



RETIREMENT LIFE

ISSUE 6: DECEMBER 2024



Welcome message

Dear residents,

Welcome to the summer issue of Retirement Life. It's certainly been a very busy few months for me in my new role as executive director of RVA and I've enjoyed every moment of it.

That has included visiting villages, meeting many villagers and speaking at village forums. I had already immersed myself in learning as much as possible about the sector but speaking to residents and operators in person is enhancing that considerably. Every day is a new learning experience.

It's been a pleasure to see first-hand the many vibrant and caring communities that operators and residents have created. I have been struck by the passion, commitment and goodwill in villages, and the warm welcome for the many newcomers moving into communities each week.

For many, they will be making that shift after living for many years in their previous homes and that can seem a very big step, so that support in those first days, weeks and months is so important to settling in and developing a feeling of belonging.

I've heard from residents about the many things they enjoy about retirement village life – warm, dry, age-appropriate housing, friendship and activities, financial security and a pathway to care. I have also heard about some aspects where residents would like to see change. I've heard from operators about the improvements they have made and their ideas for the future of the sector.

I think residents and operators alike will have welcomed the fact that we now finally have more clarity about the Government's review of the Retirement Villages Act.

The RVA recognises that change is needed to the 20-year-old Act and has actively advocated for sensible and practical reforms that balance the needs of residents and operators.

Following the Government announcement, we were pleased to hear comments by Minister Potaka in an interview with RNZ's Kathryn Ryan that the issue of considering relicensing gains or a review of the level of Deferred Management Fees were not part of the legislative review and were not being considered.

The Minister also made it clear that nothing has yet been decided about any potential changes to the current arrangement for capital repayment and he expressed concern around the potential for smaller villages if a mandated timeline was introduced.

More detail about the review outcomes is set out elsewhere in this newsletter but the key priorities the Government has identified fit with our commitment to improving the way the retirement village model works for both operators and residents.

This is what we all want.

Village operators have been seeking certainty and clarity so they can continue to meet the expectations of you, the 53,000 older New Zealanders living in retirement villages, in the best ways possible.

On behalf of the RVA and our members, I wish all village residents a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



Michelle Palmer
Executive Director
Retirement Villages Association

Announcement from the Ministers



Associate Minister of Housing Tama Potaka
and Seniors Minister Casey Costello

Priorities set for Retirement Villages Act review

The coalition Government is progressing mahi in the Retirement Villages Act 2003 review and focusing it on the areas of highest importance, say Associate Minister of Housing Tama Potaka and Seniors Minister Casey Costello, and there are some areas with high levels of agreement,

“These areas include updating the Act to bring it in line with sector best practice, strengthening transparency such as introducing a plain language version of the Code of Practice, and looking at changes to increase protections for residents, for example restricting operators from passing on insurance excesses to residents if the damage was not their fault.

“Additionally, I have agreed the next steps of the review should focus on three key priority areas that support residents. These involve receiving advice on:

- Maintenance and repairs of operator-owned chattels and fixtures.
- Managing complaints and disputes.
- Options for incentivising or requiring earlier capital repayments when residents move out of a village.

“The objectives of the review remain the same including ensuring adequate consumer protection, balancing the rights and responsibilities of operators and residents, and ensuring the ongoing viability of the sector.

“The continuation of the Retirement Village Act review reflects the coalition Government’s agreement to work with the sector and safeguard the interests of the residents living in retirement villages.”

“I expect to receive a series of briefings and kōrero from agencies next year, before seeking Cabinet agreement for legislative change in 2026. At this stage, any amendment Bill will likely be introduced in the next Parliamentary term,” Mr Potaka says.

“New Zealand’s population is ageing and it’s essential we have a range of housing options available for older people,” Ms Costello says.

“Retirement villages play an important role in this mix, and around two-thirds of them also provide aged care facilities, so we need to continue the review and to get it right.”

It is estimated that more than 53,000 people currently live in retirement villages and the industry forecasts that close to 113,000 retirees will be wanting to live in this type of accommodation by 2048.



The RVA's view

The Retirement Villages Act 2003 review announcement by the Government is a step in the right direction, says Michelle Palmer, executive director of the RVA.

"We're pleased the Government has stated it is committed to balancing the rights and responsibilities of operators and residents, and ensuring the ongoing viability of the sector.

"The key priorities the Government has identified align with the sector's commitment to improving the way the retirement village model works for both operators and residents.

"New Zealand's retirement villages sector has been proactively rolling out the most significant reforms in a generation for the past three years under its Blueprint for Improvement.

"These include providing greater clarity/disclosure around moving into care, stopping weekly fees once a unit is vacated, ensuring operators re-license vacant units as quickly as possible, paying interest on outstanding capital sums if a unit was still not relicensed after nine months, and more clearly defining chattels, repairs and maintenance responsibilities.

"Around 75 per cent of villages have already voluntarily adopted many of these industry reforms and our ambition is to bring all villages up to these same exacting standards, lifting the bar for the entire sector.

"The RVA agrees improving the complaints system is possible. Currently there are multiple channels to make complaints and that can be confusing. The industry is open to looking at alternatives if there is sufficient evidence they work.

