

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

# AHURI Research Seminar Sydney

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# Housing, land and neighbourhood use by older home owners

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- The researchers are based in the City Futures Research Centre at the University of New South Wales



# Ageing Australia

- Fuelled by low fertility, increased longevity and impact of the post war baby boom
- 55+ increase from 24% (2006) to 38% (2051)
- 64+ increase from 13% (2006) to 26-27% (2051)
- 85+ increase from 1.6% (2006) to 6-8% (2051)
- The most important demographic change
- Profound impact on society and economy
- Many implications for housing and urban policy
- Including questions about the efficient use of housing, land by older people



### Research aims

- 1. Understand the relationship between older home owners and their dwelling types, sizes and locations;
- 2. Examine the variation in these factors by age, level of ability, household type and cultural background;
- Assess the efficiency of housing stock for older home owners, considering changes in household size and composition over time;
- Explore measures that might help to improve efficient use of the housing stock & liveability for older Australians;

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### Research aims

Cont...

- Establish the costs and benefits of adaptable and universal housing design and propose an economic model to assess the consequences for older Australians if not adopted;
- Investigate the level of demand and consumer support amongst older home owners for adaptable and universal housing design
- This presentation will focus on the question of the efficient use of dwellings by older people (i.e. research aims 1, 3, 4 and 6)



### Research methods

- Literature and policy review;
- ABS data analysis 2006 Census, 1999 Australian Housing Survey
- National survey of 1782 older home owners via National Seniors magazine '50 Something';
- 70 In-depth interviews undertaken in five states/territories (NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, ACT);
- Cost-Benefit analysis and economic modeling for three design approaches – custom modifications, Adaptable Design and Universal Design

## Survey respondents





# Respondents by state/territory location





# Respondents by age group





# Permanent & temporary residents



60 53.9 50 Percentage 37.5 40 30 20 5.9 10 1.9 8.0 0 2 3 5+ 4 1 No of Permanent Residents 12 11.1 10 <sup>></sup>ercentage 8 5 1 6 3.2 4 2.3 1.6 2 0

1

2

3

**No of Temporary Residents** 

4

5 +

#### **Permanent Residents**

- 6 months or more as usual place of residence
- 54% of older households have 2 residents
- 38% have one resident

#### **Temporary Residents**

- Stay over 20 nights or more per year
- 23% have one or more temporary resident

### Household size changes in in the last 5 years





# Household size reasons for changes



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Decreases in household size

- Children moved out (53.3%)
- Death of partner or end of relationship (27.6%)

#### Increases in household size

- Children moving in (40.7%)
- New relationship (11.9%)
- Boarder moved in (8.5%)
- Grandchildren moved in (6.8%)
- Parent moving in (5.1%)

### Household size effects of changes



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Increase in Household Size

- Moved to another dwelling (31.4%)
- Alterations to dwelling (9.8%)
- No changes to dwelling (58.8%)

Decrease in Household Size

- Moved to another dwelling (48.3%)
- Alterations to dwelling (3.3%)
- No changes to dwelling (48.4%)

# Assistance required



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13% of responding households required assistance of some kind

Flat/Apartment
Attached
Separate



### Care providers

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#### 42% of care provided by family or friends



## Dwelling types & sizes



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Housing Types 75% Separate 11% Attached 11% Flat/Apartment 76% Single Storey



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# Floor area x Dwelling type



Percentage

#### Bedrooms number



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Percentage

### Bedrooms not used for sleeping





- 94.5 % of older homeowners dwellings had 1 or more bedrooms not used for sleeping
- At first glance this suggests that most older homeowners underutilise their dwellings

#### Bedrooms alternative uses





### Bedroom as office/study



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35.6% of respondents were working full-time or part-time

#### Bedroom as guest room



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23% have 1 or more temporary residents staying over 20+ nights per year

#### Bedroom as sewing or utility room





# Bedroom as hobby room





#### Bedroom as exercise room





# Bedroom other alternative uses



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#### TV/Media Room



**Sitting Room** 



Library/Reading Room



# Suitability of the dwelling

- 91.8 % were regarded as suitable for the number of permanent and temporary residents
- 49.6 % were regarded as suitable for the special care needs of their households
- 34.3% had made modifications to their current dwelling
- Most common were 'grab rails' (28.2%), 'bathroom modifications' (26.4%) and 'stair modifications' (22.5%)
- 40% said that they were likely to modify in future
- Changes to stairs (32.1%), ramps (22.8%), grab rails (22.1%) and bathrooms (20.1%) were the most likely
- 54% said they would be able to pay for these, 14% were uncertain and 4.2% said they could not

# Options for improving efficiency

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Housing option

Have adult children live in your home

Live with adult children in their home

Rent part of your home to others

Move to a self-care retirement village

Move to an over 55s seniors living development

Move to a residential aged care facility

Use professional care service in the home



# Attitudes to housing design approaches





# Attitudes to visitable design features



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**Design Features** 



## Conclusions

- Housing efficiency/utilisation measures based on no of usual residents and no of bedrooms alone are misleading and should be reviewed to take into account:
  - → Temporary as well as permanent residents
  - $\rightarrow$  Alternative use of bedrooms for essential or desirable activities
  - $\rightarrow$  Permanent and temporary changes in household size
  - → Level of ability and need for assistance (which can require more space)
- The majority of older home owners continue to favour single storey, 3-4 bedroom separate houses with private outdoor space – albeit smaller and easier to maintain as they get older

# Conclusions

Cont...



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- 'Spare' bedrooms serve a number of uses that are important to active and healthy ageing – namely office/study activities, guest accommodation, hobbies, and exercise.
- Older home owners prefer the use of professional care services in the home to other options for improving housing efficiency, but are also more amenable to seniors living, retirement villages and residential care.
- The most highly favoured design approach for improving accessibility is Adaptable Design followed closely by Universal Design.
- The four features of Visitable Design are favoured by a majority of older home owners



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### Discussant

Mark Bayly Centre for affordable housing, Housing NSW

