

A RESIDENTIAL CARE COMMUNITY WITH A DIFFERENCE

A commitment to enhancing the lives of residents living with dementia, supported by rigorous research and innovation has led to an award-winning development in north Brisbane.

What the houses will look like



Intimate, home-like surroundings where people can be involved in their daily routine – and particularly in decision making – improves the quality of life for people living with dementia, according to current research. The research highlights the ongoing issue of design that is driven by underpinnings of a medical model at the expense of a social, person-centred service. It was with this in mind, that the Synovum Care team were determined to offer a new

paradigm for care and services; where residents will be able to live as normal a life as possible.

In early 2015 Paynter Dixon Queensland were engaged by Synovum Care to undertake master planning, design and construction of a new 120 bed small scale living development in Bellmere, Queensland. Paynter Dixon's selection was largely based on its commitment to design



Site plan of Synovum Care's Bellmere project with indicative gardens

that supports and enhances life for people with dementia. A year later, the design – the result of a fantastic client-consultant collaboration – won the 2016 Best Silver Architecture – Residential Award at the 4th Asia Pacific Eldercare Innovation Awards.

Project Development

Seeking to change the way in which people with dementia are care for and accommodated, the Synovum Care team led by Managing Director Natasha Chadwick, together with the team from Paynter Dixon Queensland, reviewed research literature and participated in site visits to other facilities, including the De Hogeweyk Dementia Village in the Netherlands, seeking inspiration for an approach to small scale living in the Australian context. The resulting care, staffing and financial model that has evolved from these investigations has been progressively monitored through the development of two pilot houses at Synovum Care in Wynyard (Tasmania). The outstanding results strengthened the resolve of the team to progress to a larger project.

The site at Bellmere is a 1.852 hectare gently sloping block in a suburban area within the northern reach of Brisbane. Site works for the residential community commenced in July 2016 and once complete it will consist of 17 domestic-scaled homes, nestled in a beautiful and interesting landscaped environment supported by a community and administrative centre at the entrance. The design is suitable for people of all care needs, including those with severe dementia.

Small Scale Living

Empowering older adults to maintain their ability to complete daily self-care and household tasks, and supporting them to enjoy what they are still able to do, is an important aspect of the Synovum Care vision. The designed environment and care model are intrinsic to delivering an enhanced rather than a diminished life for people with dementia.

Synovum Care's Bellmere small scale living model will be 'households' of seven residents, supported by House Companions (multi-skilled staff) in individual homes across

the site. Ms Chadwick is very clear that "each house is autonomous, with its own budget and team. They do their own menus, cooking, cleaning and laundry, and they call on a clinical team if they require clinical assistance." A fully functional domestic-type kitchen and laundry enables residents to be engaged in supported cooking and laundry activities, facilitating greater independence in daily living activities.

Relationships-based Model

The relationship-based nature of this care model is actively supported by meal sharing around a central table, with residents deciding what they want to eat and when. The replacement of institutional routines with a more relaxed approach enables residents to live their own lives as they wish – doing what they want in their own time.

Each resident will have their own single bedroom and ensuite, providing privacy and dignity, with shared social areas in each house being the living rooms, kitchen and dining areas, as in most family homes across Australia. With such beautiful weather in Queensland, the integration of indoor areas with the surrounding gardens will be maximised, with plenty of natural indoor light and easy access to outdoors via the porch or patio.

The Outdoor Environment

The design intent of the outdoor areas is to create a familiar suburban setting that supports social opportunities between residents living in different houses, and promotes resident independence and familiar routines. Each home will have its own fenced 'backyard'. However residents will have free access into and out of these areas. The approach to each home will be via a front path past the letterbox to a front door, just as you would expect to see in an Australian suburban street.

Centrally the gardens will form a 'streetscape' with a roadway, street lamps and walking paths. The roadway will provide access for facility golf buggies and emergency vehicles only, with visitor and staff car-parking at the front entrance.

The themed gardens have been planned with points of interest to engage and stimulate residents as they journey towards the community administrative building. These include parks with seating, a men's shed, a chook pen, a formal garden, children's play equipment and an alfresco eating area adjacent to the café.

