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JANUARY 2023 – MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

President's Message

I am so privileged to be able to be part of the Alliance team and am very proud of the work we are undertaking on behalf of the tens of thousands of homeowners in residential parks across Queensland.

We have commenced the year with a meeting with the Acting Director of the Regulatory Services Unit, Terry Green, to discuss the unit's role in the prosecuting of Park Owners for non-compliance with the Act. We also discussed the inadequacies of the Act which is not fit for purpose and does not do what it is supposed to do – protect homeowners in residential parks. The Alliance has been asked to keep in contact with the Unit to discuss the changes required to the current legislation and the work of the RSU.

Our media project is on track with the first of two interviews between our Vice-President, Brad Goodwin and Steve Austin on ABC radio going to air on January 16. A second interview with Steve took place on 8 February – if you want to listen just follow this link for both the January interview and the latest. [The Stream Couch: Informative Videos \(amho.com.au\)](https://www.amho.com.au/stream-couch)

We had hoped that Josh Bavas from Channel 9 was going to run with a story about a serious breach of the Legislation at two Toowoomba Residential Parks – the owners are charging exit fees when homeowners sell, the cost reaching \$30,000 in some cases. However, Josh has advised that unfortunately his producer said no, he's too busy reporting tragedy after tragedy so he won't be doing the story, as it's only a minor story about pensioners whinging about rent increases. It seems that ratings and advertising revenue from Park Owners, is more important than a human interest story.

We have begun to update our website – the most recent additions are a welcome message on the homepage and information videos on the Stream Couch – a series on buying into a residential park.

We look forward to working with you and for you throughout 2023 and beyond for the benefit of all homeowners, now and in the future, to ensure that we can all have the lifestyle we deserve.

Roseann Whyte
President AMHO

Supporting Home Owners with the Government

AMHO'S AGENDA for 2023

The Alliance's priority is for immediate amendments to The Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act while it is being rewritten, as in its current form the Act offers very limited protection for Home Owners.

1. **Removal of the Market Rent Review** as a basis for site fee rental increases.
2. **Removal of CPI "ALL GROUPS BRISBANE"** in the dictionary as a basis point to raise rents due to the extreme volatility. The Government Statistician has confirmed that rents do **NOT** belong in this category and questions why it was legislated into the Act in 2003? Homeowners subjected to this increase have NO ability to question in QCAT!
3. **Removal of Special Costs Raising Rents Section 71** – Park Owners own the land, infrastructure, and communal facilities. Homeowners rent the land on which their home sits and have the use of the communal facilities. The Park Owner's business model while enjoying between 65% and 85% profit margin, should not require homeowners to contribute to running costs for the land, infrastructure or communal facilities.
4. **More transparency** in respect of the park owners' financials and costs, they need to be more accountable when raising site fees and produce these financials to the homeowners.
5. **The Annual Site Fee increase needs a cap or ceiling written into the Provisions of the Act.** Annual increases in rent should be applied at flat 1% and no greater to ensure affordability so that it does not outstrip the fixed incomes of residents and to protect the long-term viability of this housing market sector. Pensions have only risen by more than 2% annually once in the last decade (in 2022 because of inflation increases pensions rose by 4%).
 - a. **Increases under Section 69B be restricted to once per year** and not increased during that year when a new contract is signed.
6. **Increased power for the Regulatory Services Unit** to enforce compliance of Park Owners. Fines are small and the cost of prosecuting high, such a system does not encourage compliance.
7. **A more efficient and effective dispute mechanism**
 - a. **Appointment of an independent Ombudsman** - QCAT is not fit for purpose and is taking 2-3 years to hear disputes and has no power to enforce their rulings, hence many park owners just ignore them or appeal decisions when residents have a win, with the full might of their legal resources. An Ombudsman who specialises in disputes under the MHRP Act can give binding rulings on all matters relevant to residential parks.
 - b. **Site Rental Fee Increase clause 69E(4)** - where there is a disputed site rental fee increase, the increase should not commence until the dispute is resolved. At the present time the increased fee must be paid until the dispute is settled.

AMHO Actions Produce Improvements to Processes of Regulatory Service Unit (RSU) -

In June 2022, the then President of AMHO, Rhonda Cooper, raised issues about the RSU as a regulator, the Unit's inadequate record-keeping and performance reports, and short-comings in their investigations of breaches of the Act.

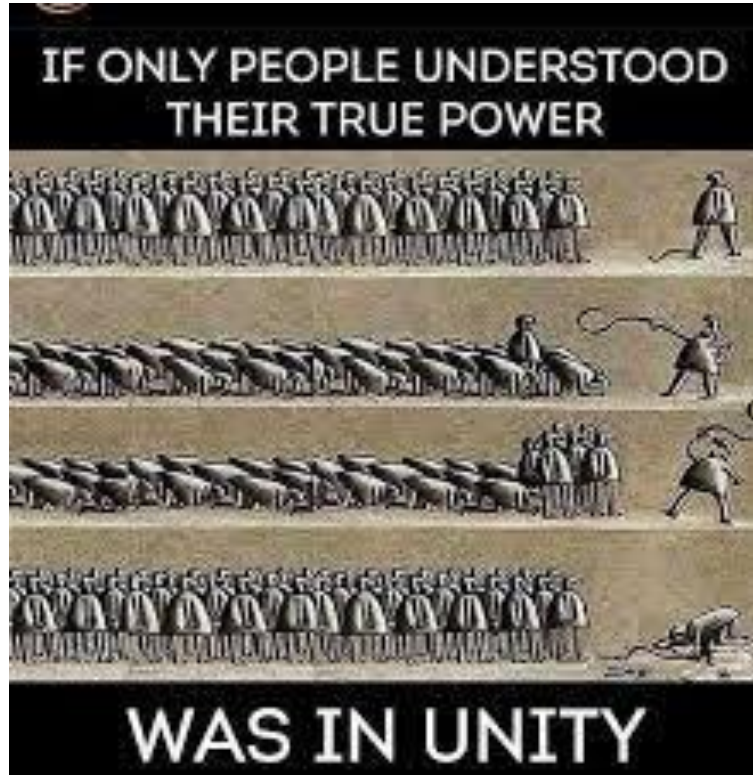
At that time the Alliance also provided some recommendations on how the RSU might better serve the needs of the thousands of Queenslanders living in lifestyle residential parks.

