

# Media release

## New research reveals Older Australians living large but staying put

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The vast majority of older Australians are living in three-bedroom homes on large suburban allotments that would be regarded as under-utilised by international standards, according to new research.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute found 84 per cent of homes occupied by older Australians aged 55 and over would be considered too big by international occupancy standards.

'Despite statistics that indicate their homes are too big, more than 90 per cent of older Australians say they want to remain in their own homes with the support of professional services', said Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute executive director Dr Ian Winter.

'Most older Australians don't believe they're languishing in homes that are too large. Their clear perception is that their homes are of a suitable size and are well utilised with extra rooms given over to hosting permanent residents, visiting friends and family, home offices and hobbies', Dr Winter said.

The national study of 1604 older home owners found that while most people would prefer to remain in their own homes; 63 per cent were prepared to consider entering a retirement village in the event of developing a disability or increased need for assistance, whilst 56 per cent were prepared to enter a development for seniors in such circumstances. However only 18 per cent would consider living in their children's homes.

Lead researcher Associate Professor Bruce Judd from the University of New South Wales said most older Australians want to have a home that can be easily modified at low-cost to meet their needs, or a universally designed home that did not need to be modified. They are less keen on moving to a retirement village, a seniors' development or moving in with their children. However, for those needing to move to more appropriately designed housing, having a choice of options available is also important.

'Many older Australians are nervous about retirement villages citing lifestyle issues, cramped living quarters, bad experiences reported by others and concern about the cost', Professor Judd said.

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute executive director Dr Winter says older Australians will need to be supported to make changes before their abilities decline.

'We need to provide attractive and diverse housing options for older people within their neighbourhoods, and eliminate financial disincentives to moving such as stamp duties', Dr Winter said.

'But because people prefer to stay where they are there's a strong case to be made for regulating housing design to make it age friendly right from the start to eliminate or at least minimise the need to make modifications later', he said.

'Obviously this doesn't come without some extra cost initially but more age friendly housing and urban design will ultimately benefit all Australians by addressing some of the wide variations in the quality of design in different neighbourhoods around the country', he said.

## Additional information

A fully copy of the Research and Policy Bulletin Issue 126: *How well do older Australians utilise their homes?* can be downloaded from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute website.

[http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download/rap\\_issue\\_126](http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download/rap_issue_126)

Media contacts: Luisa Saccotelli 0400 149 901, Aileen Muldoon 0419 112 503.