

Creating an age- friendly Victoria



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ABOUT THE OLD COLONISTS' ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA (OCAV)

OCAV is a leading not-for-profit retirement village provider offering a continuum of care from independent living, assisted living and aged care in Victoria. Our four villages in Berwick, Euroa, North Fitzroy and St Helena are home to 500 older Victorians in need.

OCAV was established almost 150 years ago by a group of prominent Melburnians to ensure that older Victorians in need had somewhere secure and affordable to live, support when and if they needed it, and a community in which they felt engaged.

Our mission remains unchanged. The need is greater than ever with an increase in single homeless women, a lack of affordable rental housing, limited public housing.

As a leading retirement village and aged care provider in Victoria, we work to provide affordable and safe housing for elderly Victorians in need, whether they live independently, or in supported or aged care living. Many of our residents have lived within OCAV villages for ten years and longer, maintaining relationships with friends and families.

Our services – both safe, affordable housing and support for older Victorians – are in high demand. We currently have a waiting list of 1,000 across our four villages and we are seeking sites for additional villages to cater for this demand.

Our funding model: we support capital investment in affordable housing through contributions from those with financial resources and at the same time provide safe and dignified housing for those with very limited or no financial means.

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

For every \$1 invested in OCAV, \$7.41 of value is created.

Our provision of housing to people who would otherwise live in public housing provides the Victorian Government with a value of \$1.6 million a year.

Additional value to the Australian Government of \$9 million each year occurs due to reduced health care expenditure.

WHO OUR RESIDENTS ARE

53% of OCAV residents were either homeless or vulnerably housed before they moved into an OCAV village.

45% of our residents were in private rentals before moving to an OCAV village

81% of our residents are single, older women.

90 out of our 185 volunteers are OCAV residents

All our residents have a need of some description be it financial, social or medical.

OUR STATE GOVERNMENT ELECTION PLATFORM

We know from our 450-strong residents that they want to live in and be supported by an age-friendly society.

They want to access transport, services and information that does not require them to be digital adroit, and they want to be able to volunteer, work and take part in social and cultural activities.

We know from our waitlist of 1,100 older Victorians that lack of accessible, safe housing, financial difficulties, poor health, and limited working options are challenging.

They want to be supported by policies which enable them to remain healthy, connected and independent for as long as possible. This includes changing attitudes to ageing and proper planning for an ageing population.

Our election platform has drawn on the views of our residents, our Conversations for Change series, and our volunteers and staff who daily witness the impact the lack of effective policies at local, state and federal governments on our residents.

Our priorities are:

1. Develop, implement and fund a Victorian older person's strategy
2. Addressing the acute shortage of affordable housing for older people in Victoria
3. Addressing transport issues as they affect older people
4. Addressing the digital divide
5. Address NDIS and other health funding

OCAV calls on all parties to put in place strategies, supports and services that allow Victorians to continue to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

OCAV calls on all parties to acknowledge that older Victorians are active participants in their families, communities and economy, whether they are working, volunteering, or being unpaid carers for their partners, children and grandchildren.

DEVELOP AN OLDER VICTORIANS STRATEGY

There is no older Victorian strategy in place for immediate needs let alone to meet the changing demands of an ageing population.

This is a glaring gap given that in Victoria now there are 1.25 million people aged over 60 years accounting for more than 20 per cent of the population. The percentage of older Victorians is set to increase to 22.2% in Greater Melbourne and 30.5% in regional and rural Victoria by 2031.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to develop, fund and implement a strategy for older Victorians across all government portfolios.

The strategy should determine current gaps and priorities for future funding for employment, healthy ageing, supporting diversity, addressing prevention and response to elder abuse, carer recognition and support, access to services and affordable, safe and fair housing.

OCAV calls on all parties to extend the part-time Commissioner for Senior Victorians into a full-time Commissioner for Ageing that reports to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

DEVELOP A RURAL AGEING STRATEGY

OCAV works hard to ensure its residents living in its regional village in Euroa have services in place which prevents social isolation. Recently we have partnered with La Trobe University in an NHMRC program to run a digital program, Winternet, which helps senior Victorians understand how to use the internet better, whether it is communicating with family, playing games, or accessing information.

OCAV calls on all parties to develop and implement state-wide and regionally specific strategies to allow for the ageing of the rural and regional areas.

PARTNER WITH AND INVEST IN OCAV TO CREATE NEW SAFE, AFFORDABLE AGE AND DEMENTIA FRIENDLY VILLAGES FOR OLDER VICTORIANS

OCAV for almost 150 years been focused on providing safe, affordable and permanent housing for senior Victorians in need. We have a solid track record of delivering housing and care

Since its first village was established in 1869 in Fitzroy North, OCAV has housed and supported thousands of senior Victorians.

Our first village in North Fitzroy was established with a gift of land from the Victorian Government.

Philanthropists including George Selth Coppin, Alfred Felton, JB Were, Henry Henty and Henry Creswick donated money and building materials to construct cottages, still in use today.

Over the years, OCAV has expanded through donations and funding from philanthropy, Commonwealth Government and the community.

Today OCAV has four villages in Berwick, Euroa, St Helena and Fitzroy North.

