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Office of the Secretary  
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Hobart TAS 7001

Via email: [haveyoursay@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:haveyoursay@justice.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Bourne

**Re: Submission on Residential Parks Bill 2026 (consultation draft)**

COTA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Residential Parks Bill 2026 (consultation draft).

COTA Tasmania represents the interests of older Tasmanians. We have heard from older people living in caravan and residential parks who report insecure tenure, intimidation (including threats of eviction), unreasonable or inconsistently applied park rules, and difficulty accessing clear and practical dispute-resolution pathways.

These risks are intensified by the current housing crisis and the limited availability of affordable, suitable alternatives for older people.

On that basis, COTA Tasmania supports the Bill in principle as a necessary and overdue framework to improve security, fairness, and dignity for long-term residential park residents.

We particularly support measures that strengthen transparency and consultation around park rules, regulate rent increases, and prohibit certain fees, improve utility billing transparency, recognise residents committees, and introduce stronger safeguards where residents are displaced due to change of use or redevelopment.

To ensure the Bill delivers practical security for older residents, COTA recommends targeted strengthening in four areas:

- further tightening of owner “no-grounds” termination for periodic agreements
- lowering barriers to challenging unreasonable park rules so protections are usable in practice
- ensuring electricity concessions are passed through to eligible residents (particularly in embedded network arrangements)
- implementing a well-resourced transition package so existing residents can access the Bill’s protections in practice

COTA Tasmania would welcome ongoing engagement as the Bill progresses.

Yours sincerely



**Brigid Wilkinson**

Chief Executive Officer

6<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## Submission on the Residential Parks Bill 2026 (consultation draft)

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### 1. Overview

COTA Tasmania supports the Residential Parks Bill 2026 as a major step forward to improve the rights and security of people living long-term in residential parks and caravan parks, including many older Tasmanians.

For a growing number of people, long-term park residency is not a short-term lifestyle choice; it is a form of housing, often used because it is more affordable than mainstream rental or ownership options.

For older residents in particular, relocation can be difficult due to health and mobility, supports tied to place, limited housing availability, and the practical (and financial) reality that dwellings are not always readily movable or saleable.

COTA's experience is that long-term residents can face substantial power imbalance, including rule changes, threats of eviction, and barriers to resolving disputes. A modern statutory framework, backed by accessible information and workable enforcement pathways, is essential.

#### Recommendations at a glance

COTA recommends the Bill be strengthened to:

- further limit owner “no-grounds” termination and/or increase notice periods and safeguards
- make unreasonable-rule challenges accessible in practice (reduce threshold; empower committees/regulator support)
- require electricity concession pass-through for eligible residents, with enforceable mechanisms
- implement a transition package so existing residents benefit in practice (templates, advice, outreach, proactive compliance)

### 2. About COTA Tasmania

COTA Tasmania (Council on the Ageing Tasmania) is Tasmania's peak body representing older Tasmanians. For more than 60 years, we have been a trusted voice for older people, promoting positive attitudes to ageing, advancing social inclusion, and championing the rights, interests, and value of people as they age.

We provide independent, evidence-based policy and advocacy informed by the lived experience of older people and engagement with stakeholders across government, community services, and industry.

Our focus is on improving outcomes for older Tasmanians and supporting ageing as a time of opportunity, contribution, and security.

We collaborate with other peak bodies, national COTA colleagues, and sector partners to challenge ageism and support practical reforms that enable people to age with dignity, independence, and connection in the communities they choose.

### 3. What the Bill does well

COTA supports the Bill's overall framework and notes several important protections, including:

- Park rules transparency and process: clearer expectations around notice and consultation for rule changes, and a mechanism to challenge unreasonable rules.
- Cost-of-living protections: regulation of rent increases and prohibition of certain fees.
- Utility billing transparency: itemised electricity billing and improved information where embedded networks are used.
- Residents' committees: recognition of residents' committees and related consultation processes.
- Change of use / redevelopment safeguards: stronger protections where residents are displaced due to redevelopment or park changes.

These elements reflect the Bill's intent to move long-term residential parks toward a more stable and fair housing framework.

### 4. Recommendations

#### 4.1 Strengthen security of tenure by tightening “no-grounds” termination

The Guide indicates periodic tenancy—no grounds allows owners to terminate with at least 60 days' notice, with limits including where the resident has had occupancy rights for five years or more.

COTA is concerned that “no-grounds” termination of periodic agreements (even with notice requirements and limitations) can perpetuate insecurity for long-term residents, particularly within the first years of occupancy.

