

WAR WIDOWS' GUILD OF AUSTRALIA NSW LTD

31 October 2017

GUILD HOUSING AT DOLLS POINT & DRUMMOYNE

We do understand the concerns of the 15 resident members in the remaining two housing properties still owned by the War Widows' Guild Australia NSW Ltd. The prospect of moving house at any age can be unsettling and our members are entitled to have their say. These ladies have not been evicted and we will continue to try to help them find suitable alternate accommodation over the coming months.

The fact is the War Widows' Guild of Australia NSW Ltd support 23,000 war widows across NSW with 4,100 members. The funds raised from the redevelopment of these properties will be directed to services that provide benefits for all members. The type of services provided by the Guild include transport support, welfare support, telephone support, commemorative ceremonies and social events for local and regional social clubs, various skills training courses, advocacy and friendship.

In the absence of ongoing government funding or other significant sources of revenue, releasing the value locked up in our property assets is essential to the continued operations of the War Widows' Guild of Australia NSW.

Background:

The War Widows' Guild of Australia NSW Ltd is a not-for-profit charitable organisation, established in 1946 for the purpose of promoting and protecting the interests of war widows from all conflicts from World War I to Afghanistan.

The Guild today has around 4100 members in NSW of a total of 23,000 war widows in NSW who are also eligible for support, the vast majority of whom are World War II widows, with an average age of 87 years.

The Guild comprises its members who have worked hard over the years and have raised money to help their fellow war widows. Its sources of revenue rely largely on modest membership subscriptions, member donations, limited community donations and a few bequests. The Guild has never received on-going funding from government.

The War Widows' Guild has had a long involvement in providing low cost housing for war widows and developed a series of housing sites between 1953 and 1988. A total of 254 units were provided for housing for war widows.

However, a marked decline in the demand for housing by war widows, and the ageing of our war widow population resulted in the decision by the Guild in 2002 to gradually withdraw from providing housing and to use any proceeds to provide services and support to all our members, in accordance with our charitable status.

Since 1998, the Guild has sold seven of its housing properties and the proceeds of these sales have been, and will continue to be used for services for all members of the Guild. Now only two properties remain under Guild ownership, housing 15 members which is less than 0.4% of our membership.

The age and nature of the remaining two properties is increasingly unsuitable for older women, especially given the lack of lifts to upper levels. Communication with residents about plans to vacate these facilities and find suitable alternate accommodation has occurred on a regular basis since 2012.

The Guild has encouraged all residents to register with the Housing Pathways List which gives opportunities to receive offers of alternative low-cost housing. It is one option to find alternative accommodation, and is not able to be accessed by the Guild, as only individuals can apply. We have also been actively connecting residents to other alternatives, including leading affordable housing provider Evolve Housing, to assist our members.

Three residents are under the provisions of the Retirement Villages Act which requires alternative housing at a similar cost to be provided to these residents and this requirement will be met by the Guild. The remainder are tenants who were notified and acknowledged the Guild's intentions to sell the properties at the time they entered Guild Housing.

We certainly appreciate a housing move in the later stages of life can be stressful for our residents. That is why we have been and will continue to working with the remaining residents of the Drummoyne and Dolls Point facilities and their families towards the most suitable outcomes, just as we have done successfully on numerous occasions for members in seven other properties since 2002.