Our operating model, put in place at inception, is tried and tested, competitive and unique, allows over half our residents who would otherwise be at risk of or homeless to be in safe housing, and is financially self-sufficient and self-sustaining.

We have a wait list of over 1,100 people - and it continues to increase.

We seek land - either gifted or peppercorn lease and \$30 million to develop a new age and dementia-friendly village.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to partnering and investing in OCAV to create age and dementia friendly villages for at-risk older Victorians that include housing for couples and single people, enable older Victorians to age in place and, if needed, with aged care support.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to either gifting land or enabling a peppercorn lease on land to develop a village in a region which has an ageing demographic with consideration given to the western, northern and south-eastern growth corridors.

INCREASING HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

At an OCAV Conversations for Change forum, Dr Owen Donald, Chief Commissioner, Victorian Building Authority argued that housing should be viewed as infrastructure, rather than a social need. He also called for older people to be included at every stage of later life in strategic and precinct level land-use planning; an allocation of land and housing developments dedicated to suitable affordable housing for older people; and greater public financial support (recurrent and/ or capital funding) for suitable affordable housing for older people of limited means.

We continue to note that older people are omitted from many of the terms of references and consultation papers on housing, for example the Public Housing Renewal Program.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to allocating dedicated suitable affordable housing for older people on all land and housing developments in Victoria.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to greater public financial support (recurrent and/ or capital funding) for suitable affordable housing for older people of limited means.

OCAV calls on all parties to invest in a range of longer term affordable and public housing options for older people who are victims of elder abuse or homelessness.

AGEING IN PLACE

Further funding is required to put supports in place that allow elderly Victorians to 'age in place' independently. This is a priority as many elderly Victorians either do not own or cannot afford a home in which to age, or are living in unsafe public housing.

People with disability and older people have different accessibility needs, which are often not provided for in standard housing design, and this can exclude them from mainstream housing.

The Victorian government undertook a regulatory impact statement in 2010 on mandating building code accessibility standards. The recommended changes have not yet been introduced. The proposed better apartment standards include some accessibility requirements, but these do not extend to detached housing.

OCAV calls on all parties to put in place funding so that universal design principles are adopted to increase housing that meets accessibility standards.

OCAV calls on all parties to introduce recommendations made on building code accessibility standards in 2010.

MAKE NEW HOMES AGE AND DISABILITY-FRIENDLY

Over the past two years OCAV has through philanthropic funding and its own resources invested in making its older-style units and cottages disability and dementia friendly. These included creating clear access paths to front doors, step-less bathrooms and front and back doors and making sure doors are wide enough for disability access.

According to the Australian Network for Universal Housing Design current housing designs do not work for many people including older people with or without mobility issues.

All Australian housing industry leaders agreed to incorporate: doors, corridors and living spaces that allow ease of access for most people on the entry level; accessible paths of travel from the street or parking area to and within the entry level of a dwelling; and bathroom, shower and toilet that can be used by most people, with reinforced wall areas for grab-rails later in all new housing by 2020. Few have taken up the agreement. This is critical to the success of the National Disability Insurance Schemes and aged care reforms.

OCAV calls on all parties to support the National Construction Code and to implement universal design features.

OCAV calls on all parties to support reforms to Victoria's building regulations to ensure all new buildings are age-friendly.

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS AMONG OLDER WOMEN

At OCAV 79% of our residents are women. Over 80 % of these women were single when they moved in and just under half were in private rental accommodation which can be precarious and subject to rent hikes. Almost all the single, older women residents at OCAV experience financial stress due to multiple life event impacts - divorce, parenting, lack of superannuation and savings. They know what it is like to live from day to day, and often battling the various siloed services of housing, health, aged care and disability.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to invest and partner with us to develop more accommodation and support for the growing cohort of older women who do not go to shelters or homeless services.

OCAV calls on all parties to invest in services and housing for older women who are escaping family violence or elder abuse: a special focus should on investing in accommodation in regional and rural Victoria.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OLDER VICTORIANS

OCAV has committed to becoming a dementia-friendly community by 2020. This includes ensuring its current new builds, maintenance program and gardening program are adapted to cater for older people in all stages of dementia.

Each village has its own activities' committee which regularly puts on age-friendly exercise programs (for example Tai Chi, weights, walking programs.) They are aimed at enabling all residents to maintain mobility, assist with social inclusion and to reduce reliance on the health care system.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to ongoing and increased funding for the *Living Longer Living Stronger* program.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to funding dementia friendly villages in addition to dementia specific communities.

MENTAL HEALTH

OCAV, its male residents and volunteers have recently restored the Men's Shed at Leith Park. The Men's Group at Rushall Park has been revitalised as part of the male residents' wish to provide support and care for other men in the OCAV community, and especially those with mental health issues or who are experiencing loss and grief after the death of their spouse.

Mental health features highly in the many conversations that men have had with OCAV staff. Among their concerns are the exclusion of older people from community mental health services and some clinical services. The growing incidence of male suicide is also of concern to them: Australian men aged over 85 have the highest suicide rate in Australia.

