

Apartments for Life at Ocean Street Community Newsletter



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Dear Resident

The Benevolent Society has been working for some time now on plans for a new form of housing for older people on our site between Ocean and Wellington Streets, Bondi.

Our Development Application (DA) for the Apartments for Life at Ocean Street project is currently being considered by Waverley Council.

Many people have asked us about the design of the apartments. This Newsletter describes some of the design features including some of the all-important safety features.

Sincerely

Richard Spencer
Chief Executive Officer



for 127 apartments in two multi-storey blocks with facilities open for use by the local community as a whole at ground level and in Scarba House.

The current plan has been developed in response to community feedback and expert advice.

The need is there

As in many other parts of Australia's inner cities, the Waverley local government area has undergone considerable gentrification over the past 20 years. This change has created social and financial pressures for its long-term residents. As prices and rents have risen, it has become increasingly difficult for older people to stay in the same area, when their current house or apartment becomes unsuitable for them.

The many walk-up blocks of units in the area are also difficult for people with poorer health or limited mobility to manage. It may be impossible to do the major modifications, for example, putting in a lift, that people would need to enable them to remain living in their own homes.

According to the 2006 Census, eighty percent of older households in Waverley are on lower incomes.

What is Apartments for Life

The Apartments for Life at Ocean Street project will be a new form of housing, care and support for older people that is fully integrated into – and in tune with – the community of which it is part.

It will enable older people to stay in their own homes until the end of their life, with the support of visiting community care when needed. It will enable people to remain fully part of their community and, for virtually all residents, avoid the need to move again to a nursing home.

The project will reflect the diverse and vibrant community of Bondi and offer a range of apartment sizes. Our plans are

Above average numbers of older people live alone, as compared to Sydney as a whole.

Forty percent of the apartments will be priced so that they are affordable by local older people in a range of financial circumstances. Some will be for disadvantaged older people who do not own a home.

Design for living and for safety

The modern design of the apartments will take into account that residents' may have health problems or disabilities, and that their health may change over time. It will mean that residents will be able to live independently in their units for longer and that those who need care services will also be able to continue doing some things for themselves, for longer.

Built in flexibility will allow the apartments to be adapted by, for example, by adjusting doors or walls to open up space or make it easier to move around safely.

All the apartments will have a second bedroom, half or full sized, so that a family member or carer can stay while helping look after a resident in poor health.

The design of the lifts will follow international practice for safety in high rise living so that, in an emergency, residents and their visitors will be able to use the lifts to evacuate.

Glass doors around the lift lobbies ('smoke lobbies') will prevent smoke getting into the lifts or lift shafts. The stairwells will have space on each floor where a person in a wheelchair can wait in safety for assistance, if needed.

All apartments will have personal alarm systems. They will also have cabling built in to minimise the cost of later on installing 'smart' technology systems, if wanted by a resident. One example of the new types of 'smart' technology that can assist older people is sensors that detect if a person has fallen over and is not able to get up.

The buildings are designed to encourage social interaction while giving residents the peace of mind that comes with a high level of safety and security.

Research has shown that having windows or balconies overlooking public areas is one of the most effective ways of making them safe.

Residents will be able to see out over the green open spaces, notice their neighbours coming and going and observe people walking through the site.

The balconies on each level that lead from the lifts to the apartments will be partially glassed and overlook the site. They will incorporate planter boxes and seating areas where residents can sit, chat with neighbours or 'watch the world go by'. There will also be space for people to park electric scooters or other mobility aids.

Similarly, the common rooms and roof terraces will provide other areas where residents can meet or take their visitors.

Gates from the streets will be closed at night, but open during the day to the surrounding community.

Expert endorses more appropriate housing for older people

"Recent research has highlighted a lack of accommodation in Australia that allows older people to remain living independently.

"This situation has a negative impact on older people but also places additional strains on the taxpayer because of premature entry into institutional living.

"The aspect of The Benevolent Society initiative that is particularly impressive is the inclusion of well-designed affordable rental accommodation, not just the services and recreational facilities."

Professor Peter Phibbs, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, University of Western Sydney

For more information see www.bensoc.org.au and click on Apartments for Life at Ocean Street Project or contact Sarah Fogg, The Benevolent Society: 9339 8000 or oceanstsite@bensoc.org.au