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## ***HOUSING, BIG BUILD AND MANUFACTURING SUBCOMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mr CG Whiting MP—Chair  
Mr JJ McDonald MP  
Mr DJ Brown MP  
Mr MJ Hart MP

**Staff present:**

Ms S Galbraith—Committee Secretary  
Dr V Lowik—Assistant Committee Secretary

### **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE MANUFACTURED HOMES (RESIDENTIAL PARKS) AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

#### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Tuesday, 23 April 2024**

**Bribie Island**

## TUESDAY, 23 APRIL 2024

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### **The subcommittee met at 4.02 pm.**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Amendment Bill 2024. My name is Chris Whiting. I am the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. With me here today are Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Don Brown, member for Capalaba; and Michael Hart, member for Burleigh. Ms Ali King joins us as an observer.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Today is an opportunity for individuals wishing to have their say to come forward and speak with the committee. Could those wishing to speak please provide their names to the secretariat.

Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. These proceedings are being recorded and a transcript will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings, and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone to turn any devices and mobile phones off or to silent mode. I now welcome our first group.

**DOUGLAS, Mr Alex, Private capacity**

**GRATTON, Ms Jane, Private capacity**

**GRATTON, Mr Ray, Private capacity**

**WILSON, Ms Lynn, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** I invite you to make an opening statement.

**Mr Gratton:** My name is Ray Gratton and my wife is Jane. We live in Solana Lifestyle Resort, Bongaree. We moved to Australia two years ago to this day and moved to Solana on 17 June. In June, the fees were \$182 per week. In July it went up by 3½ per cent. In July 2023, it went up 11.48 per cent after the market rent review. We are now paying \$210.

We are pleased that the amendment bill proposal plans to scrap the market rent review. To us, and many, it was to the park owners' and shareholders' advantage, therefore, it should be reduced. The reason is that at that time there were still ongoing issues regarding our park. They tried once to get work with our electricity and the lamp outside—and do not ask me how; they did not achieve that—and the electric power to our home was cut off. For health and safety reasons, we were informed to carry a torch and the light is still not working to this day. Both swimming pool shade sails are broken, one since 6 December 2022—yes, 6 December 2022. They have not been repaired or replaced to this day. For health reasons, this limits the time when people can use the pool, that is, sun. There are many other ongoing issues. I could mention quite a few, but I do not think I should at this time. I will pass over to my wife.

**Ms Gratton:** We are pleased, anyway, that you plan to abolish that. The park owners should have to justify why they need to increase the service charge; not that they can increase it by the cap system every year. Home owners should have details of the park maintenance costed and future plan expenditure or alterations they plan to do. In our opinion, there is a strong possibility that increases in the cost of operating this park will be well below the increases in CPI, especially when inflation and CPI are as high as they have been in the past two years. This means that park owners will be increasing their profits by imposing unwarranted increases in site rents on home owners. Though we do not get an Australian pension, the home owners in our village relying on their Australian age pension, who have to pay a site rent increase limited to 3.5 per cent when CPI is lower than 3.5, will

find that the increases in their rent are greater than the increase in their pension, and not all Australians get rent assistance. This means many elderly people are having to leave our village due to being concerned about future high rent increases.

As we do not get anything, we still expect to have a fair service charge or rent, as you call it. We know it is not your problem, but we will not have the advantage of being a permanent resident until Ray is 112 years old, so we definitely want this cap system abolished.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Jane. Lynn, do you want to go next?

**Ms Wilson:** Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Wilson and I am also from Solana. I have the same issues as Ray and Jane have said, however, I will go through my three issues. One is the site fees and how they are calculated, transparency and maintenance within the parks. It was gratifying to see that there was the proposal to remove the market rent review from the act, but it would be more fair and more beneficial to residents of parks if we had our current site rent, plus the CPI component, or the current rent plus 3.5 per cent, whichever is the lesser, taking into account the fact that CPI will now be based on all of the nation's eight capitals, rather than just on Brisbane alone. There is a strong possibility that the increase in costs of operating a park will be well below the increase in the CPI, especially when inflation and CPI are as high as they have been over the last two years. This means that the park owners will be increasing profits by imposing unwarranted increases in site rents. If the site rents keep increasing at the present rate, the resale of our homes will be nigh impossible because nobody will want to come into the parks to pay the exorbitant rents that are expected.

In regards to transparency, how many of you know exactly how your rent is being distributed? We pay our site fee, however, nobody except the park owners know how this is distributed. We need to know where our money is being spent. How many of us know about the park budget for the year? Unlike retirement villages, the park owners are not at liberty to tell us of the budget. I should think this should be addressed by the committee and should be amended in the bill.

It is also grossly unfair that sole occupants are paying exactly the same amount of money for the amenity proportion as those in a dual occupancy. I think this also should be addressed. There are a lot of single residents, not just in our park but in all parks. If you use the amenities, why are you paying double, the same amount a couple pays?

With respect to maintenance of the parks, there needs to be clarification on the time frames that the park owners have to rectify faults. Some issues like lighting, which are a safety and security issue, are not being addressed in a timely manner. I understand that on occasions some parts are not readily available, but we should be advised of this and not left wondering why nothing is happening.