For older residents, the fear of termination alone can have significant wellbeing impacts and can deter people from asserting their rights.

COTA recommends:

- Further limiting the circumstances in which a park owner can use “no-grounds” termination; and/or
- Strengthening safeguards where “no-grounds” remains available, including longer notice periods (at least 90 days) to allow realistic time to secure alternative housing, supports and relocation arrangements, with clear constraints to prevent misuse; and
- Clear implementation guidance and monitoring to ensure “no-grounds” is not used as a workaround in situations that functionally operate as retaliation.

## **4.2 Make unreasonable-rule challenges workable in practice**

The Guide indicates that rule challenges will require a joint application by residents from a majority of occupied sites. Such a high threshold may block relief in precisely the parks where power imbalance, vulnerability, and fear exist.

COTA supports the ability to challenge unreasonable park rules, but is concerned that this procedural threshold will make the remedy inaccessible in practice - particularly in parks where residents are vulnerable, fearful, or divided.

This threshold also does not recognise that the concerns of residents with long-term occupancy rights may differ significantly from those of short-term residents.

It is not difficult to envisage circumstances where a majority threshold is simply unattainable - and an unusable remedy is not a real protection.

In practice, issues faced by long-term residents in these settings can resemble other shared-living environments (for example, strata/unit complexes), where governance and dispute pathways exist without requiring a majority of all occupants simply to initiate review of a potentially unreasonable rule that affects residents' day-to-day living and, in many cases, their financial investment in a dwelling.

COTA recommends:

- Requiring establishment of residents' committees and development of a standardised charter for such committees;
- Allowing applications to challenge unreasonable rules to be made by a residents' committee;
- Reducing the threshold for resident applications to a practical minimum number; and
- Enabling regulator-supported or regulator-initiated action where systemic rule issues are evident.

## **4.3 Ensure electricity concessions are passed through to eligible residents**

COTA has previously raised a systemic issue: residents billed separately but concessions going to the park's central account, meaning residents miss entitlements.

The Bill improves transparency, but does not (on the face of the Guide provisions) guarantee concession pass-through.

COTA supports improved billing transparency, but transparency alone does not guarantee that eligible residents receive concessions in practice, particularly where embedded electricity networks operate through central park accounts or similar arrangements.

COTA recommends:

- An explicit statutory duty (or enforceable regulation) requiring concession pass-through to eligible residents, with a clear mechanism such as a mandatory credit or reconciliation applied to the resident’s account; and
- Clear compliance guidance and enforcement consequences for non-compliance, supported by plain-language resident information.

#### **4.4 Implement a transition package so existing residents benefit in practice**

COTA has repeatedly stressed the need to prevent rolling informal arrangements and to provide practical supports to avoid hardship or homelessness for residents in complex situations.

COTA notes the Bill’s transitional approach and the potential for existing agreements to continue without being brought into written, standardised form. In other words, existing agreements can continue without having to meet the new writing requirements. The Minister may also grant exemptions for agreements or rules made pre-commencement.

Without practical transition supports, older residents currently living under informal or legacy arrangements may continue to face uncertainty and power imbalance.

COTA recommends a guaranteed transition package that includes:

- A time-bound pathway for existing long-term residents to receive written terms/disclosures, supported by standard templates;
- Funded information and advice/referral supports, targeted to older residents and other vulnerable cohorts, including those with limited digital access or capacity to navigate Tribunal processes;
- Proactive education and compliance activity for park owners; and
- An implementation plan that prioritises parks with known disputes and vulnerable resident groups.

## **5. Implementation considerations**

COTA emphasises that the Bill’s success will depend on practical usability:

- Accessible information: hard-copy and accessible-format materials (including large print) and clear “where to get help” pathways.
- Resourcing and timely dispute resolution: ensuring the relevant regulator and Tribunal processes are accessible, timely and comprehensible for self-represented residents.
- Confidence to exercise rights: residents must be able to raise concerns and participate in committees without fear of retaliation.

## 6. Conclusion

COTA Tasmania supports the Residential Parks Bill 2026 in principle as a necessary and overdue reform to improve security, fairness, and dignity for long-term residential park residents, including older Tasmanians.

The Bill establishes a strong foundation, particularly through improved rules governance, cost-of-living protections, utility transparency, residents committee recognition, and stronger redevelopment/change-of-use safeguards.

To ensure these reforms deliver practical security for older residents, COTA recommends targeted strengthening of:

- “no-grounds” termination settings,
- access to rule-challenge mechanisms,
- electricity concession pass-through protections, and
- transitional implementation supports so existing residents can benefit in practice.