

Before the Independent Hearings Panel
Waikato District Council

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: Submissions and further submissions in relation to
Variation 3 to the Proposed Waikato District Plan

and: **Retirement Villages Association of New Zealand
Incorporated**

(Submitter 107)

and: **Ryman Healthcare Limited**

(Submitter 108)

Summary statement of **Ngairu Kerse** on behalf of the Retirement
Villages Association of New Zealand Incorporated and Ryman
Healthcare Limited

Dated: 31 July 2023

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**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF NGAIRE KERSE ON BEHALF OF THE
RETIREMENT VILLAGES ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND
INCORPORATED AND RYMAN HEALTHCARE LIMITED**

- 1 My full name is Professor Ngaire Margaret Kerse (MNZM). As you will recall, I am a medical doctor (Otago 1984), gerontology expert, and Joyce Cook Chair in Ageing Well at the University of Auckland.
- 2 As addressed in my statement of evidence, demographic ageing is creating crises in housing and health for older people, and requires urgent response from all sectors. Local government is a critical part of that response involving facilitation of appropriate age-friendly housing development, of which retirement village living is an important part.
- 3 The Waikato population is rapidly ageing. A person is increasingly at risk of common health issues such as mobility problems, cognitive impairment, and social isolation as they age. Retirement villages provide for preventative processes such as physical activity, access to green spaces, vibrant social activities and opportunities to stay active and connected.
- 4 My evidence outlines the common health and social issues people accumulate with ageing. Appropriate housing can moderate the negative impact of those conditions on wellbeing and facilitate independence. Social cohesion and connection and thus wellbeing will be facilitated by proximity to known environments, such as local residential neighbourhoods and commercial zones. In my opinion, retirement villages are best placed in those types of neighbourhoods.
- 5 For those with substantive disability, aged residential care is required, and the number of available beds is already limited. The projected growth in numbers of beds needed to serve the future older population is alarming. As it stands, Waikato will be unable to meet that anticipated need. Aged care beds are essential for efficient health system functioning. They assist in maintaining quality of life for those with disability in older age, as well as providing invaluable support for their wider families and networks.
- 6 In my view, it is imperative that national and local agencies promote, support, and facilitate healthy ageing policies to enable these needs to be met. Retirement villages provide a feasible and ongoing solution, and need to be located in an accessible location for communities. The care homes they contain are essential to maintaining an efficient health system. I encourage easing barriers to the expansion of retirement villages and allowing flexibility in where they are placed and the opportunities they offer.

**Ngaire Kerse
31 July 2023**