On entering the park, you are advised that the site frontage is owned by the park owner and is maintained by the park gardener. We pay for maintenance in our site rent. My interpretation of garden maintenance is watering, removal of weeds, mulching, fertilising, hedging, mowing et cetera. When only mowing and hedging is done by the gardener, we, the residents, are left to do the rest. There are some people in these parks who come here because they are not capable of looking after their gardens. They also are paying for maintenance which is not being done. I believe that the Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee should look into the park owners complying with the terms of their conditions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Lynn. Over to you, Alex.

**Mr Douglas:** I also thank the committee for the opportunity to present to you today. My name is Alex Douglas. My wife, Gail, and I live at Stockland Halcyon Landing in Bli Bli on the Sunshine Coast. We moved into a manufactured home park five years ago because we can lock and leave to travel and leave our home in some safety. My submission to the committee dated 10 April 2024 is quite extensive. I wonder how many have read the whole report.

**CHAIR:** All committee members have.

**Mr Douglas:** Thank you. My submission identifies newly introduced problems with the amendment bill which do very little to assist housing affordability and even less to correct the imbalance of power between the park owner and vulnerable home owners. I believe the CRIS, the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement, does not properly identify the many problems which home owners face in park life. This includes that CRIS fails to identify the true state of housing affordability stress. The CRIS uses the wrong calculation basis which masks the true state of affordability or unaffordability in housing costs; it is not just rental costs. Otherwise, the CRIS does identify some critical issues facing home owners. These critical issues have become high-level policy objectives in the CRIS, but unfortunately none of these appear in the amendment bill.

The proposed buyback scheme is a scheme you have when you do not have a proposed buyback. When home owners need to move out, they generally do so because of ill health or financial reasons. These home owners cannot wait 18 months for a buyback. Some may never see the 18 months out. On a resale, the amendment bill gives the park owner the ability to reset the site rent on the resale of a home. This gives the park owner complete control of your future when you must sell your home, for instance, if you move into care or you cannot afford the site rent. The park owner can reset the rent to such a level that your home is not sellable. This provision must—absolutely must—be removed from any proposed changes. This gives the park owner the ultimate power over the home owner in a very critical phase of their lives.

In regards to Commonwealth rent assistance, which I have called the elephant in the home, this is an allowance paid to many eligible home owners in manufactured homes. I have been hesitant to raise this matter because of the sensitivity. However, the CRIS recommended a change to the definition of 'manufactured home' which would have included the more contemporary homes, that is, those on a concrete slab, steel frame, masonry walls, which cannot be relocated. The recommendation to amend the definition was abandoned because the CRA—the Commonwealth Rent Assistance—is only available to home owners who live in relocatable homes. That is the eligibility status from the Commonwealth. This is an enormous issue for government and park owners, and the park owners have denied this ineligibility for years that homes are not removable. The traditional timber-framed manufactured homes of 15 to 20 years ago are removable fairly economically. The problem has been created by park owners and developers and needs to be resolved before the Commonwealth government decline the CRA to those who live in homes which are not relocatable; even worse, if the government demands the repayment of the assistance—and the Commonwealth government has a record in that department.

Perhaps it is time to redraft the act, and maybe enter two acts, concerning relocatable homes and another act, or another part of the act, which deals with the more contemporary homes which cannot be relocated. It might be also the time to look at the longer term of these home parks so that the economic life of homes might be considered. They will not last forever, but you will be paying rent forever. Perhaps it is time to introduce another model of home ownership where the home owner has financial interest in the land, perhaps similar to the body corporate and community management schemes.

The ultimate outcome might be the current manufactured home parks are transitioned into parks which are owned and controlled by home owners. If parks do not think they are making enough money, we will certainly take them on. This will be strenuously opposed by the current park owners who will be protective of their embarrassingly high operating profits, while home owners continue to suffer housing affordability stress.

Finally, this amendment bill is a very conscientious piece of legislation. This is probably not the time for amendments to be made to the act. I believe all proposed amendments should be put on hold until after the state election.

If I can have a little bit more time, I would like to repeat what the Property Council have said in their submission. It says—

In light of these concerns, we stand ready to work with the state government to implement the following proposals to ensure the Queensland manufactured homes sector continues to thrive:

1. Immediately pause the proposed amendments and commit to not progressing them until the regulations have been completed ...

We may be wasting our time here without knowing what the regulations say and what impact they have in the act. The second point is—

2. Further commit to not adopting the proposed amendments until after October's election; removing the risk of the amendments being politicised

I agree with those two comments and hope you will take them into consideration.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Alex. Lynn, I want to address you first, and certainly Ray and Jane might want to talk to this because you are in the same village. You talked about transparency and what goes into it. As part of the bill, which will become the act, the villages have to put up a disclosure statement or a comparison document to those people coming into the village. Just as important is the requirement to put up your maintenance and capital replacement plans on a website so people can access that transparency. We heard suggestions at our hearing in Hervey Bay that, as part of that maintenance and capital preparation or the disclosure documents, council rates, sewerage and water as components of the rent be in there as well. Would that aid transparency in your village, if you were able to discover how much that is as part of the rental fees?

**Ms Wilson:** When you are talking about the sewerage and the water, we are individually given an account for our water and sewerage and that is on top of our site fees. However, we do not know in those site fees how much the rates are or how much it costs to maintain the village and the amenities block. That is the issue. We are paying \$210 a week, but what are we paying \$210 for when we have to pay our sewerage and water separately?

