



VVAA Outer Eastern Melbourne (OEM) Position Statement on the Sale of Vasey RSL Care

July 1st 2023 is the deadline, nominated by RSL Victoria and the War Widows Guild Australia (Vic) Inc. for the sale of Vasey RSL Care.

OEM Member's position, is for the sale not to proceed, and for Vasey RSL Care to continue to provide accommodation support and services for veterans, war widows and ex-service people on an "as needs" basis.

A brief summary of the justification for our position on the proposed sale of Vasey RSL Care is as follows:

Consultation

The thorough consultation process was particularly important given the general confusion surrounding the sale. To a large extent this has been brought about by the limited, vague and sometimes conflicting information available. We are aware that the ensuing uncertainty has had the effect of raising stress levels amongst current residents, particularly as most of those accommodated in these establishments are elderly, in need, and amongst our most vulnerable.

- **RSL Victoria** – We received no response to our letter seeking details of the proposed sale of Vasey RSL Care. We found the two "Fact Sheets" issued by RSL Victoria to be of limited value in assisting us to gain an understanding of the issues involved.
- **War Widows Guild Australia (Vic) Inc.** – In response to our letter seeking details of the proposed sale of Vasey RSL Care, we received a letter from the President WWG (Vic) and we thank the President of the WWG (Vic) for the courtesy of a response. We note the letter did not address, with clarity, the important issue as to why the War Widows Guild Australia (Vic) Inc. is wishing to proceed with the sale of Vasey RSL Care.
- **VVAA (Vic)** – VVAA (Vic) supports the continuation of Vasey RSL Care (21 March 2021)
- **Vasey RSL Care** – In response to our seeking details, and some follow up questions, we were provided with a comprehensive quantity of useful information.
- **OEM Sub branch Membership** – We received a number of responses from our membership. All responses were consistent with the Position Statement we subsequently developed on behalf of our OEM Members.
- **Other Information Sources** – To provide for a good grounding from which to develop our position, we consulted an additional number of bodies and individuals for information, and their views.

Some Facts and Figures

- Vasey RSL Care was established in 2004 through a merger of RSL Victoria and War Widows Guild (Vic) residential accommodation facilities. Since then, Vasey RSL Care has provided valuable accommodation assistance to Victoria's veterans, veteran widows and ex service personnel.
- Vasey RSL Care is the only aged care organisation in Victoria that prioritises veterans, providing care for veterans, regardless of their financial circumstances. They have won 9 *Federal Government Better Practice Awards*. Vasey RSL Care is run by a Board of Directors nominated or approved by RSL Victoria and the WWG. .
- A *Deed* was set up on 11th December 2012 by RSL Victoria, and the War Widows Guild Australia (Vic) nominating 2019 as the time by which Vasey RSL Care should be sold. We understand the thinking at the time was that by 2019 the Vasey RSL Care facilities would be made unviable through declining numbers of WW2 service people and widows. The sale date was later extended to "earlier than 1st July 2023". A letter dated 27 August 2019, reiterated a previous direction, dated 24 July 2018, that Vasey RSL Care Pty. Ltd. be sold.
- Vasey RSL Care is Victoria's leading specialist in veterans' care and support. It provides residential accommodation and care for more than 700 people, mostly veterans (including approximately 100 Vietnam Veterans and widows). The facilities include residential aged care homes and independent living units across

Melbourne. Vasey also provides home care services for more than 150 mostly ex-service clients. The Vasey RSL Care facilities include a complex of 18 independent living units located in **Mt Dandenong Rd Croydon**. These units have been occupied by OEM Members in the past, and potentially, into the future.

Issues

- **Why Sell?**

After all our consultation, we are still no closer to gaining clear answers to the following key questions:

- **Why is the proposed sale of Vasey RSL Care proceeding while there is a demonstrated current need, and potentially growing future need, for veteran related accommodation needs?**
- **How are the funds generated by the sale proposed to be better used for welfare purposes?**

Given the impact of the proposed sale, we feel that RSL Victoria and the War Widows Guild (Vic) are obligated to provide their respective memberships with clear and concise answers to these questions.

- **Waiting List and Future Accommodation Requirements**

Rather than declining, the numbers on waiting lists for access to Vasey RSL Care accommodation facilities, by ex-service members and their widows, are actually increasing. Demand for Vasey RSL Care services will continue to be strong. Department of Veterans' Affairs projections show that in the 10 years to June 2029, Victoria's veteran population will increase 21.8 per cent to more than 35,700. Of course, the real numbers will be much higher, as DVA figures only capture DVA service users, not all veterans. The upcoming 2021 Census, which for the first time will itemise transitioned ADF numbers, will present a clearer picture of future requirements.

Vasey RSL Care has developed a *Strategic Plan* to continue to meet the demands from older veterans and their dependants. These make up more than 70% of the current residents and tenants. The *Strategic Plan* also addresses the needs of younger veterans, and those in transition, with services such as supportive accommodation, employment, and general and mental health support. Vasey RSL Care also wishes to expand its services to regional Victoria and other areas where they are needed the most.

- **OEM Sub branch Perspective**

During the course of the information gathering we were not able to identify any compelling reasons to proceed with the sale. We did however identify a number of reasons as to why Vasey RSL Care should be supported and continue to operate well into the future. There is a growing number of Vietnam Veterans/dependants, and others, in need of assisted accommodation facilities. Our average OEM membership age is now 75 years and our accommodation needs will increase into the future. We need to look after our mates and their widows.

This OEM Position Paper is membership supported, entirely consistent with the VVAA (National) Aged Care Policy, and in keeping with the spirit of the VVAA motto:

"Honour the dead, but fight like hell for the living."

The whole issue could be cleared up very quickly by RSL Victoria communicating, unambiguously and publicly, that it fully supports the continued operation of Vasey RSL Care, both now, and into the future.

We will continue to work and lobby towards a favourable outcome on this issue as long as is required.

COMMITTEE OF THE OUTER EASTERN MELBOURNE SUB BRANCH VVAA (Vic)

April 2021