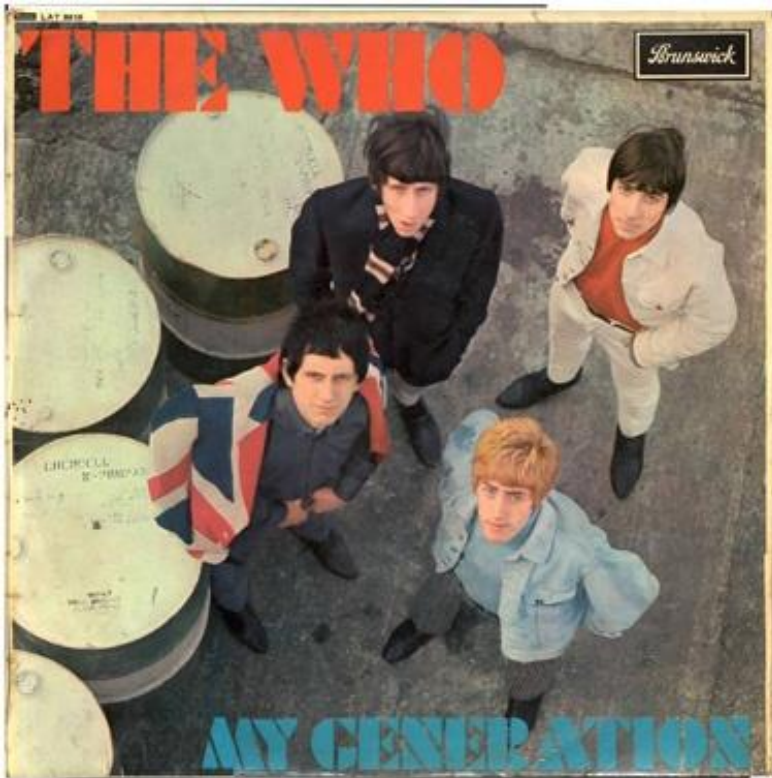


Hope I die before I get old: the state of play for housing liveability in Australia

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My Generation 1965



People try to put us down
Just because we get around
Things they say do look awful cold
Hope I die before I get old

...

I'm not trying to cause a big sensation
Just talking 'bout my generation

The Who, 1965

My Generation 2010



Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend – members of The Who

A (still)misunderstood generation?

- Many cultural shifts since 1965
- But stereotypes not shifted
- Images of frailty and incompetence
- Creation of special services
- Denies lived realities of active older people
- Expected additional calls on public purse
- Not everyone will need aged care

...Talking 'bout my generation

Where will you want to live?

- Too many stereotypes and assumptions operating in social policy and design practice
- Downsizing and villages are not for everyone
- Most options are costly
- Notions of under occupancy not well founded

People try to put us down...

But will your home suit?

- Bringing about change in the house-building industry is difficult
- Enduring stereotypes of older people:
 - special housing types for older people
 - segregation/specialisation marginalises
 - stereotypes reinforced

Things they say do look awful cold...

Universal design principles

- Change the paradigm from special designs to a paradigm of inclusive design across all housing types
- Landcom (NSW) has shown it is possible
- Dismissed myths of cost and difficulty
- But still not taken up by industry Why?

I'm not trying to cause a big sensation...

Approach to study

- Interpretivist methodology
- 62 survey returns, 16 in-depth interviews
- Overarching question: why don't we have more universal design principles in housing?
- If real barriers are not additional cost or additional difficulty, where are the real barriers?
- What is industry thinking?