**Mr HART:** Who does your water bill come from, Lynn?

**Ms Wilson:** From Solana. It is an invoice that we get. They read our meters every three months. It is calculated out. The sewerage is—

**Mr HART:** Embedded network, yes.

**Ms Wilson:** Embedded, exactly, yes.

**CHAIR:** In addition to that—and this is something we have been asking other people at our hearings—how is your home owners' committee involved or included in the management of the day-to-day decisions, or having their opinions counted? How does it work?

**Ms Wilson:** I cannot answer that as to them, but I know they have issues as well.

**Mr Gratton:** They have serious issues. Nobody is going to object to the owners making a profit, but when it is absurd profit and you do not know where the money is going, it causes problems. It is definitely causing problems where we are living at the moment. It seems that near enough every day somebody is moving out. Admittedly, somebody is moving in as well. When you get a company like Stockwell bragging on a video that the government are giving people money to subsidise them to live in these places, personally—well, what do you think? Some people, even in Stockwell, got \$25,000 to buy the place; some got less. Some people now are on rent relief and some single women are not. It is a shambles.

**Ms Gratton:** We do need maintenance.

**Mr Gratton:** We do need to know what they are spending the money on.

**CHAIR:** Alex, how does the home owners' committee work with the owners of the park?

**Mr Douglas:** The home owners' committee has no authority and no power, and the park owner recognises that and treats them with disdain, which is not too strong a term. They offer suggestions, they report on maintenance requirements, but these often fall on deaf ears. A bit of power to the home owners' committee would be a very good thing.

**Mr McDONALD:** Thank you all very much for being here. We really appreciate your input and submissions. Alex, your experience as a project manager and your 30-page submission is one of the best that we received. I particularly appreciated the summary of the \$5,600 cost to the home owner for maintenance of the place, on top of the site fees. These are really important considerations because it should be a joint ownership of the land and the building. The department, in our public hearing a few weeks ago, told us that this was designed to give consumers protection. How do you feel, as consumers, that this bill will assist you in terms of that protection?

**Mr Douglas:** We have no protection where the park owner has every right to set rents, particularly on the resale of your home. You are at the end stages of your life. You are trying to enjoy your retirement. Times are tough for everybody. They are tougher for pensioners. You say to the park owner, 'We want to sell. What is our rent going to be?' 'Oh, you are paying \$250 a week now. Let's make it \$1,000 a week.' That is in the statement. Zero to \$1,000. So, your house is unsellable. They have you over a barrel. I am afraid we lack an enormous amount of power and this amendment bill does nothing to rebalance the equation.

**Ms Wilson:** That is a fair comment.

**Mr McDONALD:** At the moment the bill locks in 3.5 per cent or CPI, whichever one is higher. At a cycle of economic decline and recession, regularly we see CPI below 3.5 and this will actually still lock in at 3.5. What are your thoughts about that?

**Mr Douglas:** We have obviously had a look at that. In 2012 to about 2020, the average CPI increase was 1.9 per cent over those eight years. Obviously at times it has been almost zero or negative. In fact, I can remember one negative quarter. A second negative quarter means recession. So, 3.5 per cent is too much. It should be CPI—just CPI. Whether it is at zero or 7.4 per cent, as we just copped in the last increase, it should just be CPI. Park owners are making an incredible profit. That 3.5 per cent does not go on the cost, it goes on the profit, and the profit just grows exponentially with extra percentage.

**Mr BROWN:** Thank you for taking time out of your day to come along and give your submissions here today. I want to get a picture of the stress about market rent reviews and when they come on. Can anyone speak to that? What sort of stresses are caused when that process is initiated?

**Ms Wilson:** An 11 per cent increase, that was our rent review from last year—11 per cent.

**Mr BROWN:** How did they start the process? Do they notify—

**Ms Wilson:** They just had a private person come in and do a rent review, they told us that that was happening and then they just increased our rent by the 11 per cent.

**Mr BROWN:** You were notified by mail?

**Ms Wilson:** By email, yes.

**Mr BROWN:** How long did that review go for before you were notified? Did you have any opportunity to consult on that?

**Ms Wilson:** It was only about 30 days. I think it was in May when we got notification that our rents were going up as at 1 July.

**Mr BROWN:** In that 30 days, it is a very stressful situation?

**Ms Gratton:** We are disputing it still.

**Ms Wilson:** It is still on the table there, but you cannot argue with them. We do not have a leg to stand on, really. Our home owners' committee has tried and it just falls on deaf ears.

**Mr BROWN:** Did they try to reach out to the park owner to have a meeting to try to discuss this?

**Ms Wilson:** They have had it, but they have all come away—the home owners are in the background and they are always in the fore. You cannot argue with them.

**Mr BROWN:** Has your park previously gone to QCAT around market rent reviews or are you in the process?

**Ms Wilson:** That is one of the things that is being talked about at the moment—QCAT, yes.

**Mr HART:** Alex, you talked about the site allowance changing from \$100 a week to \$1,000. Have you actually seen that happen?

**Mr Douglas:** Not yet, but that is in the proposed amendments, that the park owner resets—and those are the words—the site rent for the incoming buyer. There are no controls mentioned in the explanatory notes, in the minister's speech or elsewhere that control what that site rent might be.

