

Research reveals older Australians' hopes for housing

- Owning a three-bedroom, separate dwelling in the middle/outer suburbs of a capital city is the most common form of housing demanded by older Australians according to a new survey of 2,400 people over 55 years across the country.
- While current housing meets the short-term housing aspirations of over 90 per cent of older Australians, it only meets the longer-term aspirations for around 70 per cent as needs change with age.
- The housing aspirations gap, while relatively small, is largest for renters in the private and social housing sectors and highlights a demand for diverse housing options, notably in small regional towns, for two- and three-bedroom houses.

The research, '*Older Australians and the housing aspirations gap*', undertaken for AHURI by researchers from Curtin University and Swinburne University of Technology explores the housing aspirations of older Australians (over the age of 55) in order to support government policy making that will deliver the housing and housing assistance required to meet their diverse aspirations.

According to the report, the middle or outer suburbs of a city are the locations older Australians most want to live, an aspiration which increases with age. There is a strong desire to live in small regional towns for those aged between 55 and 74 years, while those aged 75 and over are more likely to indicate a preference for the inner suburbs of a capital city. Few older Australians want to live in the CBD of a capital city.

The research reveals that over two thirds of older Australians want to live in a detached freestanding home, with the remaining third preferring an attached dwelling or apartment. Around 50 per cent of older Australians want to live in a home with three bedrooms, while just 20 per cent wanted four or more. The preference for large dwellings drops sharply with age.

'What this shows is that the housing industry needs to recognise this great demand from older Australians for two and three-bedroom dwellings located in high level amenity locations. While apartments are an important product for around 13 per cent of older Australians, smaller attached houses also offer a solution' says lead author, Dr Amity James from Curtin University.

'Regional areas also need a greater diversity of dwelling product to offer older Australians more housing choice,' says Dr James. 'While small regional towns are a popular place for older Australians to live, there needs to be a range of dwellings available in these locations to meet demand. Regardless of location, the delivery of housing which meets these aspirations will require a joint approach between developers and planners.'

'Aspirations are underpinned by a desire for long-term stable housing which offers safety and security into later life' explained Dr James. Around 80 per cent of older Australians surveyed reported a preference for home ownership, this is a cause for concern given homes ownership rates are falling fast within younger generations.'

The research found that the housing “aspirations gap” was highest among renters in the private and social housing sectors. Such households face barriers of discrimination, limited housing options and, for those in the private rental sector, insecurity. ‘We need to find ways to assist older Australians to sustain home ownership and develop alternative tenure options which offer the type of security desired’ says report co-author, Associate Professor Steven Rowley. ‘Specific retirement living products have an important role to play along with a reformed private rental sector.’

There are opportunities for policy makers to bridge these gaps through targeted housing assistance for vulnerable home owners and creating greater tenure security for older private renters. ‘Increasing housing diversity to offer more choice allowing older households to reduce the size of their dwelling and developing a central housing information service to advise older Australians of their housing options are interventions that will assist older Australians to meet their housing aspirations’ says Associate Professor Rowley.

The report can be downloaded from the AHURI website at

<http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/317>

For media enquiries, please contact:

Anthony Smeaton
Marketing and Communications Director
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
Mobile +61 404 544 101
Email anthony.smeaton@ahuri.edu.au

ATTACHMENT

Table 1: Ideal housing outcomes of older Australians by age group

Location	55–64	65–74	75+
the middle/outer suburbs of a capital city	32%	36%	40%
a small regional town	21%	21%	18%
a large regional city or town	19%	16%	14%
the inner suburbs of a capital city	16%	18%	21%
the CBD of a capital city	6%	3%	5%
a remote community	3%	2%	0%
No preference	2%	2%	1%
Other	2%	1%	0%
Dwelling type	55–64	65–74	75+
Separate (detached) dwelling	69%	69%	61%
Attached dwelling (semi-detached/terrace/townhouse etc.)	9%	11%	14%
Apartment (less than 4 storeys)	9%	8%	10%
Apartment (more than 4 storeys)	4%	4%	5%
Ancillary dwelling/granny flat	2%	2%	3%
Caravan or other temporary structure	1%	0%	0%
No preference	4%	2%	1%
Other	1%	2%	4%
Number of bedrooms	55–64	65–74	75+
1	2%	2%	3%
2	25%	25%	35%
3	51%	52%	47%
4	20%	19%	13%
5+	1%	2%	0%
Tenure type	55–64	65–74	75+
Ownership (full, joint, shared)	78%	81%	80%
Rental	6%	4%	6%
Social housing	5%	3%	2%
Within a lifestyle or retirement village	5%	8%	6%

Source: Authors. Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations Survey (2018) data, unweighted.