We are also glad that the Government has confirmed the scope of these matters, so that operators can be sure that key aspects of the commercial model are not at risk.

"We look forward to continuing to work with village operators, the Government, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the Retirement Villages' Residents Council and the Retirement Village Residents Association."



Retirement Villages' Residents' Council

The Government appears on the right track in signalling changes to better balance the needs of residents of retirement villages and operators and ensure this critical industry remains viable, says Carol Shepherd of the Retirement Villages' Residents' Council.

"We welcome the direction of travel for future reform following the review of the industry carried out by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

"The Council has advocated for legislative change to provide improved consumer protections for residents and ensure the industry is sustainable so this is much needed, albeit slower progress than we would have wanted.

"The country faces big challenges in this sector with the population of villages set to more than double from 50,000 residents today within the next 20 or so years.



Retirement Villages' Residents' Council

"It is pleasing that the Government has recognised the need to balance the needs of residents and the need for a sustainable industry. As our population grows and ages, residents need to have choices, their assets need to be better protected and the industry must be able to provide affordable options.

"Specifically, the Council is pleased the Government has decided to look at options for incentivising or requiring early capital repayments when residents move out of a village.

"The Council looks forward to working with the Government on the next stage of the review to ensure changes that benefit residents."

You can find more information about the Council [here](#).

Ryman celebrates 40 years with village-wide birthday events

Congratulations to Ryman Healthcare, which has celebrated its 40th birthday with a series of events across its villages in Australia and New Zealand.

During September, residents, team members and guests enjoyed a variety of activities, including an '80s-themed happy hour held at each village to mark four decades of kindness, care and community.



Traditional New Zealand Christmas Cake

Here's a classic New Zealand-style Christmas cake recipe, rich with fruit and spice, perfect for a festive celebration.

Ingredients:

1 kg mixed dried fruit (raisins, sultanas, currants, chopped dates, and chopped dried apricots)
 1 cup glacé cherries, halved
 1 cup chopped walnuts or almonds (optional)
 1 cup brandy, rum, or orange juice (for soaking the fruit)
 250 g butter, softened
 1 cup brown sugar
 4 large eggs
 1 Tbsp golden syrup

2 ½ cups plain flour
 1 tsp baking powder
 1 tsp mixed spice
 1 tsp cinnamon
 ½ tsp nutmeg
 ½ tsp ground ginger
 Zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon
 ¼ cup extra brandy or rum (for drizzling after baking)

Instructions:

Soak the fruit:

In a large bowl, combine the dried fruit, glacé cherries, and nuts. Pour the brandy (or juice) over the mixture and stir well. Cover and leave to soak overnight or up to 24 hours, stirring occasionally to let the fruit absorb the liquid.

Prepare the oven and pan:

Preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F). Grease a 20 cm (8-inch) round or square cake tin and line it with 2-3 layers of baking paper.

Cream butter and sugar:

In a large bowl, cream together the butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the golden syrup and the orange and lemon zest.

Mix dry ingredients:

In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, mixed spice, cinnamon, nutmeg, and ground ginger.

Combine everything:

Gradually fold the flour mixture into the creamed butter mixture. Then, fold in the soaked fruit and any remaining liquid. Stir until well combined.

Bake the cake:

Spoon the batter into the prepared tin and smooth the top. Bake for 3 to 3 ½ hours, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. If the cake is browning too quickly, cover it loosely with foil.

Drizzle with brandy:

Once out of the oven, poke a few holes in the top of the cake with a skewer and drizzle with the extra brandy or rum. Let the cake cool in the tin.

Store and mature:

Wrap the cooled cake in layers of baking paper and foil. Store in an airtight container for at least 2 weeks before serving to allow the flavors to mature. You can occasionally "feed" the cake with a little more brandy for extra richness.

Optional Decoration:

Marzipan and royal icing: For a traditional finish, cover the cake with a layer of marzipan and then royal icing.

Nuts and glazed fruit: Decorate the top with whole almonds, cherries, and a glaze of warmed apricot jam.

Enjoy your Kiwi Christmas treat!





Resources and support

Information on resources available to residents

Visit the Retirement Life website at www.retirementlife.co.nz for a seamless and comprehensive source of information catering to all your retirement village inquiries. Whether you're seeking advice or answers, this website has you covered.

There is a wealth of topics on the Retirement Life website, including a practical retirement village planning checklist and the importance of seeking legal guidance prior to moving to a retirement village.

For tailored information specific to your retirement village, don't forget to consult your village manager – they're your best resource for personalised answers.

Join our engaging discussions on social media platforms such as Facebook (facebook.com/retirementlifenz), Instagram (instagram.com/retirementlifenz), and LinkedIn (linkedin.com/company/34695026). We look forward to connecting with you.



Contact details

Stay connected with us by subscribing to our newsletter and receiving consistent updates. Simply visit <https://www.retirementlife.co.nz/contact>, send us an email at info@retirementvillages.org.nz, or give us a call at 04 499 7090 to ensure you're always in the loop.

Call for Contributions

Your thoughts and experiences matter and we welcome your stories and ideas. Please reach out to amanda@retirementvillages.org.nz via email to share your contributions, whether they be in the form of stories, articles, or suggestions for upcoming editions. We're excited to hear from you!



