

**The Ocean Street Project:  
A new model of housing, care and  
connection for Australia's ageing  
population**

**The Benevolent Society  
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# About The Benevolent Society

- Australia's oldest charity, established in 1813
- Purpose
  - To create caring and inclusive communities and a just society
  - Believe that building stronger communities is the best way to reduce social and economic disadvantage
- Provides services to, and work with 10,000 people pa
  - Children, families, women, older people, carers and communities, in NSW and SE Qld
  - We help older people age well with dignity and respect, living independently for as long as possible
  - Services for older people include community care services, low cost housing, residential aged care

# The need for new models

- Increasing numbers of older people, with varying needs
  - In their 60s and 70s few people need assistance with daily living, are more likely to be providing than receiving care
  - But in their 80s and above are more likely to need assistance
  - The group aged 85+ is projected to grow by 56% in next decade from 333,000 (2006) to 521,000 (2016), as compared to total population growth of 11%.
- Strong consumer preference and Government support for people to stay in their own homes, with support of informal (family) support and formal care services.
- *But* this is only possible if they have suitable and secure housing

# What does suitable and secure housing mean for older people?

- Location, location, location
  - Same neighbourhood even more important than same house
  - Strong social networks and familiarity with local community resources contribute greatly to health and wellbeing in later life and are not easily rebuilt if move to a new area
  - Ease of access to shops, services and transport become critical in later life
  - Housing market and stock typically offers limited opportunities for older home owners to trade down to more appropriate housing in same area
  - Retirement accommodation (purpose built) often very separate from rest of the community.

- Design
  - Critical in helping or hindering independence, as health declines and disability increases
  - Minor modifications such as better lighting, grab rails, ramps are important
  - But not always possible to modify or prohibitively expensive – eg in walk up apartment blocks, rented housing
- Security and cost
  - Frequent moves threaten social networks and sources of support
  - Lack of security and high rents a major problem for older renters, especially those on low incomes in gentrifying areas
  - Forced to move away entirely, e.g. to regional or rural area or prematurely to residential aged care.

- Other factors driving need for new models
  - Demand for community care outstrips supply
  - Need to make better use of government-funded community care and to foster self reliance and informal care.
  - Projected workforce shortages
  - Concerns re availability of informal carers as well
  - Poor integration between health and care systems - difficult to navigate, fragmented and access patchy at critical times
  - Limitations of residential aged care – highly regulated, difficult to avoid institutional feel.

# Ocean Street Project

- A contribution to development of new models for Australia of housing, care and support for older people
- Based on concept originally from Humanitas, in Rotterdam, Holland, called 'Apartments for Life'
- Trialling at a site in Bondi, Waverley LGA, in Sydney's eastern suburbs
- A purpose built complex of multi-storey apartments and community facilities

# Key aims of Project

- Residents able to live as independently as possible, living fulfilling and socially connected lives
- Residents able to stay in the same apartment for the rest of their lives, with the support of formal community care when needed
- Socio-economic and other diversity among residents, reflecting the local population
- An impact on the directions of housing and ageing policy and models in Australia.



# Key features

- Appropriate design
  - High standards of accessibility and adaptability (eg concealed ceiling tracks for later easy installation of hoists)
  - Smallest apartments large enough for a family member or friend to stay overnight
  - Private and public space
  - Lots of incidental meeting spaces, internal and external
  - Space for health promotion activities, wellness, exercise
- Connections with the local community
  - Shared community facilities at ground level, e.g. meeting rooms, café, men's shed, day centre for people with dementia, health professionals rooms, child-friendly space
  - Active community development strategy involving local community (especially in walking distance)
  - Open site, local community encouraged to walk through.

## Key features (cont)

- Support and care for residents who need it
  - Monitoring function, service coordination and referral to formal services (HACC, CACP, EACH, private, health services etc)
  - Space for visiting careworkers
  - Promotion of informal and volunteer support
  - On-site facilities – e.g. café, dementia day care centre,
- Majority of units offered on a loan/licence basis
  - Residents ‘buy’ a licence to occupy with an upfront capital entry payment (largely repaid on leaving), and recurrent fees
- Affordability
  - A proportion of apartments available at affordable rates, i.e. reduced entry payment
  - Plus 10% of apartments rented to low income older people who do *not* own a home.

## Key features (cont)

- Appropriate marketing strategy, pricing policy and selection criteria
  - To ensure diversity of residents reflects local community
- The Society retains freehold and manages the project on an ongoing basis
  - So affordability goals are maintained into the future
  - To allow time for the longer term community development goals to be achieved
- An evaluation, research and dissemination strategy
- And, mostly importantly, an articulated philosophy
  - Autonomy and independence
  - Active ageing
  - Respect and inclusion

# Key partnerships

- Local Council (Waverley)
  - Consent authority but also with a keen interest in increasing affordable housing, services and facilities for older people
- NSW Department of Housing (Office of Community Housing)
  - Possible support for provision of rental apartments in return for nomination rights
- Government departments, state and federal
- Local community organisations, health service and care providers
  - These partnerships will be critical so that service coordination and community development functions work well, and to facilitate seamless transitions and integrated care
  - Opportunities to develop health promotion activities etc.

## In summary

- Project has the potential to overcome many of the limitations in housing and care of older people
- Currently in detailed design and community consultation phase, expecting to lodge a DA within next few months
- One of the more interesting aspects of the project has been trying to reconcile housing policy and ageing/aged care policy – previously unknown to each other!

# Contact

- More about The Benevolent Society:  
[www.bensoc.org.au](http://www.bensoc.org.au)
- More about this Project: [www.bensoc.org.au](http://www.bensoc.org.au)  
and go to Ocean St Project
- Barbara Squires
  - General Manager, Ageing
  - [barbaras@bensoc.org.au](mailto:barbaras@bensoc.org.au) 02 9339 8071
- Sarah Fogg
  - Senior Project Officer, Ageing
  - [sarahf@bensoc.org.au](mailto:sarahf@bensoc.org.au) 02 9339 8019