**Mr HART:** To fix that, the government is suggesting that a home buyback scheme be put in place. I understand that, if the place does not sell, then 18 months later the park owner would buy it. Do you think that solves the issue in some way?

**Mr Douglas:** Let's be critical here. If after 18 months you still need to sell, you are desperate for cash, you are in care, you are still paying rent and the park owner says, 'Yeah, we will sell it but we are going to put \$1,000 a week rent on it', the house price collapses. People are paying \$1 million to \$2.4 million for homes in Halcyon B. The park owner says, 'Well, your rent is \$1,000.' How many bids are you going to get to get your \$2.4 million back? None.

**Mr HART:** The reasoning behind this, or what the government is thinking, is that parks that still have properties available to sell themselves might prefer to do that or lean that way rather than sell the existing house for the owner and that may solve that problem. They tried that with the Retirement Villages Act and it did not really work. I think that is the point.

**CHAIR:** Yes, it did.

**Mr HART:** No, it didn't. It didn't work here because they have had to take out the Pebble Beach Retirement Village. I will move on from that. Alex, when you were talking about transitioning to the owners of the house owning the land, how would that work? What would that look like? Can you explain that?

**Mr Douglas:** I have a property investment background. When Halcyon announced that it was going to sell all of the parks and before it did a deal with Stockland, I had a chat with the managing director and said, 'If you're going to sell, why don't you sell it to us?' He said, 'Where's your money?' Well, Westpac have some money. I had a lovely conversation with a senior Westpac banker who said, 'This is all possible.' But they sold it to Stockland and nothing more was said. I did notice something in either the CRIS or one of the surveys that there has been some thought that another model might be more applicable than our paying rent forever.

**Mr HART:** For sure. I just wonder how to do it. That makes sense.

**Mr Douglas:** You pay almost a million dollars for your house in the average park and you cannot borrow money to pay that. If you can raise a million dollars to actually buy your house, you have a million dollars in capital that you can borrow against. That is where the system works.

**Mr HART:** How many houses are in your complex?

**Mr Douglas:** We have 171.

**Mr HART:** Do you have any idea what the land would be worth per block?

**Mr Douglas:** It is not just the land; there are improvements, there are swimming pools and recreation centres. That could be worth, including land, about \$30 million.

**Mr HART:** So \$300,000 a block roughly or around there somewhere?

**Mr Douglas:** It is not out of the ballpark that you would contemplate that as a business proposition. It is like buying into a body corporate scheme in a block of units.

**Mr McDONALD:** Where you have some say.

**CHAIR:** Thank you Alex, Ray, Jane and Lynn.

**BRITTENDEN, Mr Graeme, Private capacity**

**EDWARDS, Ms Jude, Private capacity**

**PARKER, Ms Cheryl, Private capacity**

**PEARSON, Ms Erie, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. Please talk about your experience and what you are going through as it relates to this bill. The idea is to have a say about your experiences. I welcome Cheryl to the table. Please introduce yourself.

**Ms Parker:** My name is Cheryl Parker and I live at GemLife, which is next door to Solana that has just been represented by the group here today. I have a few issues that I wanted to bring to your attention because they are issues that we have been unable to solve within our residential park. The first one that has been a bugbear for me personally for the last nearly two years is the water bills that we receive from the park owner. The park owner does not just bill us for the water that we use as our site agreement says will happen. We are billed for the water that we use at a rate that is higher than they claim they are going to bill us at—double actually—and it also includes all these excess water charges. On four different occasions I have asked the park owner or the park owner's representatives to explain and they will not explain them. Water bills have varied from our first one that was \$85 to some people who left about eight months ago because their bill was \$700 for a quarter, for three months' worth of living there.

Like I say, despite my repeated requests for that information as to what all these excess charges are—because that makes up basically 90 per cent of the bill that we receive—it appears to me that being a property owner you do not pass on your infrastructure costs to your tenants because you are not allowed to as they do not own the property. As a landowner, you are responsible for those. For GemLife, the park owner is pushing those costs on to home owners. That equates to 98 per cent of that costs pushed onto us and he picks up two per cent of that cost, which I think is grossly unfair.

As a result of all of my research, I lodged a comprehensive complaint with regulatory services on 3 October 2023. They told me after Christmas that they would hopefully have a response for me by 9 April which has, of course, passed and I still have not heard anything. We still are waiting to see whether or not we are legally bound to pay all these water bills or whether we should just be paying for the water that we use, which is what our site agreement says. But that is not the only problem.

**CHAIR:** No worries. I invite you to briefly explore some of those other issues.

**Ms Parker:** Twelve months ago the park owner told us that he was going to install what they call a virtual power plant. It was going to collect all this solar power from the roofs of our homes, which he absorbed back from us for free by virtue of telling us that we needed to sign a document. We did not find out about that until months after we purchased our villa. This virtual power plant has been installed and, even though we were told that it is not running yet, it makes a hell of a noise. I have complained about it sounding the other week similar to standing beside a jet aircraft. It has been installed right in the middle of the residential park. The act says that we have a right to quiet enjoyment of our complex.

