



MEDIA RELEASE

27th of February 2018

CALL FOR PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE

Bob Ainsworth president of the South Australian Retirement Villages Residents Association (SARVRA) today called on major party leaders Jay Weatherill and Steven Marshall to give a commitment to unravel a bungled policy that will increase water supply and sewer charges to over 8,000 retirement village residents.

Three years ago, in a discriminatory move, the State Valuation Office began issuing separate assessments to all retirement dwellings to replace single assessments which by the way, continue to be issued to other multiple occupancy complexes such as shopping centres, office developments and blocks of flats.

The State Government bungle was revealed when the first annual water bill at one village, the Lutheran Village at Para Vista came under the new assessment policy, which resulted in the water supply charge increasing from \$566 to \$7,353 and when all 26 units were separately subjected to the capped sewer charge the bill went from \$1,577 to \$9,163.

Overnight residents were confronted with a total bill that moved from \$2,123 to \$16,516 – an annual increase of 680 p.c.! And that's before they were billed for the cost of water.

“To fix this ill-considered policy an “agreement” was reached within the Government for the Department of Community and Social Inclusion (DCSI) to pay SA Water an amount being the difference between the SA Water fees calculated under the separate assessment and the single village assessment methods,” Bob Ainsworth said.

This agreement administered by DCSI will end on June 30, 2025 and is nothing but a quick fix which the Government hopes will go away, he said. “The truth of the matter is that the current Government is deferring resolution of this botched policy for a future administration to mend, as village residents will be subjected to overnight SA Water fee increases of up to 700 p.c.”

This was on top of 8,500 separate assessments already issued to retirement village dwellings built since the early 2000s which has provided windfall revenue gains to SA Water through the introduction of individual water meter supply and sewer charges.

Mr Ainsworth said retirement village residents were not a “soft touch” and despite numerous deputations by SARVRA, both Mr Weatherill or Mr Marshall have been unwilling to tackle this issue head on.

To settle this matter once and for all, Mr Ainsworth called on both leaders to announce their intentions.

“Whichever party leads the next Government should affirm that it will appoint a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate discriminatory practices used against retirement villages by both the State Valuation Office and SA Water.” It's the only decent thing to do,” said Mr Ainsworth.

He said retirement village residents were not after favourable treatment – they just wanted to be assessed in the same way as other multiple occupancy complexes, where occupiers do not own the property but have security of tenure with a licence to occupy or lease.

Prior to casting their votes on Saturday March 17, 26,000 retirement village residents have a right to know that both leaders will provide a commitment to genuinely investigate this matter which is seen as a major problem in many metro-marginal electorates where the majority of villages are located, Mr Ainsworth said.

Bob Ainsworth is available for further comment on 8361 3439 or 0423 057 290