OCAV calls on all parties to explore and act upon the barriers that older people are facing in accessing appropriate mental health services in the community, aged care and clinical services.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to funding services and community grants aimed at improving mental health among older people.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

As stipulated in the Disability Services Act 2006, the Victorian government must ensure goods and services are available to meet the needs of all Victorians with disability, including those who are over 65 years of age.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme does not provide equitable access for older people with disability who do not meet the age eligibility requirements for the scheme. From 1 July 2019 all older Victorians who do not meet the age eligibility requirements for the NDIS and have not previously received state-funded services will be forced to access services from the aged care system, which may not fully support their disability-related needs.

OCAV calls on all parties to confirm NDIS funding arrangements after 1 July 2019 and provide clear information about where older Victorians with disability can access assistive technology services.

OCAV calls on all parties to fund community services to provide support for people over 65 with a disability living in the community who are not eligible for NDIS.

PALLIATIVE AND END OF LIFE CARE

OCAV has a strong record for palliating its residents at Liscombe House, its nursing home. Over the past year 19 residents chose end of life care at Liscombe House rather than die in hospital. Its nursing staff have received specialised training, and its wellbeing staff work with all residents coming into the nursing home to ensure their life stories are known and written down for use by nursing staff. This work has been done at OCAV's own cost.

OCAV is concerned that there is no clear action plan and deadlines regarding Victoria's End of Life and Palliative Care Framework.

It has similar concerns that real increases in palliative care funding have not kept pace with the Victorian Government's conservative estimates of increasing need (4%).

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to matching the Commonwealth Government's \$32.8 million national funding for pilot projects to improve access to palliative care for residents in aged care.

STREAMLINE POST DEATH RED TAPE

Post-death procedures added greatly to the distress of our residents. Our resident coordinators do what they can to make it easier for them but are held back by bureaucracy.

OCAV calls on all parties to consider funding an advocacy service to assist bereaved people.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to funding community education initiatives on plain English information, rights and responsibilities in how to manage or close or access a deceased's digital legacy.

ELDER ABUSE IN VICTORIA

A recent Protecting Your Rights seminar at OCAV delivered by the Commissioner for Seniors Victoria and Seniors Right Victoria highlighted the importance of reviewing wills and POAs, as well as having an advanced care plan. Our residents were impressed with SRV and emphasised the need for the service to have increased funding for its help line.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to recurrent funding for SRV to employ a full-time lawyer and advocate to support and inform older people experiencing elder abuse.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to funding to enable the helpline service to be operated around the clock.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

OCAV's residents are concerned about public transport in different ways. Our Rushall Park community worked hard to finally have the local tram stop altered to become mobility friendly. This was after several falls by residents getting on and off trams.

Our Leith Park community constantly calls for increased buses. Their reliance on their own cars is problematic for two reasons; firstly, many do not wish to drive but are forced to because of a lack of public transport, and secondly, the cost of maintaining a car is out of many of our residents' reach. Our Braeside and Currie Park residents are also concerned about irregular trains and buses, again forcing them to either have their own car or take expensive taxis.

We note several issues relating to Victoria's public transport system: it is not geared to an increasing number of older people (as evidenced by our residents' experience); universal design is not applied to public transport; more investment is needed in community transport which can be more cost-effective than taxis, ride-sourcing or local bus travel, particularly in rural and regional Victoria.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to more investment in public transport as current congestion compromises older people's ability to use it.

OCAV also calls on the Victorian Government to invest in community transport especially in rural and regional Victoria.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to expanding the transport subsidy program and especially the mobility program which currently is restricted to taxis, and can't be used for cheaper options like Uber or community transport.

ENERGY

Our residents are concerned about mounting costs of utility bills. As the operator of four retirement villages and a nursing home, OCAV is also concerned with the cost of energy as it is vital that we provide appropriate heating, cooling and lighting for older people. All our new builds and maintenance programs now include energy efficient lighting and heating – to six-star standard; where we can we use solar energy.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to ensuring consumers access fairly priced and easily understood tariffs for their electricity.

OCAV calls for the introduction of a basic service offer, as recommended in the independent review of the Electricity and Gas retail markets

OCAV calls for continued energy brokerage funding to not for profits to allow low income consumers and those not connected digitally to access affordable energy deals.

GOING DIGITAL

The digital world is not for everyone. Many of our older residents find it hard to access bank accounts, Centrelink, and My Aged Care because they are increasingly digitalised. Further, lack of access to free internet is problematic for those living regionally, and then the access is slow and impacts communication costs.

OCAV is increasingly concerned about poor and expensive access to internet, and has put in place computers with internet access in communal areas. At least four residents in Euroa have recently given up landlines because of the cost of rental, relying on mobile phones despite poor reception and cost. Being in a digital world is not just a matter of cost. It also contributes to an increasing sense of social isolation.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to a digital transition strategy from 2019 to 2030.

OCAV calls on all parties to commit to broadening the utility relief grant scheme offering financial relief towards broadband services.

OCAV calls on all parties to require essential services to provide paper bills at no charge.

OCAV calls on all parties to ensure that all government services provide information in written form and in community languages for those who do not or do not want to use the internet.



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