This leads me to the next problem: regulatory services says they cannot do anything about that because the section of the act that it refers to does not have a penalty associated with it and, therefore, there is nothing they can do. What is the point in having data in the manufactured homes act if they cannot do anything about it? What is the point? They may as well just get out the Wite-Out and delete it. What is the point?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Cheryl. We have heard some commentary about the regulatory services unit. Thank you for that.

**Ms Parker:** From my perspective, the act starts off by saying that the objective is the viability of the Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act. It talks about ensuring the viability of the concept of residential parks. If there are all these problems and nobody is going to do anything about them to sort them out, how is the viability ensured?

**CHAIR:** I just note that there are two new aims being inserted into the act as part of this. Erie, would you like to introduce yourself and tell us where you come from?



**Ms Pearson:** Certainly. My name is Erie. I am the chairperson of the home owners' committee association at Orianna at Sandstone Point. I have lived at Sandstone Point for almost two years. It will be two years in September. Last year I was the vice-chair and this year I am the chairperson so I have had a lot of interaction with management as far as issues that we have had at Orianna and continue to have. Hometown is a multinational, multiglobal business that does not have any transparency in any way, shape or form. It has no consistency from one park to another. Things are run extremely differently at Hometowns on the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane compared to where we live.

When I moved in, we were told we were to pay water usage. Then we receive a bill that has the bulk state water charge, which is fine—I get that. I understand that you have to pay for the water to come through the pipe to your house. What I do not understand is that Hometown, in its last invoice for utilities, ditched the explanations and gave us a one-line bill that said 'water usage' and created a figure that cannot be calculated by anybody. I have sat for several hours trying to work the calculation. I have been to Unitywater, our water supplier, and got the usage fees and the kilolitre fees, but nothing adds up. Hometown will not come to a meeting. I have tried. Again, today, I had a meeting with our community manager, looking to have a meeting with senior management as to why all of a sudden they can change the explanation in their utility accounts. People in our community pay for sewerage and for water. We have people who just pay for water. There are no consistencies. We have people on fixed rent site agreements. There are people on market review and CPI site agreements. The consistency and the transparency are just completely lacking.

We were told when we moved into our house that we had solar—and we do. We have five solar panels on our roof. They are not connected to the grid. We are still fighting to get that connection through. There are 113 houses that have solar panels. Some of them are working, but the majority do not.

Where is the culpability for these companies? There is no culpability. I understand: I worked in business all my life. I have run big businesses. I know what they do. I know how they do it. That is the problem: they think I have grey hair and I am stupid. Well, I am not.

I am sorry but I do not believe that CPI or 3.5 per cent is the way to do it. I have worked in leasing. I understand how that works—and I do understand it. You have one or you have the other. If you are going to have 3.5, CPI or the greater then it is always going to be the greater. It is always going to be the higher amount that you pay. If CPI is one per cent, pensions are going to go up one per cent. If you are stuck at CPI or 3.5, whichever is greater, you are going to pay 3.5 per cent, which is higher than what your pension is going to go up by. I do not see the fairness in that for the home owner. That is just lining the pockets of this multinational companies.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Cheryl. Jude, over to you.

**Ms Edwards:** I am from Solana and I am the president of the home owners committee. The three people who were here before were great representatives for us saying what they felt. You asked about the market review and how it worked and what we have done. The treasurer and the president at the time went around with the market reviewer and looked at it, and they had a look at the comparisons he was making to the different resorts. The treasurer wrote a big precis of everything that was wrong with the comparison—like having a bowling alley, having all the different preferences that we do not have. The comparison was put against those. That report went to Stockwell and they wrote their reasoning against it to the valuer. The valuer then sent his report back to Stockwell and said, 'The range is from \$200 to \$215 a week. I recommend \$210,' so Stockwell took it.

We have got a form 11 in for the rent review. We have got a form 11 in for water and sewerage because everything is just so wrong. With the rent review, we have been right up to mediation. The next step is QCAT, but we do have to get full approval from the village. We have got 200 homes and about 360 people.

**CHAIR:** On that, is the owner asking for everyone or just a representative?

**Ms Edwards:** No. Some of the people think we do not need to do it and others do, so the committee has to get 75 per cent of the village to agree. It is going to cost us \$2,500 to \$3,000 to get a revaluation, to have our own person do the review. If you do not have that when you go to QCAT, they just say, 'Go away,' so we have to spend that money. That is why we have to ask permission to the rest of the community.

**CHAIR:** Sorry to interrupt, but I have heard exactly the same thing from Maryborough.

**Ms Edwards:** We are in that stage. The thing is that the mediation was just disgusting. The property owners, the managers, have no respect. They do not care. We actually spoke to their accountant, their general manager. We did not speak to the owner, Mark Stockwell. They were representing him. He did not see the anguish. He probably does not even know what is going on in the villages. They just treat us with contempt and they told us, 'He's entitled to line his pockets. He's entitled to make a profit. You just suck it up.' That is basically what they said, so we are attempting QCAT.

With the water and sewerage, it is only a new village, five years old. When I came in at 4½ years, the site agreement was you pay for water that you use. It is water and sewerage, but sewerage has to be metered separately to be able to be charged. That was fine; we were not charged sewerage. We were then told in June 2022 that we were going to be charged sewerage so we started the process again: 'Hang on. How can you charge sewerage when it is not metered?' They said that they had waived it for the first 1½ years while the village was being built. There was no letter; there was nothing to say that it was being waived. They then sent a letter in September saying, 'Yes, it was our mistake. We did not advise you, but we are going to now just charge you from the end of July.' They gave us compensation for a month, but they had not told us and then they admitted to it. This is now a form 11 going, starting the process. We have to get to mediation now.

