

Australian Retirement Village Accreditation Scheme (ARVAS)

Background

In late 2017 the Property Council and LASA first came together to discuss merging their respective accreditation schemes for the retirement living sector.

Our two organisations understood the need for a clear and consistent way for retirement villages to demonstrate a commitment to consistently delivering quality services and support for residents.

Over the past 15 months, a joint working group of industry participants has developed a new scheme from scratch – the Australian Retirement Village Accreditation Scheme (ARVAS).

In February 2019, the Property Council and LASA announced that Quality Innovation Performance (QIP), an experienced, not-for-profit provider of accreditation services to community organisations and primary, secondary and tertiary health care services, had been selected to operate and manage ARVAS on the industry's behalf.

Following consultation on the draft accreditation standards and final approval of the new standards, ARVAS is expected to be operational by June 2019.

Standards development process

The Property Council-LASA joint working group has been developing a refreshed set of standards for ARVAS that reflect the modern expectations of retirement village residents, and the evolution of the sector beyond purely a property and facilities-based offering.

The working group used the *villages.com.au National Resident Survey 2018 – the Independent Study of Today's Retirement Village Residents*, conducted by Australian Online Research, as the basis for identifying what residents value about their village and the areas where improvements can be made.

An independent consultant was also engaged to work with residents at villages in Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, to help us better understand what is valued about the existing accreditation schemes, and what needs changing.

These focus groups found that:

- There is a strong desire from residents for more knowledge about accreditation
- Residents had a higher level of desire for an accreditation program once the potential benefits had been communicated, and a strong desire to be part of the auditing process
- The topics identified in the *National Resident Survey* largely matched their priorities

The same consultant also conducted a series of interviews with industry participants, some of whom had direct experience with accreditation, to determine how a scheme can be efficiently run and ensure credibility with residents and other stakeholders. Those surveys indicated a need for the scheme to contain more practical support to participants to aid continuous improvement and achieve positive outcomes for staff and residents.

This work significantly informed the structure and content of the proposed ARVAS standards, which have now been completely drafted and are **available here for your feedback**.

ARVAS standards structure

The ARVAS standards have a three-level hierarchy comprising standards, criteria and indicators. Each standard is comprised of criteria; each criterion is comprised of indicators.

The standards are supported by explanatory notes, which provide important guidance for ARVAS participants and auditors about how the standards should be applied – a level of guidance that was missing from each of the predecessor schemes.

A ‘met’ or ‘not met’ assessment is undertaken against indicators; however ratings are applied at the level of the indicators, criteria and standard level.

- An indicator is rated ‘met’ if there is objective evidence of achievement based on the Explanatory Notes and Evidence Guide for the indicator. An indicator is rated ‘not met’ if there is not sufficient evidence of achievement based on the Explanatory Notes and Evidence Guide.
- A criterion is rated ‘met’ if all applicable indicators for the criteria are rated ‘met’. A criterion is rated ‘not met’ if one or more applicable indicators for the criteria are rated ‘not met’.
- A standard is rated ‘met’ if each applicable criterion for the standard is rated ‘met’. A standard is rated ‘not met’ if one or more applicable criteria is rated ‘not met’.

ARVAS accreditation is awarded when all standards are rated ‘met’. Conditional accreditation may be granted where up to five indicators are rated ‘not met’ because of minor deficiencies which can be remedied quickly.

ARVAS standard categories

The standards are broken up into seven quality areas:

- Standard 1: Community Management
- Standard 2: Human Resource Management
- Standard 3: Resident Entry and Exit
- Standard 4: Resident Engagement and Feedback
- Standard 5: Environment, Services and Facilities
- Standard 6: Safety and Security
- Standard 7: Resident Care (if applicable)

Standards 1-6 apply to all retirement communities and must be met to achieve ARVAS accreditation. Some criteria within each standard may not apply to all villages – applicability guidelines are provided with the explanatory notes for each criterion.

Standard 7 applies only to villages that also provide care services, where that service is provided as an included service in the resident contract, or as an additional service on a ‘fee for service’ basis.

Approved providers of home care will be deemed to automatically meet Standard 7.

ARVAS and the Code of Conduct

ARVAS has been deliberately designed to interact directly with the Retirement Living Code of Conduct. While the Code will be self-certified by operators, ARVAS will require independent assessment of the Code’s requirements, and many standards directly reference the Code.

As such, subscription to the Retirement Living Code of Conduct will be a pre-requisite of ARVAS accreditation.

What we are seeking

As the final step of the ARVAS standards development process, we are seeking comment from the retirement living industry, residents and other interested stakeholders.

Comments are welcomed on any aspect of the draft standards, including:

- The standard categories
- The criteria and indicators for each standard
- The structure and presentation of each standard, including the usefulness (or otherwise) of the explanatory notes
- Any areas of potential conflict

Comments received will feed directly into the Property Council-LASA working group for their consideration.

The working group will provide feedback on how public input has influenced the standards that are adopted.

All comments must be sent via email to retirementliving@lasa.asn.au by Friday 12 April 2019.