



House of Assembly

Extract from Hansard
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RETIREMENT VILLAGES BILL *Second Reading*

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light)
(12:54): I will speak briefly on this matter, but I think there are a couple of things to be said. First of all, I would like to commend the minister and her staff, and also the staff of the department, for bringing this bill to the chamber. I am aware of the amount of work that has gone into it. I am also very mindful of the competing interests in this sector and how the minister has had to find a balance between the interests of those people who own the facilities and those who live in those facilities.

It is not an easy task because often they are competing interests and to find some common ground can be at times very difficult, but I believe the minister has found the right balance. Issues have been raised by people who live in retirement villages in my

electorate. Having said that, I would like to thank those officers from the department who came out to speak to people at the retirement villages, and we had hundreds of people come along to discuss this.

The key issues for them are very simple; one is that they want quite clear terms. They need to know what they are buying, the product they are buying. What is the licence, etc.? Hopefully this bill will lead to greater clarification, and also simplification, about what they are buying. You can have this huge disclosure document, which hides everything and has the reverse, and that is what was happening in the franchise sector some years ago. So, this bill helps that.

They wanted to know clearly what their ongoing commitments were in terms of fees and charges; that is a main issue for them as well. This bill, again, helps to make sure that happens. The third element was that they wanted to know, when their licence is terminated, what are the benefits to them, what are the costs to them, etc. So those are the issues which were raised. I believe the bill addresses those issues.

Another thing this bill does, in an ongoing sense, is allow an advocate on their side. There is an advocate in place and that person makes sure that they have somebody to support them through the scheme should they have a grievance of some

type. I will not go through this bill line by line because it has been debated already at length, but I can say that this bill also is mindful of the fact that in the marketplace we have quite small operators and quite large operators, and they can be quite different in terms of needs. With those comments, I would like to say that this bill reaches a good balance in protecting the rights of residents but also makes sure that we have enough people who wish to invest in the facilities.