You asked whether we have good communications with the proprietor. The managers are good but they are just working for them. It is the head office you cannot get by. I asked for a Unitywater bill, which we found out we are entitled to. They are supposed to put it on our noticeboard every time they get a water bill. I wrote to them in February asking for the last two years since sewerage, and last week they politely gave it to the manager. They never responded to my two emails requesting it. They did not even have the courtesy to say they were going to look into it. Now they have agreed that it has to be done; we have been saying all along it has to be done. We found out by getting a copy that they had been charging us 90 per cent for sewerage when it was 60 per cent. They said they had not picked it up, so how long has that been going on for?

These are the things. It is quite off-putting. As we say, we are here to retire in the last part of our lives but we are having to deal with these businesspeople who do not care. They honestly do not care. It is good to hear that other villages go through the same thing.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Jude. Graeme, over to you.

**Mr Brittenden:** I do not live in any of these parks but I have sold them. I was amazed when I came in to think what the afternoon was going to be like. I wonder sometimes if people value what they are getting and what they are paying for in an over-50s like Solana. I was there when it was launched. How many people have got a swimming pool, a picture theatre, a gymnasium and a bowling green in their backyard? You are not paying just for water, rates and other things. There is a whole lot more in the package.

What I want to say at this stage is that they are not villages. I heard that 'villages' were not going to be mentioned today. It might be easier for the government to have a separate act for every location rather than for every type of property you could buy. They are not villages. That is a completely different thing altogether. I do not know how many years it is since I retired from this industry, but they are called removable homes. The next one that moves will be the first one that I have seen. I was hoping to offer something positive to the afternoon. If you are going into a new lifestyle, do your homework. If it does not suit you, get out. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Jude, do you have anything to add to that?

**Ms Edwards:** I agree with Graeme in the fact that we do have facilities. Whether they go from good to exceptional, the rent in those good to exceptionals do not vary much. That is one issue. The big thing is the respect, the care and the thinking of the property owners. We all agree that we have got good facilities and a good life, but I do not want to be arguing. I do not want to be chasing up the owners to get our lawns done or get lights. We did not have lights in the street for two years and the home owners were going on and on about it. We should not have to do that. The lights were not going on.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Jude. Before we go to questions, I want to point out that Ali is here as an observer but she cannot ask questions because she is the Assistant Minister for Housing so has a conflict of interest. If we ever have a member of parliament come to these committees, we always allow them to sit with us as an observer. In this case, Ali cannot participate because she will be one of the people reading the report that we produce. I know she would be itching to say something.

**Ms KING:** It is useful for me to hear the feedback from people. I just want to note for the audience that I have to leave in a moment to get to my next engagement. It has been great to hear what you have had to say. I wish I could stay longer. Thank you so much for having me today.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for coming. We will go to questions.

**Mr BROWN:** Is it Mark Stockwell the swimmer who is the owner?

**Ms Edwards:** Yes.

**Mr BROWN:** A big donor to the LNP.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a question, member for Capalaba?

**Mr BROWN:** I do. I cannot help myself. Thank you for coming. It is good to hear the stories. One thing that is not in this set of reforms but I think needs to be is empowering committees and giving them more power and more direction to be engaging. Would you agree with that?

**Ms Edwards:** The committee to parliament?

**Mr BROWN:** No. Formalising committees under the act and enforcing parks to engage with committees. It seems to me that a lot of disputes could be resolved on a park level. Where there are small parks and the owners are engaged and only own one park and they are on the ground, things do not get to QCAT, but when it is the big American or Stockwell these things are not being resolved on a park level. It seems to me the next step is trying to formalise these committees to have some powers so they can compel those with the power to come to the table and negotiate or resolve these things on the ground.

**Ms Edwards:** It would be very beneficial, but I do not know how the park owners would come to the party with that.

**Mr BROWN:** For example, we do it with workplace health and safety. We empower workplace health and safety committees to compel the bosses to come to the table to negotiate things. Do you feel you could have a similar thing where a manufactured home park committee had powers to be able to get them to the table and have a say and be able to resolve these things on the ground before they need to go to QCAT?

**Ms Edwards:** I will give you an example where that would happen. With all this rain and everything, our lawn bowls area has got great big black spots on it. The resort manager has said it is not mildew. The residents do not want to play on it because it could have mildew and give them some sort of sickness. We are having a meeting with the resort managers tomorrow, and one of the questions is whether they will get a health and safety person to come and give a report. I have already mentioned it to the resort manager in passing and she said, 'They've told me there's no mildew. It's as simple as that.' Now we have to start to fight. If we had the power to be able to get them to get official reports done for certain circumstances, that would be really beneficial.

**Mr BROWN:** If you ever come across that, you should go to your local state member and ask, 'Is there any ability for workplace health and safety to visit the site or engage them?' Feel free in any of those situations—

**Ms Edwards:** I have already rung the health place and they said, 'Speak to your resort manager first. Second, get a report yourself. Third, if you cannot do that, go to QCAT.'