The house building machine

Property
Developers

Regulators

Architects

Builders

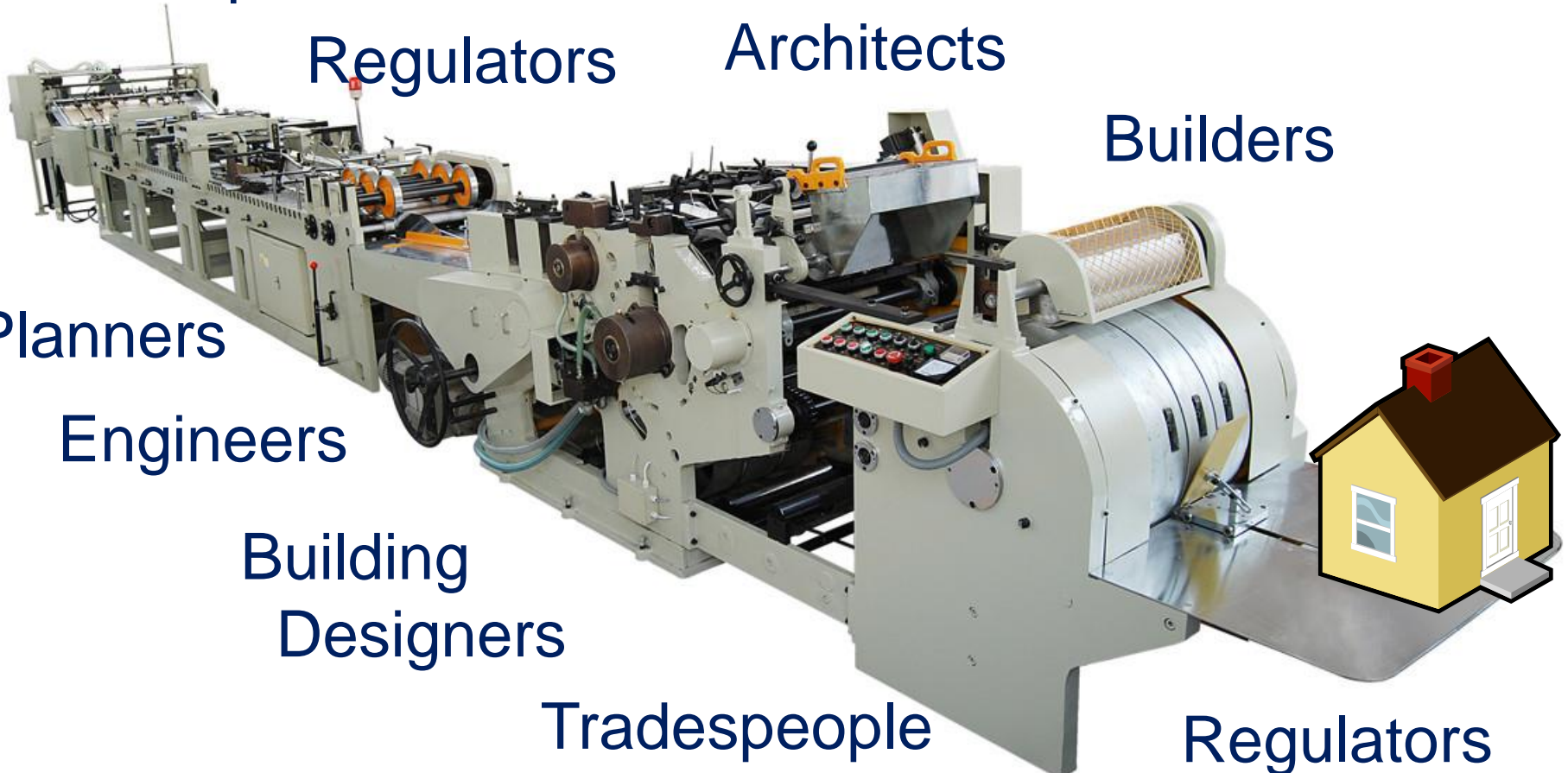
Planners

Engineers

Building
Designers

Tradespeople

Regulators



Industry attitudes

Varied from:



Familiar with the concepts of universal design in housing

Hearing about it but not knowing what it is

Not embracing the ideas at all – retaining notions of specialist accommodation

Those familiar with UD

“We talk about universal design, or design-for-all as an added extra and it shouldn't be”

Architect: large property developer

“There is considerable focus on disability and no sense of just making life easier for people...”

