

DESIGN FOR AN AGEING POPULATION

Productive Ageing Centre **National Seniors Australia**

Designing spaces for older people

Architects are rethinking the design of homes and buildings in private and public spaces. Professor Alan Pert (*Director, Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne*) spoke about some of the new and exciting designs that cater to the needs of older people.



Design for an ageing population: creating buildings and places that meet the needs of an ageing society

Professor Alan Pert (Director, Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne)

Alan Pert pointed out that the demographic landscape of our cities is changing as our population ages. In response to these changes architectural courses are now far more multidisciplinary and bring together academics from:

- Public health
- Architecture and design
- Business and economics
- The arts.
- Medicine
- Engineering
- Government policy

These multidisciplinary teams work together to help design and build structures that prevent social disadvantage, encourage healthy lifestyles and enable people to contribute to the communities in which they live.

Global age-friendly cities

A guide from the World Health Organization (WHO) encourages city planners to start thinking about the kinds of social, cultural and physical structures that are needed to make an age-friendly city. The eight domains of an age-friendly city are:

- Housing
- Respect and social inclusion
- Communication and information
- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transportation.
- Social participation
- Civic participation and employment
- Community support and health services

A total of 35 cities, including New York, London, Moscow, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Istanbul and Shanghai, contributed to the WHO project encouraging discussion about age-friendly cities.

Alan spoke about how architecture students were given the task of redesigning Bridge Road in Richmond, Melbourne, into a more community-minded street. He also talked about co-housing where people live in a multi-generational community setting, comprising private homes but with shared facilities. People in these communities share activities such as cooking, dining, childcare or gardening.

Information about the global age-friendly cities guide is available at who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_guide/en/



Innovative building designs for accommodation

Across Europe governments have collaborated to set up a panel of innovation to tackle housing for the ageing population.

Gradmann Haus in Stuttgart, Germany, was designed according to a 'village street' concept for people with dementia. There are 24 ground-floor apartments in two loops connected to a social area, with 18 apartments for partners on the first floor. The design takes into account that some people with dementia like to move around and explore, so the design includes spacious, barrier-free areas ideal for strolling with views to the garden.

The De Rokade Tower Block in the Netherlands was built within a community care and nursing home complex and includes a community hub. Only people over 55 years of age are allowed to buy an apartment in the complex. This complex has a kindergarten and other facilities that can be used by the neighbourhood.

Another building project in the Netherlands gives students rent-free accommodation in return for them spending time and doing activities with the aged-care residents. This helps to reduce the residents' feelings of loneliness, disconnectedness and other negative feelings that can be associated with ageing.

In Switzerland, a group of four women redeveloped a former embroidery factory and turned it into Solinsieme, a building with 17 private flats, and communal spaces (kitchen/dining/meeting room, a laundry and community room) that take up 20% of the floor space. The project was initiated to provide people in the second half of their lives with barrier-free access in the spaces where they lived.

In Australia, The Arbour near Sydney was built for people aged over 55. This retirement complex comes complete with private and shared facilities, sustainable houses with courtyards and a diverse range of social, physical and intellectual activities.

Innovative design for care facilities

Alan pointed out that architects were now looking at new ways to design facilities that care for people's physical as well as emotional and psychological wellbeing.

The Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres were designed to help people affected by cancer. The first centre was built in Edinburgh, located within a hospital, and now there are centres throughout the UK and in other countries. The centres were built to provide peaceful and striking environments with an important place for art and gardens. Alan said the architects emphasised the landscape features when they designed the centres. The centres also have services that provide psychological support and help people navigate through all the information about cancer.

These types of cancer care centres could become a model for designing other facilities that could cater for a wide spectrum of other diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and heart disease.

This fact sheet was developed using information provided by Professor Alan Pert (*Director, Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne*) in his presentation on design for an ageing population at the Productive Ageing Forum 2015.

Disclaimer: The material presented in this fact sheet is general information only and not legal advice. You should seek legal advice for your individual circumstances.

The information contained in this fact sheet is current as of June 2015 and is subject to change.