The entire site is secure. Once a visitor has parked their vehicle, there is a single entrance through a welcoming foyer in the community administrative building, providing a sense of security for residents and a safe area for people living with dementia. Fencing will be discretely integrated into gardens, and will cleverly utilise the natural contours of the ground to create an overall feeling of openness.



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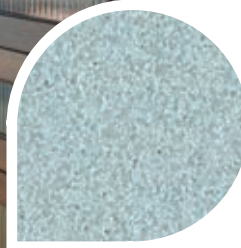


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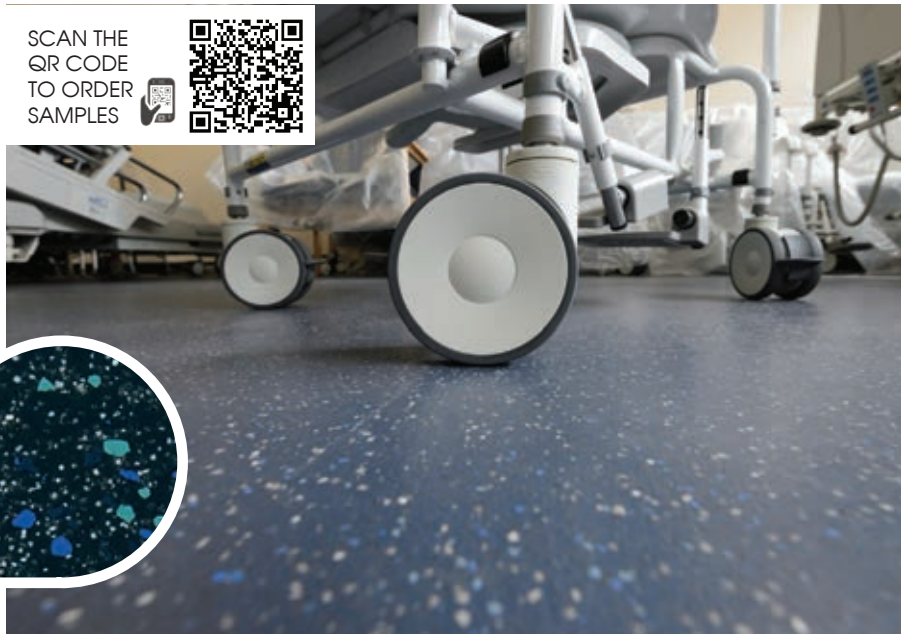


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Master Planning Workshop with Natasha Chadwick (Synovum Care)
Andrew Spilar (PDQ) and Shane Chadwick (Synovum Care)



Community Engagement

Assimilation with, and contribution to, the surrounding community is important to Synovum Care and a core aspect of its service. The community administrative building will feature services such as a hairdresser, barber, café and a wellness therapy centre that will welcome residents, families and the local neighbourhood. From the minute a visitor enters this care community light, energy, colour and vibrancy will be evident.

The wellness therapy centre will promote enablement and re-ablement programs as well as clinical support for residents and older adults in the community, and will include a gym area, consultation rooms, dental services and a spa.

The café will have a coffee service window opening to the external carpark for early morning commuters. A 'corner

store', theatre, music room and activities room provide additional venues for residents and families to enjoy social activities.

The overall vision for Synovum Care Bellmere is to provide an attractive, safe and engaging place for older people requiring aged care support to continue to live the life they have been used to, and to feel respected, valued and fulfilled. Synovum Care is an Approved Provider with Government subsidised residential aged care bed licences, making access to this exciting new model of residential aged care living an affordable option for older people and their families. ■

For more information contact Kerrie Storey or Erica Lambert, Paynter Dixon Queensland (07) 3368 5500

DESIGN IN THESE CHANGING TIMES

Debbie de Fiddes | Principal de Fiddes design

Design is one of the key critical components in providing a successful aged care and retirement facility. In these changing times it is important to explore what is happening in different parts of the world and review how are we doing things in Australia and could we be doing them better?

I recently travelled to Budapest to speak at the International Alzheimer's conference and thought I would take the opportunity to visit the Netherlands to take a look at the facility everyone is talking about – de Hogeweyk.