Architect A: private practice

Those familiar with UD

“I think there is an attitude of, oh, people adapt to the housing as they get older, and if they struggle you put a hand rail in – and OK, then you die [laughs].”

Architect A: private practice

Those unfamiliar with UD

- Confusion with disability standards and adaptable housing standard
- Assumed to be a different housing type
- Claimed much higher cost of construction
- Too difficult to apply in all cases
- Not their business – government business

Influencers of design

It's [the developer's] product, it's their money, it's their gamble, it's their risk. It's their show. They should be having a lot of say in what it's like.

Manager: industry association



Influencers of design

“Architects have control over design to the extent to which they can within the planning controls of a particular area. ... You need [to influence] planners because the planners in most councils write the controls, and often they have little design skill.”

Urban Designer: private practice

“...the next greatest influencers are law makers, being regulations and planning controls.”

Design Manager: property developer



Influencers of design

“If [management] are not educated on those things they automatically don't seem important to them - it is about changing attitudes and educating.”

Architect: project home builder

Sales and Marketing

“I think at that point of time in [the lives of young families] the concept of being restricted in access is not something that’s high in their mind. It’s not important to them at that part of their lifecycle, and they don’t really care about that – it is not something that is strong in their mind at that point of purchase.”

Planner: local government

Sales and Marketing

“Not that we are not in tune, but the demand for universal housing is not there. People aren’t asking for it and therefore it doesn’t get built.”

Business Development Manager:
project home builder

Sales and Marketing

“You do different products, different developments for different markets... and what those markets are telling you [universal design] is not a big consideration you need to factor into developments.”

Manager: industry association

Sales and Marketing

“But if you are talking about mainstream housing then the fact that someone has a terrible accident or gets ill or whatever, well then, no, it's not factored in. So what's the benefit versus the cost of requiring a change in standards that add costs across the board versus, OK, if you are unlucky enough to have [an accident] happen to you and you are living in housing which doesn't suit that need then perhaps you need to find alternative housing. If you design a product around an age group which is at the back end of its life, you deliberately design [an assistive living product].”

Manager, Industry Association

Sales and Marketing

“All too often the customer doesn’t know what they do not know. Hence, customers keep buying the same homes and the builders are happy to keep selling them.”

“Most people that buy them like them, and you can’t argue with that.”

Design Manager: property developer

Perceptions of cost

Landcom (2008) research showed the overall cost was one or two percent extra on construction costs when re-arranging existing project home floor plans, but almost zero if the features are integrated into the design from the start.

Perceptions of cost

“My company is currently doing costing exercises and I haven’t seen the results yet. But I’d be amazed if it came out too expensive. From what I know of the basic regulations it’s minor money in the scheme of things.”

Design Manager: property developer

Perceptions of cost

“The industry is always thinking about costs and returns. At the end of the day they are basically seeking return on investment. They look at it from that perspective.”

Planner: local government

Older people should move

“It is probably better to move rather than alter their house to suit their changing needs. I don’t support the concept that older people with disabilities who are struggling [should stay home]. But at the same time I would like to see that older person have a viable option of a place to go that suits their needs better...”

Architect B: private practice

Older people should move

“One day they’ll get to the stage where they can’t run that house anymore and either need to spend more on assistance – that’s one way to do it. The other is, forget this, I’m going to go out and buy a little town house and have a different lifestyle – a little apartment somewhere.”

Manager: industry association

Update

- Livable Housing Design Guidelines 2010
- Landcom and Clarendon Homes working together
- Three display homes at The Ponds development in north western Sydney will open early 2012

Groundswell of change happening?

