

Apartments for Life at Ocean Street

The Social Model

**A new concept in retirement living
and aged care for Waverley**

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1. Introduction

This paper describes the social model underpinning The Benevolent Society's proposed Apartments for Life at Ocean Street Project.

The paper outlines:

- the concept
- the process undertaken by the Society to develop the concept
- the demographic, social and economic context in which it has been developed, in particular, the ageing of the population, and
- the need for new approaches to the housing, care and support of older people in Australia and more specifically in Waverley.

It then goes on to outline:

- the key aims of the Apartments for Life concept
- how these will be achieved at Apartments for Life at Ocean Street, Bondi, and
- the expected economic benefits of the project.

2. The concept

The Benevolent Society is proposing a new form of housing, care and support for older people that allows older people to remain in their own homes and communities throughout later life, encourages older people to be as self-reliant as possible and offers a more cost effective way of supporting those who do require support services. In doing so it will enhance older people's ability to remain active and fully part of their local community.

The key elements of the concept are:

- apartments that are carefully designed to encourage self reliance and allow for changes in residents' health over time
- residents are able to stay living in their own apartment until the end of life (in 95 percent of cases)
- an affordable housing component so that older people in varying financial circumstances are able to stay in their familiar community
- on-site services, facilities and social activities, for residents' and the local community's use
- assisted access to support services and care, so that residents can obtain appropriate support when needed
- a philosophy of respect for residents' individuality and autonomy, and

- a program of evaluation and research, so that others can learn from and build on the model.

3. Development of concept

The proposed project draws particularly on the highly regarded ‘Apartments for Life’ model developed by the Humanitas Foundation in the Netherlands. Humanitas’ Apartments for Life has been successful in providing housing, care and support to people in active older age, during frailty and ill-health and right up until the end of life, while at the same time enabling them to remain fully connected to the community.

The Society has adapted the Humanitas concept for Australia, and for the proposed location of this project in Bondi. The Society undertook wide ranging consultations with local, state and national stakeholders including Waverley Council, experts in aged care, housing, planning, health services planning, community care and government policy. It also visited the Humanitas organisation in Holland.

The Society undertook or commissioned reviews of the literature on ageing; a review of models of care and support of older people in Australia and overseas; a statistical analysis of the demographics of ageing in Waverley, Bondi and the immediate area around the site; and a statistical analysis drawing on 2006 Census data of the potential demand for lower income older persons housing in Waverley.

4. The demographic, social and economic context

The Benevolent Society’s Apartments for Life proposal has been developed as a response to demographic, social and economic trends in Australia, in particular the ageing of the population and trends in aged care services and housing.

Demographic trends

- The number of people aged 65 years and over is projected to more than double over the next 30 years from 13% of the population (2.7 million people), to 24% of the population (6.7 million people) by 2036.
- The number of people aged 85 years and over is projected to grow at an even faster rate, from 333,000 in 2006 to 1.1 million in 2036.¹
- About 32% of people aged 65-74 report needing some assistance with personal or everyday activities. Among people aged 85 and over the proportion is much higher, at about 86%²
- An estimated 23% of people aged 65 years or over reported severe or profound disability always or sometimes requiring assistance with self-care, mobility or

1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, Older Australians at a Glance

2 Productivity Commission, 2008, Trends in Aged Care Services: some implications, Research Paper

communication; 58% of those aged 85 years or over have this level of disability.³

- Approximately 29% of older people live alone in a private dwelling, rising to 39% among people aged 85 and over.⁴
- Future cohorts of older people will be more diverse in terms of incomes, wealth, and cultural backgrounds. They will be more likely to live alone or in smaller households, be divorced and to not have had children.⁵

These demographic changes, together with trends in aged care services and in housing, have implications for the future wellbeing of older Australians.

Aged care trends and implications

- As highlighted above, the number of older people who need assistance has been increasing for some time and will continue to do so, largely because of the growth in number of people in the upper age groups.
- This is expected to lead to a burgeoning demand for aged care services and increased government expenditure. At the same time it is projected there will be fewer people in younger age groups to support it – as taxpayers, aged care workers and as informal carers.⁶
- Older people who need assistance with personal and other activities of daily living have a limited range of accommodation and care choices available to them at the moment.
- There is evidence of unmet need for community care services, particularly for support with home maintenance, household chores, transport, and cognitive or emotional tasks.
- Current community care services tend to focus on the physical care needs but do little to counteract experiences of loneliness and social isolation of older people who live alone.⁷
- If given the choice, the majority of older people would prefer to remain living in their own homes supported by appropriate community care, rather than move to a nursing home or hostel. There is evidence that future generations of older people (baby boomers) will be even less interested in traditional forms of residential aged care. However, this requires them to have access to suitable and secure housing, as well as to care services.