What's special about de Hogeweyk?

De Hogeweyk is a secure village designed specifically for residents with dementia. The village incorporates a theatre, supermarket, restaurant, pub, hairdresser etc. There are 23 residential houses each with six or seven residents. Residents are grouped together according to their similar interests and backgrounds and the houses are modelled according to these parameters. This style of care obviously works: the overall atmosphere is one of contentment and the residents seem very happy. The tours undoubtedly highlight the facility and the level of care it is possible to achieve.

I was very fortunate to have Eloy van Hal as my tour guide and interpreter. I bombarded Eloy with questions the entire time and was particularly interested to know what didn't work and if de Hogeweyk had the opportunity to do it over again what would they do differently.

One issue is the entrance, which is also the only exit. The design is such that the main internal boulevard leads directly into the entrance/exit. During my visit I noticed a resident giving the poor receptionist a very hard time. The lady in question had just recently gone to live at de Hogeweyk and was still becoming accustomed to the village. De Hogeweyk is currently looking at ways to camouflage the doors leading from the main boulevard into reception.

What was impressive during that confrontation was how the receptionist handled it. All staff and volunteers receive three years of training and it was obvious he knew exactly how to handle the situation.

De Hogeweyk have also removed the carpet in the individual houses and replaced it with vinyl. Whilst vinyl is practical it

can lead to a noisy environment. To deal with the acoustics issue de Hogeweyk installed a noise cancelling device that worked extremely well.

As I mentioned, each of the houses are designed to suit lifestyle types of the residents. I was invited into the house styled for residents of affluence and happened to walk in whilst they were enjoying high tea. All residents were sitting around talking, laughing and generally looked like they were having a good time. Eloy purchased a bottle of wine from the on-site supermarket to give to the residents as a gift for allowing our visit, a perfectly normal gesture as if you were visiting friends!

Kitchens in the de Hogeweyk houses are normally integral to the dining room; however, that wasn't the case in this particular house. Eloy explained that these residents typically would have had hired help and therefore wouldn't have been involved in domestic duties and rarely would have used the kitchen. The house design itself is very simple and includes shared bathrooms. This is something that is becoming an issue as resident families are beginning to ask for a private ensuite.

The other facilities such as the restaurant, supermarket, theatre, pub and cafe were all very impressive and certainly not token gestures. The design would fit into any urban setting and all the facilities are used by the community. The integration, however, lacks direct connection to the community. The security of the residents and ease of use by the community could have been designed in a better way to incorporate both.

I believe the success of de Hogeweyk can be translated into larger vertical living, which is the preference in design here in Australia.

Back to basics – The Green Farm

Another impressive facility we visited just outside Amsterdam was a small green care farm called

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“Reigershoeve”. The facility provides 24-hour nursing home care for 27 people living with dementia. They also have an impressive adult day centre.

The facility consists of four houses with an upstairs barn style accommodation for use by resident families if necessary. Whilst we were not permitted to enter their houses we were given information regarding the interiors. Interestingly, at Reigershoeve each resident had their own ensuite.

When you entered the day centre it felt immediately comfortable and was a mix of eclectic furniture and fabrics. The design was simple but rich in flavour.

The outdoor spaces were impressive with an abundance of growing veggies and a mini zoo! There were chickens, ducks, goats, sheep, bales of hay, mini tractor and even a small lake. Whilst all residents are encouraged to participate in the every day activities of the farm, it is by no means compulsory; it is their choice.

Most of the work around the farm is completed by volunteers and Reigershoeve provide an impressive workshop that most men would envy!

The children’s playground is so successful that the local children ask if they can come to play on a daily basis. They also have conversational pits for family and friends, exercise areas for the body and mind and much, much more.

So what’s different?

Whilst the designs were interesting and certainly had some take away ideas, I couldn’t say that was the key feature.

The extraordinary thing about these places was the emphasis on normal life. I didn’t feel out of place and I certainly didn’t feel like I was in an aged care facility. It felt like a natural environment and a day like any other. Successful design is in the ability to translate that *feel* into our model here in Australia. This is the change we have to strive to make. ■