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APRIL 2023 – JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER

President's Message

As I write this message to you, I am conscious of the achievements to date and the work to come for the Alliance and you, our members. Our meetings with the Department of Communities, Housing & Digital Economy (DCHDE) have continued as we prepare for the release of the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (C-RIS) which is the next stage of the slow process making the desperately needed changes to the Manufactured Homes Residential Parks Act 2003 (MHRP).

After 15 months of advocacy and meetings with MPs, AMHO has been recognised by government as a peak body. To that end we have been asked to assist in the distribution of the C-RIS information to homeowners. We will continue to work with our MPs to ensure that we (and they) engage with as many homeowners as possible to encourage homeowners to have their say in what needs to be changed in the legislation which should be protecting them, but which absolutely does not.

We hope that you will participate in the process. ***This will be your opportunity*** to protect the lifestyle you love, and which you deserve, to ensure that it remains viable and sustainable for all parties now and in the future.

Once again, thank you for your support and for continuing to travel this journey with us.

Roseann Whyte

President AMHO

Supporting Home Owners with the Government

WHY I LIVE WHERE I DO?

When I was young, excited about life stretching out before me, there was never a part of me that ever contemplated “where I might live when I was old!” Let’s face it, even though now in my seventies I still don’t own up to being old, preferring the word mature, like a fine wine or others may say cheese.

The concept of a Manufactured Home Village has proven to be a very popular housing model and it makes me smile when they are marketed as “Over Fifties Lifestyle Villages” as most residents are in their late sixties to mid-nineties, with just a very few in the fifty-age group who have moved in before retiring from the workforce. I have never regretted buying into this splendid lifestyle back in 2017, as it is a great way to live.

Living through our COVID lockdown in the village, meant I saw and spoke with people every day, at a safe distance, of course. Whereas if I had been living in my previous home, sheltered by trees from the street view, lack of human contact and loneliness would have been my experience instead.

Owning my own home gives me independence and choices if a health crisis should strike leaving me incapacitated, as I know that there is a spare room for a carer to live in, whilst being surrounded by those who know me. Couples also appreciate that when the time comes, whoever is left on their own, will be supported by the friends they have made in the village over the years.

Why am I telling you all this? Well, it is to remind you that this great way of living is worth protecting and we need to know it will be sustainable as the years go by. This is why it is so important to get the Manufactured Home Residential Parks Act (MHRP) amended and protections we need put in place, enabling us to enjoy our final years.

The Alliance believes this lifestyle is worth fighting for and I’m sure you do agree. Very soon we will be asking you to stand up and have your say when the C-RIS comes out, as it is the next stage in making the necessary changes to the MHRP Act. Your options for participating will be via an online feedback form, feedback paper, attending AMHO information meetings either in your village or via Zoom, being part of a focus group, or even writing your own submission. We urge you all to play your part in this process, as there is power in numbers, and the more who engage with this process, the louder our voice will be. Once we get this right, we can all sit back and enjoy what life has to offer!

AMHO continues to work closely with Members of Parliament, to get the changes needed to protect our futures and give the Regulatory Services Unit the power to act on behalf of us all.

Supporting Home Owners with the Government

LAWS CAN CHANGE QUICKLY AFTER ALL!

We've all been told by Politicians that we must understand that changing the Legislation is a difficult, long arduous journey, especially when we have demanded urgently needed changes to the MHRP Act. One Member of Parliament has told us that *"patience was a virtue"* - as if that is a satisfactory response.

We now know that if there is a will, need or real desire to change legislation by Politicians, you can just tag it onto something else going through the Parliament, as was done recently with the Premiers Rental Legislation. Changes to the Legislation were slotted into an unrelated local government Bill, meaning it was not subject to the normal scrutiny of a parliamentary committee or community consultation!

According to the Courier Mail *"The laws passed parliament late Tuesday, with Mr Miles facing questions from the LNP and the Greens as he moved the amendments"* because that is what you can do when your Party holds the balance of power. Rumour has it that a rental freeze had been contemplated, but economists had said no as it would impact the state's economy.

All this gives us confidence with the Alliance's determination to pursue a cap on site fees rises of no more than 1%, along with removal of the Market Review, while the changes to the Legislation move slowly through the necessary processes of changing the Act, which could take 18 to 24 months. The economists cannot complain about this as we are only around 50,000 residents which would not affect the Queensland economy – in fact, it may be the opposite – homeowners with confidence in the affordability of their choice will spend out in the community. So, using this same process, we could achieve the urgent changes required will give us protection against the present high CPI% rent increases and market rent reviews.

ARE YOU BEING PAID THE CORRECT RENT ASSISTANCE?

We all assume that we are being paid the correct rent assistance, but unfortunately that is not always the case. Centrelink has insisted we all need to go online as their preferred option, selling it as *"convenience and giving you the opportunity to know, control and understand all your payments, without leaving home."* Yes, we can now see the exact amount of our pensions and how that payment is made up.

When our annual rent rises occur, we must contact Centrelink to give them a copy of the Rent Increase document to ensure we get the maximum amount of rent assistance we are entitled to. However, this is where problems arise, as the Centrelink uploading of financial documents system is not working as it should. Unfortunately, our Rent Increase notices are not a recognised document in Canberra, and whilst the system will issue you an acknowledgement receipt, your documents are not being acted upon, simply disappearing into the system, lost forever.

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If Centrelink wants to continue down the digital path, problems such as these will need to be acted upon now. However, until that happens the present Centrelink advice is to **always** take your Rent Increase documentation into your local Centrelink Office and physically hand them in. ***You must do this every time your rent is increased, if you have not been doing this you may not be getting the full rent assistance you are entitled to.***

**Thank you to our members at Living Gems Sapphire Gardens and Hometown Ironbark who discovered they were being underpaid on their Rent Assistance and advised AMHO of their experiences with the Centrelink process.*

INSURANCE FOR MANUFACTURED HOMES

In the past the Alliance has contacted insurance companies to find out who will insure a Manufactured Home. With so many changes in the marketplace due to disastrous storms and fires over the past months, we will not be able to provide this document in future as it is impossible to keep up to date. However, we regularly receive information from our members of the treatment received from various insurance companies and how they process claims. Our advice is that you **MUST** closely study the **Product Disclosure Notice** provided when getting a quote before you commit to any insurance company, to ensure that you will have the protection when needed.

THANK YOU DR AMY MacMAHON MP

Member for South Brisbane

Dr Amy MacMahon has always been a friend of AMHO, even though she has no manufactured parks in her electorate. Amy has always campaigned for the right to affordable housing and rents. On the 11th May 2023, she asked Minister Enoch the following question in parliament on our behalf:

***With reference to residential parks becoming increasingly unaffordable for residents—
Will the Minister advise when the C-RIS regarding residential (manufactured home) parks
will be made public?***

We await the Minister's response!

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.

Your Committee

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