retirement villages universally describe the village as their home. Ancillary services, such as a bowling green café, gym, library,

pool, craft rooms, etc are provided for residents only and complement the residential function of retirement villages by meeting the particular needs of the older residents.

- 15 Retirement villages provide most, if not all, of the resident amenities on-site without the need for external community infrastructure or space. These services and amenities are important due to the frailty, and lack of mobility, of many residents. They also provide a better quality of life for residents than could be offered without these communal services. For example, a townhouse would not have space for a pool or gym
- 16 A key consenting challenge faced by the RVA's members is an expectation from council officers that the internal amenity controls used for traditional housing types (e.g. outlook, sunlight, privacy, outdoor living spaces, landscaping and the like) are appropriate for retirement villages. Further, in the experience of the RVA's members, council officers often attempt to redesign village layouts based on what they think might be suitable, without proper knowledge of villages and residents' needs.
- 17 In this case, the RVA is encouraged by the acknowledgement in the section 42A report that such controls are not appropriate for retirement villages. However, we prefer the alternative controls suggested by Dr Mitchell, which are better suited.
- 18 I disagree with the section 42A, which suggests that these features of retirement villages may result in greater effects. In our experience, retirement villages fit very well in their environments. They are peaceful and tranquil places, often including significant landscaping and open spaces.
- 19 These outcomes will be expanded on by Mr Luke Hinchey and Dr Phillip Mitchell.