3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, Australia's Welfare 2007

4 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, Older Australians at a Glance

5 Gibson 2008, The New Picture of Ageing, HACC National Forum 2008

6 Productivity Commission, 2008 *ibid.*

7 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, Australia's Welfare 2007

- Research commissioned by the Society confirms that the overwhelming majority people over 50 do not relish the prospect of spending their last years in a nursing home and want alternatives.
- The sustainability of current funding arrangements for residential aged care (nursing homes and hostels) is under question. In addition, they are heavily regulated making it difficult for operators provide a true home-like environment and avoid the negative characteristics of institutional living.

These trends underline the importance of developing new models of care, of enhancing older people's self reliance and of improving the efficiency of community care service provision.

Housing trends and implications

- The majority of private housing was not built with the needs of older people in mind, even though, in 2001, 23% of private households were occupied by at least one person aged 65 and older.⁸
- The form and location of older people's housing has a considerable impact on their ability to 'age in place' and use of aged care. Unsuitable housing contributes to premature and unnecessary moves to residential aged care. Recent cost benefit analyses confirm that insecure tenure and dwelling type can increase the costs of care both to individuals and to the government/taxpayer.⁹
- There is a strong preference among older people for staying in the same neighbourhood, if staying in the same home is not viable.
- Unfortunately, affordable housing options for older homeowners on low or moderate incomes who wish to stay in the same area are frequently very limited. As their health and circumstances change, many find that their home no longer suits but they cannot afford to move to more appropriate housing in the same area.
- There is compelling evidence that strong social networks contribute greatly to better physical and mental health in older age. These networks of family, friends and familiar community resources (e.g. churches, doctors, shops) are not easily rebuilt if people are forced to move to a new area in order to access more suitable housing and/or care.
- Unsuitable housing may also contribute to social isolation, for example, among people whose health is poor or who do not have access to transport.

8 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007, Submissions to Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs: Inquiry into the cost of living pressure on older Australians

9 Bridges C, Phibbs P, Kendig H, Matthews M and Cooper B, 2008, The costs and benefits of using private housing as the home base for care for older people: secondary analysis, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Loneliness and a sense of social isolation may contribute to decisions to move to an aged care home.¹⁰

- There is a lack of secure, affordable and appropriate housing options for low income older renters who do not own a home. This group is extremely vulnerable and projected to grow in numbers. Older private renters spend the highest proportion of their income on housing compared with households of any age group or tenure.¹¹

For individual older people the factors that make it hard to stay living in their own homes include:

- The design of their home (e.g. too many stairs, bathroom unsafe)
- No longer able to manage repairs, maintenance and gardening
- The location (e.g. hard to get to shops, doctors, see friends and family)
- Feeling unsafe living alone, or isolated and lonely (e.g. after partner has died)
- Families/friends unable to provide enough help (e.g. they don't live close by, they have other responsibilities or concerns, they are also elderly)
- Inadequate access to care services to support them at home (e.g. people don't know what's available, it's hard finding out about and then getting what you really need, waiting lists, costs).

5. The need for new solutions

In summary, current housing and care options for older people are limited, not adequate for Australia's ageing population and not what people want.

On the other hand we know that ensuring older people have appropriate housing and appropriate social supports can enhance their self reliance and quality of life and reduce their need for aged care services.¹² The challenge is to put this into practice by developing more and better models of housing and of care that:

- enable people to remain in their own homes and communities;
- are 'age-friendly';
- encourage older people to be as self-reliant as possible;
- offer more cost effective ways of supporting frail older people; and
- enhance older people's participation in the community.

10 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, Australia's Welfare

11 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, Older Australians at a Glance

12 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, Australia's Welfare

The Society's Apartments for Life project has been developed in response to the crucial need for new approaches to ensuring the future wellbeing of older people in Australia and, specifically, in Waverley.

6. Aged care and affordable housing options in Waverley

The situation in Waverley local government area reflects the national trends described above. As in many other parts of Australia, there is a shortage of housing that is suitable for older people and affordable. This can create major difficulties for long term older residents of Waverley when health problems make their housing unsuitable, especially those on low incomes.

