

Baby boomers have designing influence

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Builders and architects will be encouraged to design houses that cater for WA's rapidly ageing population under changes announced by the State Government yesterday.

Disability Services Minister Helen Morton said the Government was introducing voluntary building guidelines because it wanted more people to be able to live in their homes as they got older.

As part of the "liveable homes initiative", builders would be urged to include several features into the design of a house that would make accessibility easier and could accommodate people with disabilities.

Among the features were wider doorways and corridors, level entrances and reinforced showers and toilets in case the owners wanted to install hand rails.

Mrs Morton insisted that although the guidelines were not being made mandatory, the level of demand and interest from the housing industry and buyers would be strong.

She also said the measures were unlikely to increase costs to the average price of building a house, despite initial predictions they could add up to \$2000 to the bill.



New features: Baby boomers Harry and Pat O'Neil at their home in Wembley.

Picture: John Mokrzycki

"The reference group for the liveable homes initiative ... has said that these universal designs can be built without any additional cost if it's incorporated at the planning stage," Mrs Morton said.

Master Builders Association housing director Gavin Forster said he was happy to support the guidelines but

only as long as they were kept voluntary.

Mr Forster said he had opposed suggestions they should be compulsory to fall in line with commercial building requirements because private individuals should be allowed to choose how their home was designed.

Housing Industry Associa-

tion executive director John Dastlik said many baby boomers would embrace the guidelines as they looked to build smaller houses near retirement.

Harry O'Neil, whose new Wembley home has many of the guidelines' features, said they would make his life more comfortable as he got older.