**Mr BROWN:** I think there are always measures you can take before that.

**Ms Edwards:** That is basically what I was told.

**Mr Brittenden:** I want to make one point if I may. We are talking about houses that can be moved. When you buy into an over 50s park it is not a real estate deal; it is a chattel. The building is a chattel. I have a friend who has been in there two or three years. He paid \$400,000 and something. He showed me the written quote on the sales sheet for \$600,000. It is not a bad mark-up in two years.

**Ms Pearson:** I would like to respond to that. Being on the committee at Hometown, I have a regular meeting with our community manager. We have what we call an action list that is a progressive report as to what is happening, what the current issues are in the park. Every fortnight I go in with my action list and every fortnight I get no action, no response and no change. The list just gets longer.

The thing is the community manager is a tool. She is a pen-pusher who does what she is told because she has no authority. To get to the people who have the authority the committee needs to have some level of authority itself. What we have been doing recently is we get the quotes and we take them to the community manager because that is the only way I can get anything done. It took nine months to get a pool heater replaced. A pool heater is standard issue. When you have a pool and it is a heated pool, it needs to have a heater. We ended up with two form 11s on a pool heater.

It took nine months to get that pool heater replaced. It is a simple transaction. I know it costs money, but it is a maintenance issue. People could not use the pool because it was freezing cold in winter and in the cooler months. In summer everybody forgot about it. We managed after nine months to get a pool heater replaced, but it should not take nine months, it should not take two form 11s and it should not take me sitting down with the community manager every fortnight to get simple things done.

I understand that maintenance needs to be done. When you own a home, it does not matter if it is a chattel or it is a freehold piece of property; there is maintenance that needs to be done. If there is an issue, it needs to be sorted. The committees definitely need some sort of authority to be able to work with them, not against them. We do not want to fight with people; we want to work with them to get some sort of improvement. Surely they have a duty of care to the residents who live there.

**Ms Parker:** Just on that point, would it be such a bad idea if there was something in the legislation that says that once a park owner receives information about maintenance issues—like that pool, for example—the park owner has to have it fixed or at least show the attempts to have it fixed within a certain time frame rather than letting it go on and on? That is just unacceptable. That puts the residents in a situation where they are without any power. It gives the park owner all the power to just prolong the maintenance and they should not be allowed to do that.

**Ms Pearson:** Unfortunately, commercial people are very good at distraction and deflection.

**Mr McDONALD:** I have a couple of quick questions. Erie, are you from GemLife as well?

**Ms Pearson:** No, I am from Orianna.

**Mr McDONALD:** At GemLife, do you have separate meters?

**Ms Parker:** Yes.

**Mr McDONALD:** You do have separate meters. How do they embed the charges with the excess water for that?

**Ms Parker:** The bill that they give us each quarter states your usage. For example, the first bill that we received said we used seven kilolitres, which I believe is 7,000 litres. At the bottom of the invoice it said, 'The billing is in accordance with Unitywater's pricing guide 2021-22', and that guide says that if you use less than 110 litres per day then you only get charged tier 1, but we were billed at tier 2. Then it said you get the state government charges, of course, which are three times as much. Then you get the water excess charges, which were based on figures that were set out on the invoice as being in brackets. That amount is worked out to be some other amount, and nobody knows what it means. The first bill came to \$87 even though our water consumption was something like \$20 in total. We are paying four times more than what we should be paying.

**Mr McDONALD:** I understand. When the bill was introduced the department said this was all about consumer protection. Do you feel this is protecting consumers?

**Ms Parker:** No. Under no circumstances would I feel like that.

**Mr McDONALD:** We have a housing supply shortage in South-East Queensland. Does this help the housing supply?

**Ms Parker:** No, because—

**CHAIR:** Hang on a tick. You nearly got that question through.

**Mr HART:** This is the politics coming in, is it?

**Mr McDONALD:** It is all about priorities. It is all about housing supply.

**CHAIR:** Jim asks this question on whatever bill on housing comes through. I have given him a concession.

**Mr McDONALD:** I did not use 'crisis'.

**CHAIR:** Okay, you did not use the word 'crisis'. Are we talking about the capacity of the industry to help generate housing?

**Mr McDONALD:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** We usually put that to the park owners, but the home owners might talk about the attractiveness of living here and whether it offers another alternative to building housing.

**Ms Parker:** In my mind, they should provide a system where you have two things you can weigh up with living in a residential park. The first part would be the social aspect of having people around you and the security of living in a park. That is great. That is just great; I really enjoy that.

Then you have the downside where you try to get information out of the park owners or get facilities fixed. Then you get, like us, this big power bank that is parked in the centre of the park right up to people's homes and it is just noisy 24/7, which is a very big downside as far as I am concerned. As a manufactured home owner, you come in thinking it is going to be a great place, but then you find out afterwards—because you cannot find it out beforehand—that all these things start to change. That skews your mind a bit and you think, 'Have I made the right decision in being in this residential park, or would I be better off looking at a freehold property?'

In the last two years we have ummed and ahed about going back to a freehold property. We were umming and ahing about selling the freehold property we have and staying where we are or selling where we are and going back over there or doing something completely different. We should not be in a situation where every day we feel we cannot get common sense or simple answers out of a park owner that pulls \$4 million out of that park every year—it is more than \$4 million; it is \$4,322,082 or something every year—and yet they will not explain what the water bills are about and why we are being charged all this extra money.