For low income home owners, their home represents a significant potential asset but one that can generally only be realised if they move out of the area. Low income older renters are under even greater pressure and are rapidly being forced out of the area altogether.

Housing affordability and the ageing of the population are identified by Waverley Council as two of its most significant community issues in its Social Plan.¹³ Key points include:

- *older people (are) living longer and facing increased isolation*
- *Waverley has a growing number of older people¹⁴ projected to increase to 17.6% by 2022.*
- *housing affordability is further decreasing forolder people... on low to moderate incomes*
- *greater demand for housing that is accessible and appropriate for those who prefer independent living*
- *continued shortage of boarding house and affordable one-bedroom units*
- *many long term residents who have grown up in the area find they can no longer afford their rent*
- *In 2004, 4,630 people in Waverley LGA were receiving the age pension... two fifths of Waverley LGA's age pension recipients resided in the postcode area 2026 (Bondi).*

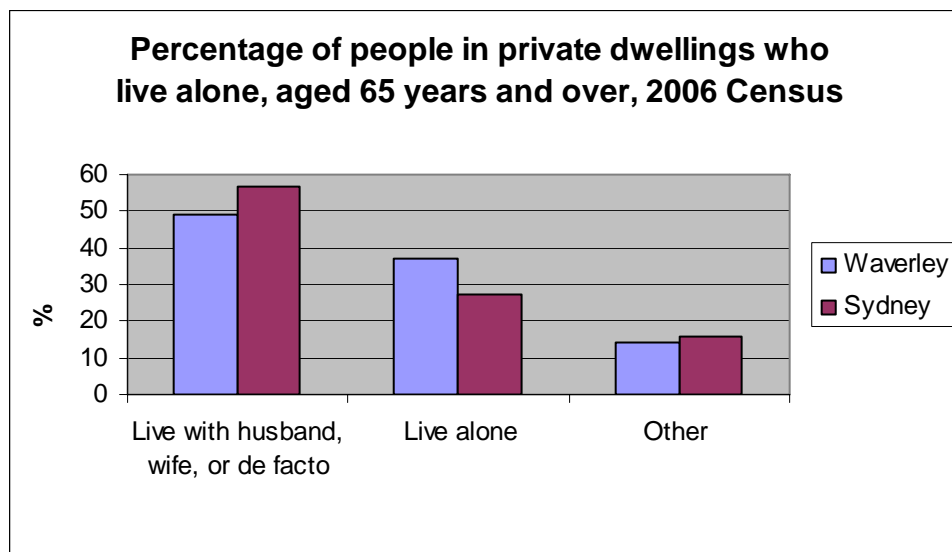
The Society's own analysis of the 2006 Census confirms that Waverley is home to

- 7900 people aged 65 and over, comprising 13% of the total population
- 4400 people aged 75 and over, or 7.3%% and comparing to 6% or Sydney as whole

13 Waverley Council Social Plan 2005 -2010, Volume 2

14 People aged 65 and over.

- a high proportion of people aged 65 and over living alone, 37% as compared to 27% in Sydney as a whole, and 31% in 2001. The majority are women.



The Society also commissioned Professor Bill Randolph at City Futures at the University of New South Wales to undertake an analysis from 2006 Census data and rent and sales data, of the potential demand for housing for lower income older households in Waverley. Key points from his analysis:

- There were 3542 older low income¹⁵ households in Waverley in 2006.
- Two-thirds of older low income households were owners, i.e. 2,371 households. Of these 50.6% live in houses and 48.5% in apartments (40% in high rise, i.e. >4 storeys and 8% in low rise.)
- 9% of older low income households were private renters, mostly in apartments.

Professor Bill Randolph advises that the provision of housing to assist in retaining lower income older people in the area fits with principles of social sustainability.

Waverley Council’s 2005–2010 Social Plan and Housing Policy 200716 set out Council’s own plans to:

- Enable long term older residents to remain living in and connected to their local community;
- Improve access to affordable housing to enable people from diverse backgrounds remain in the LGA;
- Work with aged care housing providers to ensure the provision of adequate facilities for Waverley’s ageing population;

15 Using the standard definition of households whose incomes are at or below the 40th percentile of household income (all ages) for the area.

16 Waverley Council Social Plan 2005 -2010 and Waverley Council Housing Paper 2007.

- Improve older people's health and sense of wellbeing and participation in the life of the community.

