

APARTMENTS FOR LIFE AT OCEAN STREET

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does Apartments for Life offer the care and accommodation that older people need?

Research shows 75% of people over 50 would only move to a nursing home as a last resort. Older people want to stay in their own homes. They want alternatives to traditional nursing home care.

Our Apartments for Life model does not currently exist in Australia. It offers a genuinely new and innovative approach to housing, care and support for older people.

It differs from the usual retirement village approach by combining purpose-built 'age-proof' housing, which promotes self-care, with mutual care from informal sources (family, friends, neighbours) and community-based care delivered in the older person's home. It provides:

- **age-friendly design:** The apartments will be fully accessible and adaptable to older people's changing mobility and dexterity.
- **interaction with the surrounding community:** the proposal includes community and recreational facilities that will be open to the general public.
- **care advice:** the care management team will help residents and their families negotiate with health and care services on residents' behalf to get the services they need
- **community support:** the community development worker will develop group activities such as exercise classes, adult education, garden club etc
- **community /family interaction:** local support and friendship networks will be preserved because residents won't have to move to find appropriate, affordable accommodation.
- **affordability:** 40% of the apartments will be for lower income residents – allowing long-term residents of Bondi to grow old and stay in the community they've known for decades.

Our aim is that 95% of residents will be able to stay in their own apartment until the end of their life.

Why is a different approach needed?

Expert research shows that unsuitable housing contributes to premature, expensive and unnecessary moves to a nursing home or hostel. Cost benefit analyses confirm that insecure tenure and dwelling type can increase care costs, putting greater pressures on taxpayer-provided funding.

Although Government policy encourages older people to stay in their own homes now, it assumes they already have suitable and secure housing. This is frequently not the case. In Sydney, there is a severe shortage of secure, affordable and appropriate housing options for low income older renters. This group is extremely vulnerable.

As their health and circumstances change, older homeowners may also find their home is no longer suitable to live in, but housing price increases mean they can't afford to trade to something more appropriate and still stay in their local area.

Right now there is an urgent need for a better way. Apartments for Life is our response.

Is the site suitable for this proposal?

The project directly addresses key issues identified in Waverley Council's own Social Plan and Housing Plan, including:

- provision of accessible, affordable and secure housing for older people
- more aged care services and promotion of healthy ageing

- support for older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- strategies to combat social isolation.

Statistics show that 7.3 per cent of the residents of the Waverley LGA are aged 75 and over. This compares with 6.1 per cent for this age group for all of Sydney.

Are the building heights and scale appropriate?

The project complies with Council requirements, including floor space ratio, design, affordability, heritage preservation and parking.

The mix of stepped 4-10 storey buildings fits with the existing neighbouring buildings and is supported by the SEPP 65 Design Review Panel for Waverley. The heights are consistent with the housing style of the area.

We require 140 units to help us meet our social objectives for this project, which include:

- making 40% of the units affordable to people on low or modest incomes, in accordance with Waverley Council's social plan
- having site facilities open to the general public as well as residents
- preserving Scarba House and the historic fig trees and keeping half the site as green, open space for residents and the Waverley community to use and enjoy.

The project was submitted under the SEPP (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability) and is compliant with SEPP 65 design quality principles.

Does this project set a precedent for building heights in Waverley?

This project will not set a precedent for building heights. The site and development application both have unique characteristics which set them apart, including:

- Special uses zoning
- Heritage listed building and grounds which will be open to the public to use and enjoy
- Provision of affordable housing
- Housing for the aged
- Large site with two access ways and frontages
- It will continue to be owned and operated by The Society, with a strong track record of providing care for older people.

How is The Benevolent Society addressing potential loss of views and overshadowing?

The positioning of the complex is designed to minimise impact on solar access to, and views from, neighbouring buildings and our plans maintain the majority of view lines down the streets or through the park.

We made substantial changes to the original Development Application (submitted May 2008) in response to feedback from Council and the local community. To date, approximately 40 design concepts have been developed to balance and minimise the effect on the neighbouring buildings.

We acknowledge that there will be a loss of views for a small number of neighbouring buildings, and that shadowing will affect some of the units at 22-28 Wellington St and 24 Ocean St.

Our design has lesser impact on neighbouring building's views and access to sunlight than an 8 storey building that complied with setbacks in a comparable Development Control Plan scheme.

Is the project a profit-making exercise for The Benevolent Society?