**Mr BROWN:** You talked about the \$700. Was that a concealed leak?

**Ms Parker:** I do not know the details; I just know they got billed \$700. The park managers at the time confirmed that was the case and then the park owner gave them a discount of \$200. Then they sold up two months later.

**Mr BROWN:** Just to let everyone know, there is a new policy that the Queensland government have brought in around concealed leaks and getting the rebate on the bulk water component. Please make sure you are aware of that. You can contact Unitywater. For pensioners, there is a 100 per cent rebate on a concealed leak.

**Ms Parker:** We cannot get it because we are not customers of Unitywater. The park owner is, but the residents are not.

**CHAIR:** It is a grey area. We can probably talk about that later because there are some concessions.

**Mr HART:** Some of the things that the four of you have talked about today are in your site agreements, in regulation or in legislation and, therefore, should be followed. When you pass that information on to regulatory services, do you get any response on that? It should be, 'Yes, this is what should happen,' and tick, off we go and that gets fixed. What have been your experiences with regulatory services?

**Ms Parker:** I lodged the comprehensive complaint about these water bills with regulatory services on 3 October 2023. Just after Christmas I sent them an email and said, 'Have there been any updates or any outcome on this matter yet?', and they said, 'No, but we should have something by 9 April.'

**Mr HART:** That is very slow.

**Ms Parker:** I am still waiting for them to let me know what the outcome is.

**Mr HART:** Taking your point that a lot of site agreements are different for different people, if in one project, village or whatever you want to call it, the site agreements were all the same, would that fix the situation to a certain extent?

**Ms Pearson:** It would help. It would bring consistency and comparability. It would certainly help with that. People talk. Managers say to you, 'This is confidential,' and then people walk outside and blah, blah, blah, it is around the complex in 20 minutes.

**Mr HART:** Just extrapolating that a bit further, if the site agreements were all the same and one person took this to QCAT and got a result from it that applied to all of those site agreements, that may assist as well?

**Ms Pearson:** Absolutely. That is a very good point.

**Ms Parker:** I think all of our site agreements are very much the same. It says 'user pays'. The wording in the site agreement is exactly the same for the water as it is for electricity in that it is user pays. You think, 'Okay, that is what it means,' but then there are these special terms at the back of the site agreement, and the special terms section has more pages than the actual site agreement document, which is the state government document.

Years ago, you might remember, with renting a house you used to give the tenant a lease agreement. Then you could have all this annexure on it: don't swim in the pool and don't do this and don't do whatever else. You could put whatever you wanted in it. The state government stamped that

out about five or six years ago—or maybe longer. They said that you had to just stick with the state government issued document and make no additions to it. However, when you look at a site agreement then you have a state government document and the park owners are allowed to add any number of pages saying any gobbledygook they want to that document.

**Mr HART:** Graeme, could I have your input to that question about the site agreements all being the same?

**Mr Brittenden:** Yes. I am just trying to remember. It is a few years since I was playing with that paper. If there is a common site agreement, the annexure only needs to cover what facilities they have that are over and above the norm. There has to be a core which has to be in every one, but I would think that they would have annexure to it to cover a bowling green or a swimming pool et cetera. It is usually the document that causes the most trouble anyway.

**Ms Pearson:** May I just add that the current site agreement is a generic site agreement that is used by most people and it is very ambiguous.

**Ms Parker:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** I will point out that last time we did reform in this area we did deal with that variety. It became clear that if you want it at one consistent level, it gives the opportunity for everything else to ratchet up to that price level or then you would have to pay all the sewerage and water. We examined that last time, but we realised that bringing it up to one level would mean the people on the most beneficial level would have a huge increase in liabilities. The member for Burleigh is right; it is an issue. It is a thorny one to resolve. Do we have any further questions?

**Mr HART:** No, I think we need to think about that one.

**Ms Parker:** I have a question. When you weigh up both sides of the park owner and then the residents, the park owner for GemLife has I do not know how many legal people that he has access to and uses on a regular basis. From the point of view of residents or manufactured home owners, we do not really have access to anything legal. We are all operating separately in isolation to a degree. Yes, we have a home owners' committee and that is good, but where is the legal help? Where is the help desk for people who own a manufactured home?

**Mr HART:** Caxton.

**Ms Parker:** They are inundated I hear.

**CHAIR:** I can deal with this. I think that is a very legitimate point: where is your bargaining power? I would encourage you that with the number of home owners' committees out there—and you have a couple of bodies there—there is a good argument for empowerment and recognition of the owners of the houses. We heard this morning the term 'co-investment'. That was the first time I have heard that from a park owner. They developed it, but a lot of the capital comes from yourselves as home owners. It is a co-investment and what we want to see is that sensibility and that principle recognised in the processes and the laws, that each side has a responsibility, each side is an investor and each side needs to be recognised and encouraged. At the end of the day that builds a healthy sector, that builds housing and that makes sure that you all live in viable parks. Co-investment is a key for that and that principle should be reflected throughout everything else.

I have answered a question now. That concludes our hearing. Can we have a round of applause for our secretariat, for Vicki and Steph, as well as Hansard? A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course and all our participants will get a copy of that transcript. I declare this hearing closed.

**The subcommittee adjourned at 5.17 pm.**