

We're getting older...

Over the past two decades, the number of elderly people increased by 167.8 per cent and one in four Australians are aged 55 years or older.¹

Almost a quarter of Western Australians will be aged 60 years and over by the year 2021, compared with 15% in 2001.²

WA's baby boomers start to reach the traditional retirement age of 65 in 2011, at which point baby boomers will represent approximately one-quarter of the WA population.³

We're living longer

The number of elderly people increased over the past two decades by 168%, compared to total population growth of 30%. Increased life expectancy for both males and females has contributed to this rise.⁴

With advances in medicine and public health interventions, mortality rates due to disease continues to decline; however disability rates are not declining at the same pace.⁵

This means that with longer lives, years lived with disability is also longer. At present, women are expected to live 20.7 years with a disability and Men are expected to live for 18.6 years with a disability.⁶ If the trend of increasing lifespan continues, years lived with disability will continue to increase.

We are working (and earning) longer

In 2010, 71% of Australians aged 55-59 years were working. Half (51%) of 60-64 year olds and one quarter (24%) of 65-69 year olds also participated in the labour force.⁷

Our health and wellbeing impacts on how we live

In Australia 68 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women are overweight or obese (based on actual measurements).⁸

One in five West Australians has a disability (20 percent or 405 000 people).⁹

In 2007, one in ten people aged 55 years (490 000 people) and over was a carer of people this age. One of the key factors in future trends will be people's plans as they get older, including when and how they intend to retire and what factors will influence their decisions.¹⁰

Our expectations about where and how we will live are changing

Most older people live independent active lives and are involved in a wide range of social, leisure and community activities, as do people with disability. Most older people continue to live in private households, with around two thirds in family households, usually with their partner.

Only three per cent of people aged 65 and older live in retirement villages and mostly because their homes were not designed for them to 'age in place'. The vast majority of them would have preferred to stay in their previous homes.¹¹

A survey on dwelling, land and neighbourhood use by older home owners suggests a market demand for more accessible dwelling designs, to provide those homes that 'better suit needs', preferably in the general housing market rather than age-segregated housing developments.¹²

To achieve our dream of ageing in place we need homes designed to be economical, environmentally friendly and socially sustainable.

Smart universal design can meet these needs at little or no additional cost.

Reference

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