7. Apartments for Life: Key aims

Apartments for Life will be a new concept in retirement living and aged care. It will be a place where older people can live in their own homes, throughout the changes and challenge of later life, with a sense of independence, autonomy and purpose, and fully connected to the local community.

Key aims:

- Residents are able to stay in the same apartment for the rest of their lives. The Society's goal is that 95 percent will never need to face the disruption and cost of moving into a nursing home.
- A vibrant new 'social hub' is created; connections between residents and the local community are built and strengthened; contacts with family and friends are promoted; social isolation is reduced.
- The apartments are affordable by local older people in a range of financial circumstances; so that local residents are able to stay in the area and so that the resident mix reflects the diversity of the local community.
- Lessons from the project are disseminated to the aged care industry, researchers and government policy makers, for others to replicate or adapt.

8. Apartments for Life: Key elements

Apartments for Life will work through a combination of:

- the design of the apartments, buildings and external open space
- inclusion of affordable housing
- on-site services, facilities and social activities
- assisted access to support services and care
- a philosophy of respect for residents' individuality and autonomy
- evaluation and research.

Design for living and for safety

The complex will be designed to maximise residents' autonomy and quality of life and to foster social interaction.

The design takes into account that many residents will have health problems and disabilities, and that the health status of individual residents will change over time.

The design features will mean that residents will be able to live independently in their apartments for longer and that those who need care services will also be able to continue doing some things for themselves, for longer.

Key design features include:

- Self-contained *1 and 2 bedroom apartments*, all with separate living area, guest/study area, kitchen, bathroom and balcony or courtyard.
- Internal apartment *design that takes into account reduced mobility and common health problems*, including level entries, wider doors and hallways, bathrooms designed to be useable and safe, kitchens with switches, plugs and cupboards within easy reach .
- Space in each apartment (in the guest/study areas) so that a *family member or carer can stay* for a short period while helping look after a resident in poor health.
- Built in *safety features*, including lifts which can be used in the event of a fire, personal alarms systems in each apartment
- Built-in cabling to minimise the cost of installing ‘smart’ technology systems (e.g. sensors that detect if a person has fallen over and can’t get up).
- Partially glassed in balconies on each floor overlooking the site, with sitting and meeting areas and space for electric scooters or other mobility aids.

Affordable housing

Apartments for Life will address the shortage of affordable housing in the Waverley area that is suitable for older people.

Thirty percent of apartments will be priced at a discount so that they are affordable by local older people who cannot afford to pay full the market price – because of the modest value of their current home.

Another *ten per cent will be rental housing for low income age pensioners* without assets.

The substantial affordable housing quota (40% in total) will help more older residents stay in the Waverley area.

Management arrangements

The apartments will be offered to residents on a *loan-licence or rental* basis. The Society will retain freehold ownership, thus ensuring that the site remains in community ownership for future generations and ensuring that the affordable apartments will be kept affordable for future residents, beyond the first residents.

Most residents (90%) will be invited to enter into a loan-licence agreement with the Society, loan-licence being the most common arrangement in retirement villages. Residents will pay an up-front interest free loan (a capital payment) upon entry to the village. The loan is repaid when the resident leaves or dies minus an agreed proportion specified in the agreement. The licence agreement grants the resident a right to occupy the premises. Recurrent charges will also payable on a fortnightly or monthly basis.

Residents of the rental apartments will be invited to enter into a tenancy agreement with the Society and pay rent fixed as a proportion of their income.

The complex will be classed as a 'retirement village' under NSW legislation. As owner and operator, The Benevolent Society will abide by the fair trading laws that apply to retirement villages in NSW - i.e. the *Retirement Villages Act 1999*, *Retirement Villages Amendment Act 2008*, *Retirement Villages Regulation 2000*, *Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal Act 2001* and *Fair Trading Act 1987*.

Services and facilities

The complex will include a range of community facilities at ground floor level and in the newly refurbished Scarba House. The aim is to create an inviting 'community hub' and neighbourhood atmosphere that:

- has useful services and facilities for residents of the site and people nearby
- is a pleasant place for people to get together
- has ongoing activities, events and spaces for older people and the general community.

Some of the services will be particularly useful for older people who live on the site or nearby. Others will be of value to people of all ages.