Apartments for Life is not about making a profit. We are Australia's first and oldest charity, with a track record of nearly 200 years of community service. We are a non-profit organisation whose focus is to address social problems and the needs of the disadvantaged.

Apartments for Life offers a solution to a pressing social issue: providing suitable housing for our increasingly ageing population. The Benevolent Society is planning to invest more than \$60 million in bringing this project to fruition.

We believe in the value and benefits of Apartments for Life and are prepared to accept a deficit of up to \$6 million in the early years of the project. In addition, we are subsidising affordable housing on this project (\$16 million); development of the community facilities and renovation of Scarba house and the gardens (\$5 million); the employment of onsite staff (\$500,000 per year). Any surpluses down the track will be utilised to help duplicate the model and to grow community support programs.

What are The Benevolent Society's reasons for undertaking the project?

Australia's population is ageing at an unprecedented rate. The number of people aged 65+ years is projected to double over the next 30 years: from 2.7 million to 6.7 million. The number of people aged 85+ years is projected to triple over the next 20 years to 1.1 million in 2026.

The current residential aged care system does not meet the needs or desires of older Australians. It is a very expensive model, which will be difficult, if not impossible, for current and future governments to sustain.

Apartments for Life will offer significant public benefits – not only for Waverley. We want to transform the choices available to all older Australians to age well, by offering them the chance to live independently in their own 'age-friendly' apartment until the end of their life.

Will Apartments For Life provide adequate care services on site?

Apartments for Life is based on the successful Humanitas model in The Netherlands. It combines purpose-built 'age-proof' housing, self-care, mutual care from informal sources such as family and friends, and community-based care delivered at home.

A care advisor and other support staff will be available to help residents access community care services; to arrange for volunteers to visit; to liaise with residents' families; and to organise transport for social outings, medical appointments etc. The community facilities are also designed to promote interaction with neighbours, to encourage a culture of residents 'looking out' for each other.

We have decades of experience in community home care in the Eastern Suburbs and we are confident the new model will work well.

How are concerns about parking being addressed?

110 new underground car spaces will be provided, to reduce demand for on-street parking. Three above-ground onsite parking spots will be dedicated to the Go-Get car share scheme.

How will the designs incorporate environmental considerations?

Environmental design features of the project include:

- on-site water retention and rainwater harvesting for toilet flushing and drip irrigation
- maximisation of open space and buildings positioned to allow flow of natural light and air
- wide use of fans instead of air-conditioning

The site location will also encourage pedestrian activity. It is close to shopping, entertainment, associated medical services and other amenities and is well-served by public transport. It will also have a mini-bus service.

How will The Benevolent Society manage eligibility for affordable housing residents?

Affordable housing eligibility criteria will be developed in line with guidelines from Housing NSW's Centre for Affordable Housing.

Is high-rise appropriate housing for frail and older people?

Multi-storey complexes have proven very popular with older retirees. Indeed, 45% of older lower income households in Waverley live in high rise apartments (2006 Census). According to the 2006 Census, 40 per cent of older lower income households in Waverley already live in apartment buildings which are more than four storeys high.

High-rise only becomes problematic for older people when the apartment and building have poor access and adaptability for older people's changing abilities and dexterity.

Apartments for Life has been specifically designed for older people and includes special features to accommodate changing levels of ability:

- extra safety, security and access features (eg. level entries, wider doors and hallways)
- purpose-designed lifts
- kitchens with switches, plugs and cupboards within easy reach
- bathrooms designed to be useable and safe.

How were the needs of previous residents of Chapman House and Walter Cavill Village addressed?

Some time ago, we decided we could better serve older people and their families by providing more community care services, delivered in their own homes, instead of running residential sites. We therefore made the difficult, but inevitable, strategic decision to close Chapman House and Walter Cavill Village.

Chapman House – the aged care hostel

In October 2007 we advised residents and their families of plans to close Chapman House. Over a six month period we talked to them about their care needs and helped them to find appropriate alternative accommodation. The vast majority – 39 of the 45 residents – remained in the Eastern Suburbs. Six residents chose to move elsewhere, to be closer to relatives. Chapman House closed on 28 March 2008.

Walter Cavill Village – independent living units

The decision to close Walter Cavill Village was announced in August 2003. Over a three year period we helped residents relocate to suitable accommodation. We paid all relocation expenses (eg. removalists, electricity reconnection) and bought new furniture. We kept residents and families informed throughout this time and also put them in touch with independent advocacy services. The Village closed in 2006.