The house building machine

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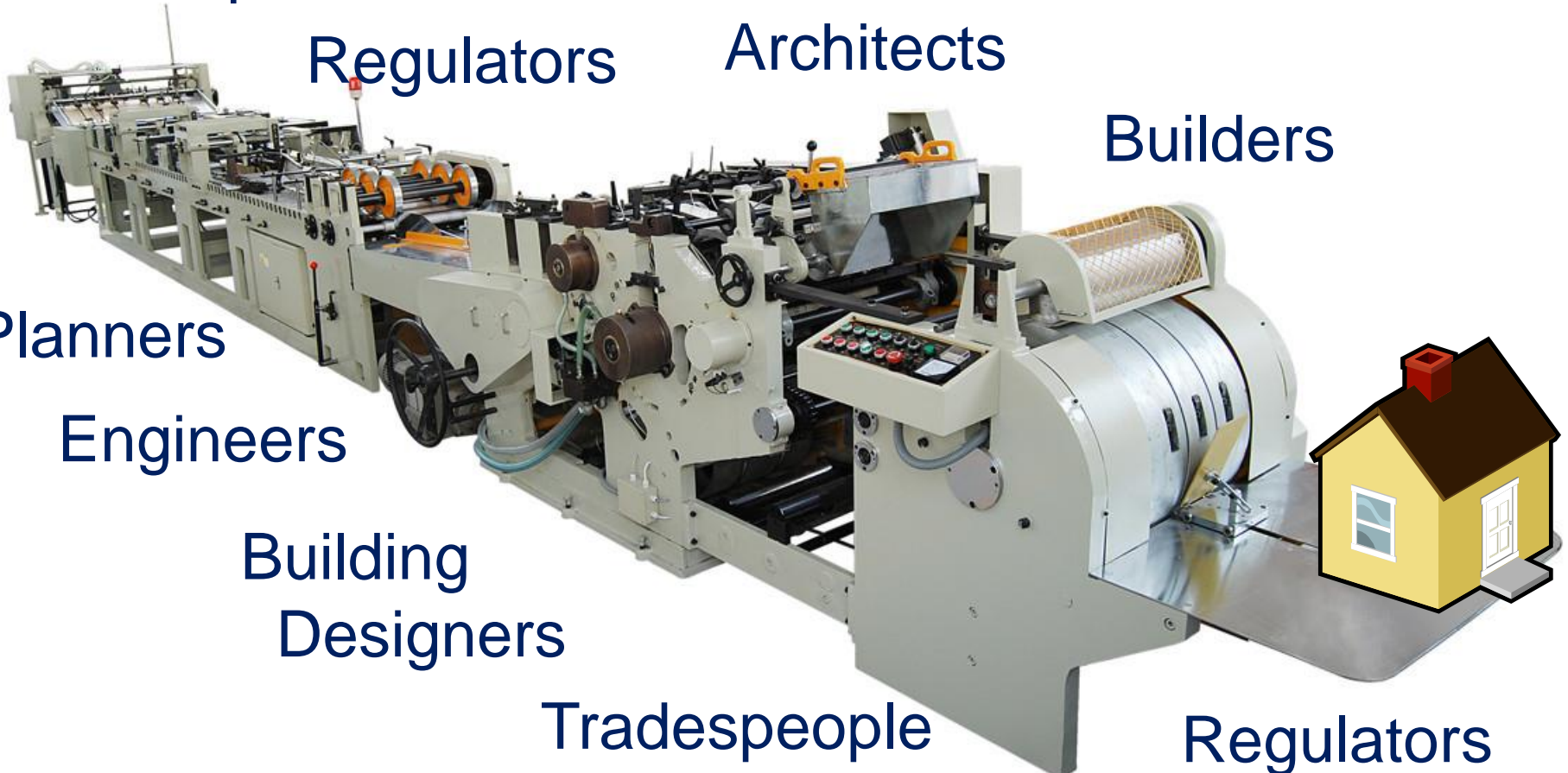
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A paradigm shift is needed

So that people like the Whitlams don't have to live separately because they *did* grow old and now their home doesn't suit them anymore.



Thank you!

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