

Factsheet: We need your help so we can continue to serve Victoria's veterans

1. Why are there proposals to sell Vasey RSL Care?

- RSL Victoria and the War Widows' Guild of Australia (Victoria), through their presidents, have issued a number of directives to sell our organisation or assets. The most recent, made on 27 August 2019, directed us to sell the organisation before 1 July 2023.
- RSL Victoria and the Guild want to invoke a "wind-up clause" in our constitution, which provides for the proceeds of any winding up of Vasey RSL Care to go into a trust to assist in the care of veterans and their families. We understand that RSL Victoria and the Guild intend that this trust would buy services for the aged and dependants with disabilities from external providers.
- While we cannot speak for RSL Victoria or the Guild, the reasons given in correspondence include their belief that the number of veterans and war widows is declining, the cost of residential care and changing service models for older people.
- However, we know that veteran numbers are not declining – 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.
- In the past, Vasey RSL Care believed it was legally obliged to comply with the sale directive and accordingly it took steps to do so. Since then, we have taken independent legal advice. We are advised that the RSL and the Guild have no legal power to direct Vasey RSL Care to take any action. Rather the directors have a duty to act in the best interests of Vasey RSL Care.

2. What is the relationship between RSL Victoria and the War Widows' Guild of Australia (Victoria) and Vasey RSL Care?

- RSL Victoria and the Guild were instrumental in establishing Vasey RSL Care in 2004 through the merger of RSL Care Victoria (which formed at the end of WWI) and Vasey Housing Victoria (which formed at the end of WWII).
- The two organisations play a key role in our governance. They nominate members of our company and nominate or approve members of our board of directors.
- We believe that all parties agree that accommodation and support services are needed for aged and younger veterans alike.

3. Why has Vasey RSL Care sold its Manningtree Road property if it doesn't want the whole organisation sold?

- The two-storey Manningtree Road independent living units were built at the end of WWII and were in a poor condition, not suitable for elderly residents. In 2018 we progressively worked with the few remaining residents of the units to transition into more modern facilities.
- This sale is nearing completion and the intention is to reinvest proceeds into more modern facilities for veterans. No further sales are planned.

4. What impact does the coronavirus pandemic have on the directive to sell Vasey RSL Care?

- The coronavirus outbreak has no direct impact on the sale directive. However, we are aware that the outbreak is particularly distressing to elderly people who are more susceptible to the virus. Our residents, clients and staff should not have the additional worry about the future of our organisation and their housing and services.
- We are increasingly receiving enquiries from ex-service organisations and our own residents and tenants, who are worried about asset sales and the future of the company. We all need certainty.

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5. What are Vasey RSL Care's plans for the future?

- Vasey RSL Care is the only aged care organisation in Victoria that prioritises veterans. We provide care for veterans regardless of their financial circumstances. We have won nine Better Practice Awards, which are awarded by the Federal Government agency responsible for accrediting and monitoring aged care organisations.
- The Vasey RSL Care board has a well-considered strategic plan to continue to meet the demand from older veterans and their dependants (who make up more than 70 per cent of our current residents and tenants) while adapting to serve the needs of younger veterans and those in transition, with services such as supportive accommodation, employment and general and mental health support.
- We want to expand our services where veterans need them most, such as in regional Victoria and the western suburbs of Melbourne.
- Department of Veterans' Affairs figures show that demand for our services will continue to be strong with veteran numbers in Victoria predicted to increase by almost 22 per cent over the next decade.

6. If Vasey RSL Care is sold, will residents have to leave their homes?

- We are a long way from that point. Vasey RSL Care is keen to work with RSL Victoria and the Guild and we are hopeful that they will commit to a strong future for our organisation.
- It is extremely important that residents of our aged care facilities understand that there is no immediate threat to the home they live in and the services they receive.
- Even if RSL Victoria and the Guild succeed in persuading a company member vote to sell Vasey RSL Care assets to another aged care provider, residents have protections under Federal Government laws governing the sale of residential aged care facilities. The Federal Government must approve any proposed new provider and existing resident agreements would continue, meaning that residents could remain at the homes if they wish and would not need to pay a new bond or increased fees.

7. What does this mean for Vasey RSL Care's 550 staff?

- We have an excellent team of dedicated aged care, health and veteran specialists who care for our residents and clients. We want them to be able to continue to develop their skills and have career opportunities with Vasey RSL Care offering services to a wider group of veterans, regardless of age.
- There are no changes currently proposed to our staff, and we are working to provide long-term security. Certainty for our residents, clients, staff and future service users is the key reason behind the campaign to promote our alternative vision.

8. How can I help?

- We need your help to highlight the importance of our services and ensure we operate beyond the 2023 deadline given to us by RSL Victoria and the Guild. We are asking supporters to help by:
 - Emailing a short letter of support to us at communications@vaseyrslcare.org.au and we will pass it on to RSL Victoria and the Guild.
 - Contacting RSL Victoria and the Guild to ask them to commit to a strong future for Vasey RSL Care. You can:
 - Contact the President of RSL Victoria, Dr Robert Webster OAM, at rslvic@rslvic.com.au or send your message of support to communications@vaseyrslcare.org.au and we will pass it on.
 - Contact the President of the Guild, Mrs Wendy Charlton, by sending a message to communications@vaseyrslcare.org.au which we will pass on.
 - Before casting your vote in the RSL Victorian branch election, contacting your candidate of choice and ask for their commitment to a strong future for Vasey RSL Care.