

## Retirees in dark over loans

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Another Retirees WA committee member has broken his silence over concerns about the financial dealings between the 8000-strong pensioners' organisation and former Liberal government minister Roger Nicholls.

Alan Bascombe said yesterday that he was alarmed to discover that Retirees WA had lent Mr Nicholls and his business partner Frank Pinner \$1.8 million from its funeral fund to buy a building in East Victoria Park from which Retirees WA now leases office space.

A special meeting of the committee has been called for today, but Mr Bascombe and three other committee members maintain they knew nothing of the loan arrangement until it was revealed by The West Australian on Tuesday.

“We know that all the facts are not on the table about this,” Mr Bascombe said. “This did not go through the committee. There appears to be a committee above the committee and we are no longer running the organisation.”

Mr Bascombe is one of four finance and administration committee members who signed a letter to Retirees WA chief executive Sue Hiddlestone asking for the details of any business deals done with Mr Nicholls and his company Over 55 Lifestyle Villages Pty Ltd.

It is understood that two committee members met a Department of Consumer and Employment Protection officer on Tuesday. Apart from the \$1.8 million loan, Retirees WA has invested \$1.6 million in redeemable preference shares in Mr Nicholls' firm and has borrowed \$1.02 million from his company at an interest rate of 10 per cent.

Until last year, Mr Nicholls was a paid consultant to Retirees WA and is now described as an honorary liaison consultant with the right to attend committee meetings.

Following The West Australian's article on Tuesday, Mr Nicholls told radio station 6PR that he was disappointed that a cloud had been cast over Retirees WA.

“A lot of the information and a lot of the suggestion in the article was really about trying to create the

connotation that this ex-politician is in there trying to rip off a not-for-profit organisation,” he said.

“The organisation will be in a very strong position in future years simply because a few people have been prepared to stand up and say we believe in what the organisation is about and we're prepared to underwrite you during the difficult years.”

Retirees WA president Thelma White issued a statement to clarify her knowledge of the \$1.8 million loan to Mr Nicholls' company.

“At the time of being interviewed by the journalist I misunderstood the reference being made to the loan,” she said. “For the record I was party to the discussions and the decision.”

Memo: **ROGER NICHOLLS**;ALAN BASCOMBE

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