The Alliance has received a letter from the Director of RSU dated 1 February 2023 with the results of an internal review, regarding the matters raised but more importantly as a result of investigations into AMHO's correspondence, their review identified a number of practice improvements which will better meet stakeholder and complainant expectations.

These included:

- Preparing detailed acknowledgement letters to complainants
- Maintaining regular contact with complainants to keep them apprised of the status of their complaint
- Preparing detailed investigation closure letters to complainants and park owners so that it is clearly seen how the RSU determined their decisions.

It is pleasing to see that the Alliance has been able to influence the department in ensuring better service to those it serves.



Supporting Home Owners with the Government

Premier's Request to Minister Enoch – re Single Mature Women's Housing Needs

On the 1st December 2020 the Hon Leeanne Enoch was appointed as Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts. Her letter of appointment contained a "Portfolio Priorities Statement" and under the Housing heading is this statement - **Oversee the development of housing options to assist people to find affordable, accessible, sustainable and secure housing for sale or rent, in particular, older women.**

AMHO has contacted a number MHRP villages to ascertain the percentage of single older women using this form of housing for their final years. There is a tendency for single women to live mostly in the smaller villages with less facilities, rather than the larger Resort Style due to the higher cost of buying into these parks, or the higher rental charges. The majority of older single women in these larger resorts mostly bought in as a couple and their partner has died. There are also women who have lived in smaller residential parks for decades and now their annual site fee increases have compounded to figure which is actually much higher than many of the newer resort villages. Some are paying more than 40% of their pension in site rent fees.

Our research showed that this is a preferred way of living for many older single women and most are aged from late sixties up to ninety years old, with some parks having 45% single women residents. The majority of single women are living on a fixed income (Age or Disabled pension).

The Manufactured Home Parks Model is an excellent concept. However, the continual yearly rent increases compound, along with the rising cost of living, medicines, house maintenance and insurance costs, etc. If rents continue to rise at their present rates, many will be unable to afford to continue living in their homes.

Five years ago, land and community rents were around \$160 per week with access for some to rent assistance from Centrelink. Now rents can be \$220+ driven by the yearly CPI compounding rent rises of around 2%, along with Market Rent Reviews pushing the rents up. With inflation, and the incorrect CPI legislated in the Act, residents are now facing compounding rent rises of 7.3% per annum, which is completely unsustainable, with pensions only rising by a maximum of 2% until last year when it rose by 4%.

The Alliance has asked that rents be held at 1% per year and Market Rent Reviews be removed from the Act. Evidence is available that the park industry has not only survived the low CPI rent increases of past the five years, but has also grown exponentially over this time, despite CPI (All groups for Brisbane) figures having sat below 2%. They have continued to make huge profits. (Stockland Prospectus for purchasing Halcyon stated "65% Strong revenue operating margins with low ongoing capital expenditure). Park Owners are also assisted with federal tax incentives provided by Prime Minister John Howard many years ago to encourage affordable housing.

We have written to the Premier and Minister requesting that the Minister honour her Portfolio Priorities Statement stated above for the most vulnerable group, who are more likely to be living in poverty or to be homeless. We have also advised all MPs of our findings and always encourage residents to take their problems to their local state MP, they need to know their constituents are NOT protected under the Act in its present form.

Supporting Home Owners with the Government

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP – 31st MARCH 2023

Thanks to you our members, we can now look back on the past 12 months and say “We have definitely raised the profile of those people who live in Residential Lifestyle Parks and those in Government definitely know who we are”.

Members of Parliament who once claimed “I didn’t know that was happening”, are now aware of their responsibilities to constituents and some have embraced the fight, recognising the inequities in the MHRP Act.

We are very proud of the work AMHO did during the Survey and Issues Paper, but more importantly that so many people came forward to give their views via the survey, thank you.

Our Park presentations have given us new friends and supporters, along with information on the changes desperately needed to the Act. Your fees, support and information are truly our life blood and **we will be sending out Renewal of Membership letters very soon, with fees due on the 31st March 2023, held at \$10 per year per person and \$30 per HOC.**

However, we do have some members who have transferred funds into our bank account, but we have no details on them. We need your help to find them.

Are these people in your park?

Algate

Janine Arnold

Brian Baldwin

Jillian Reyfield

Gregory Wayne Woodcroft

If they are in your park, could you ask them to contact us either by phone 0418 527 041 or email amhocontact@gmail.com

Please stay on this journey with us, why not invite your friends and neighbours to join, as the more members we have, the louder our voice will be.

We are presently booking our Village Presentation visits for 2023 and if you would like AMHO to visit, please contact Carol Fitzpatrick at amhocontact@gmail.com or phone 0418 527 041. If you have friends in other villages, who are not members of AMHO but would like a Presentation, please pass on our details. We can also do online live zoom presentations for those interested.

Our Presentations to Villages in 2022 uncovered major problems in some parks, such as illegal Exit Fees and other questionable charges, brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities. Local MPs have now stepped up to help their constituents and it’s the exposure of these unfair behaviors, which assist us in our case to Government for amendments and a rewrite of the Act.

Alliance of Manufactured Home Owners Inc



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Supporting Home Owners with the Government