Key features include:

- A *café* at ground level in the new Wellington Street building. As well as offering meals it will have basic supplies on sale for people who cannot make it to the shops. Residents will be able to have meals home-delivered to their apartments and it will be accessible by people who use wheelchairs and motorised scooters. It will include a child-friendly area for visitors with young children.
- *Rooms of various sizes* for flexible use, in and next to Scarba House and on the ground floor of the proposed new Wellington Street building. These will be for the use of local clubs for meetings, by interest groups, self help groups, craft groups, for wellness activities, exercise and dance classes, adult learning, and social activities.
- A *men's shed* or workshop. Men's sheds have become popular with older men across Australia as places to spend time with others, share tools, and work on their own or on community projects.

- *Open space* for the enjoyment of residents and the local community covering 50 percent of the site, and including a *community garden*.
- A *minibus* for trips and outings.
- *Consulting rooms* for visiting health professionals, for example, a doctor, physiotherapist, podiatrist or diabetes nurse, on the first floor of Scarba House.
- A *day centre for people with dementia* in the new Ocean Street building where they can go for the day, be looked after by trained staff and give their partners a much-needed break.
- A *community development coordinator* to facilitate and coordinate a program of activities involving residents and the nearby community. Their role will be to help strengthen community networks, reach out to socially isolated older people, promote activities important to older people from varying cultural backgrounds, foster volunteer activity and build intergenerational projects (for example, involving children at Bondi Public School) .

Older people know that staying ‘active’ - physically, mentally and socially - is the key to successful ageing and this is backed up by research. By providing easy access to a range of social and recreational opportunities and a community development worker, The Benevolent Society’s aims to enable residents to stay ‘active’ whether they are relatively young, fit and in good health or whether they are much older, frailer and in poor health. Enabling residents to develop shared interests and feel a sense of belonging is also strategy for countering loneliness and depression in older age.

Assisted access to care and support

Some residents will live wholly independently; others will need care services and support from time to time or on an ongoing basis.

The Benevolent Society has 20 years’ experience in providing care assistance to older people living in their homes in the Eastern Suburbs. The Society is one of a network of more than 20 organisations that provide community care services to older people in their homes in the Waverley area. The Society understands that one of the hardest things for older people is finding out about and getting the right type of care and support when they need it.

A *care advisor* will enable residents to access the particular care services they need – whether from another non-government organisation, the Benevolent Society’s Community Care Eastern Sydney service, a government service or a private agency. This can include but is not necessarily limited to:

- personal care (toileting, showering, dressing, putting to bed)
- housekeeping, laundry
- help with meals, shopping
- nursing (e.g. dressing wounds, administering medicines, monitoring health problems)

- loans of equipment (e.g. walking frames)
- help with paperwork (e.g. paying bills)
- respite for carers.

The care advisor will

- provide residents with hands-on assistance to help them connect with the particular type of care and support that they need (up to and including care equivalent to hostel or a nursing home level care).
- negotiate with health and care services on residents' behalf
- discuss with residents' families about how they might help, if appropriate

There will be staff and visiting careworkers always on site during the day and at least one person always on site during the night to respond to emergencies.

9. Economic benefits

Savings and efficiencies will be generated through the project in a number of ways, of benefit to individuals and the general community.

- Overall, aged care costs to the community and individuals are less when recipients have secure and appropriately designed housing.
- Community care is a lower cost form of care than nursing home and hostel care, in terms of nursing, care worker and other staff costs.
- There will be greater efficiencies and flexibility in the use of community care workers' and nurses' time, and reduced transport costs. Normally in the provision of community care, up to a third of workers' time is spent travelling from client to client and visits tends to have to be in rigid and single blocks.
- Appropriately designed housing and social support will enable residents to be more self reliant for longer, thus reducing or delaying their use of formal care services. This will also be important given the projected shortages of aged care workers.
- The project is expected to significantly reduce the costs of hospitalisation, by reducing avoidable admissions and length of stay and admissions caused by falls. Persons over 65 account for 45% of acute bed days in NSW public hospitals.
- By offering older people a local housing option that is both suitable and affordable, under-occupied housing will be freed up for younger families.
- The costs of having to move home a second time in later life will be avoided, as residents will be able to stay until the end of life.

10. Conclusion

The Apartments for Life at Ocean Street project is the result of a comprehensive process of review, research and consultation that has highlighted a crucial need for new approaches to ensuring the future wellbeing of older Australians. The proposal represents a major contribution by the Society to making this happen.