

Downsizing

ADVERTISING FEATURE



Understanding community needs when it comes to an ageing population



Left to right; Urban Development Institute of Australia's WA (UDIA WA) CEO Tanya Steinbeck - A host of aged care options are available including the luxurious Echelon by Giorgi

by Allen Newton

COMMUNITIES need to better understand the needs of an ageing population in order to ensure older community members can live in safe, appropriate, and affordable homes.

That's the view of Urban Development Institute of Australia's WA (UDIA WA) CEO Tanya Steinbeck. She believes it is really important that we foster a greater community understanding about the benefits of quality medium and high-density development in our suburbs, so that we can deliver the diversity of housing needed, including for our older generations.

"Local and state government, along with the

development industry, need to work more effectively together to educate people about what needs to happen in our local areas to ensure we are accommodating our older community members in safe, appropriate and affordable homes, where they want to live," Tanya says.

UDIA WA represents the urban development industry in Western Australia.

Tanya says the industry is a community creator. It plans and delivers the places and spaces that are integral to our lives including residential, commercial, retail and industrial areas.

"A key focus for UDIA is housing diversity and affordability. It is absolutely critical that peo-

ple have access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs.

"This is particularly important for older Australians. It is critical that they have housing options that meet their changing needs, in locations that allow them to age in place."

UDIA WA is pushing for greater infill development, facilitating housing choice, property taxation reform including the abolition of Stamp Duty, and maintaining a consistent supply of affordable housing.

Being able to 'age in place' means providing affordable housing choices for older people in the area that they are familiar with, may have lived in for many years and where they have

established networks including family and friends, support services and other local community ties.

"We are seeing a trend toward residential aged care facilities in more established areas, including higher density retirement and seniors living accommodation closer to their local area."

Providing an increased level of quality infill housing in areas that are close to essential services is also important in providing older people with appropriate options as they get older and rely more heavily on public transport and proximity to medical or other support services.

Tanya says apartment developers are also incorporating concierge

and other support services into their new buildings to cater for the older demographic of buyers such as downsizers who are an increasing component of their market.

Accessible and universally designed homes allow people to stay in their homes for longer as they are designed to accommodate their changing needs and abilities.

She says that includes homes with flexible layouts that can be adapted to suit different needs such as wheelchair access.

Retirement living communities are a popular choice for many retirees and older people, she says. These types of communities offer attractive lifestyle options, supportive communities and lots of entertainment and recreation facilities.

"However, they are not for everyone. That is why we support the delivery of diverse housing, from smaller, single homes through to apartments, to allow more people to downsize to appropriate accommodation in their local area."

New developments offer a range of recreational and other facilities to suit a broad range of interests and demographics.

"Developers today un-

dertake extensive community research and consultation to ascertain what facilities and amenity best suit the needs of their current and future community members.

"Parks and other public open spaces often incorporate accessible design and feature elements that suit different abilities and needs.

"Many developers go beyond 'bricks and mortar' and employ community engagement officers that develop a range of community services and opportunities for locals to connect with each other and establish groups including senior citizens groups, 'men's sheds', and other groups aimed at older community members."

For West Australians looking to the future, who believe they will want to age in place, Tanya believes it is not simply a matter of constructing homes that are more adaptable at a price point the market can afford.

"Rather than just making our homes more adaptable, we believe a better approach would be making transitioning between different housing types as households

needs change over time is a more effective solution. To achieve this we

need to remove inefficient taxes such as stamp duty."

Tanya says public transport is crucial.

"Access to efficient and affordable public transport is critical in our cities, and it is paramount for older people who may not be able to drive themselves or have limited access to personal transport.

"The ability to get to medical appointments, go shopping and visit family and friends is contingent upon a train and bus network that allows for travel across the city north and east to west.

"The State Government's METRONET program is an important aspect of improving Perth's public transport network, however there is still a shortfall when it comes to east - west connectivity and people getting from suburb to suburb. An improved rapid transit bus network would assist with this issue.

"Development of precincts around METRONET stations with a mix of uses including residential and commercial development will also provide more opportunity for people to live in a precinct where they have everything they need at their fingertips," she said.



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