

A new Australian model of housing and care: Apartments for Life at Ocean Street

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Introduction

- Population ageing is a major challenge for Australia.
- Numbers of people aged 85+ will treble by 2040, so services to support that group need to greatly increase.
- Government policies encourage older people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible ('ageing in place'), with support of family and formal services.
- Rates of home ownership among older Australians are high (82% in 2006)ⁱ, but inappropriate design and/or location can make staying in their own homes impossible.
- Older renters are a very vulnerable group and their numbers are projected to increase.
- Premature moves to a nursing home:
 - are expensive to taxpayer and individual
 - are not what the majority of older people want
 - often jeopardise the social connections that are critical to wellbeing in later life.

What older people want

Nursing home accommodation does not appeal to the baby boomer generation.

A telephone survey was done in July 2008, (n=1,001) across NSW, of those 50+ (included city, rural and regional areas, in proportion to the population).ⁱⁱ

- 29% believed they knew a lot about nursing home accommodation and a further 59% knew a little. 12% claimed to know nothing.
- 44% had a positive opinion of nursing homes, 43% negative, 13% uncommitted.
- 75% would only move into a nursing home if they had no other choice.
- Those 50-59 were the most negative about nursing homes, and those 70+ the most positive.
- 82% believed there is a need for a new style of accommodation and care for older people.

Apartments for Life at Ocean Street

- will offer a new way of living in later life, giving older people an alternative to traditional forms of retirement accommodation and aged care
- based on extensive research into Australian and overseas evidence (especially Humanitas' Apartments for Life in the Netherlands).ⁱⁱⁱ



Location

- in Sydney's eastern suburbs, 2 km from Bondi Beach
- very densely populated area, with a higher proportion of people 75+ than Sydney as a whole
- a short level walk to transport, shops, leisure facilities and churches
- shortage of housing that is suitable for older people and affordable
- older renters, and owners with low value housing (e.g. older style apartments with no lift) often have to move away.

Key aims

- 95% of residents able to stay in their own apartment to the end of life
- older people able to stay in their own community, keeping social networks
- social participation and integration with the local community encouraged, to reduce risk of social isolation
- apartments affordable to a range of older people, and diversity encouraged.

Key features

- designed for a high level of accessibility and adaptability
- inclusion of affordable housing for both renters and purchasers
- assisted access to support and care services
- on-site services, facilities and social activities
- a philosophy of respect for residents' individuality and autonomy.

The Project is in the detailed design phase with occupation expected in 2012.

Conclusion

The model has the potential to overcome many of the limitations inherent in current provision by better integrating housing and care for older people, maximising their independence, autonomy and community participation and minimising their need for high cost institutional care. A conservative estimate of savings to governments is \$20m over the life of the project.^{iv} The benefits in improved quality of life for residents are likely to be very significant and will be the subject of detailed evaluation.



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ⁱ ABS unpublished data, quoted in Productivity Commission 2008, *Trends in Aged Care Services: some implications*, Commission Research Paper, Canberra, Australia

ⁱⁱ Galaxy Research, 2008, *Looking to the Future: The care and housing of older Australians*, Sydney, Australia

ⁱⁱⁱ The Benevolent Society, 2009, *Apartments for Life in Australia: Lessons for Australia from Humanitas in the Netherlands*, Sydney, Australia

^{iv} Acil Tasman, 2009, *The Apartments for Life housing, care & support concept for older people: an assessment of economic and budgetary implications*, Sydney Australia.