



Residents', family members', and non-family paid carers' prioritised housing features for supported accommodation: A preliminary analysis.

A new study investigating the perspectives and preferences of young adults with complex disabilities shows that young adults and their significant others have very particular views when it comes to housing choice and features. PhD Scholar Courtney Wright has provided the first systematic understanding of what young people need and want in their supported living environments. A summary of her findings, which will inform future Youngcare developments is provided below.

Housing design: The perspective of residents

Residents prioritised features that promote 'physical accessibility' and 'physical access to amenities' within the home and around the dwelling more than any other 'type' of feature. Example 'physical accessibility' features include: (1) a low-set house; (2) wider hallways, doorways, and doors; (3) a level plan throughout the dwelling; (4) a spacious/open plan layout (especially in the bathroom and bedroom areas); (5) a hob-free and open plan shower; (6) ramps at entry and exit points; (7) a level driveway; and (8) a flat block of land.

Similarly, example features that promote 'physical access to amenities' include: (1) accessible under-benches in the kitchen and bathroom to allow wheelchair access; (2) power points one metre from the floor; (3) physically accessible appliances in the kitchen; and (4) suitable storage spaces that are within reach from a seated position. These findings are not surprising given the physically inaccessible nature of most housing stock currently available, and the independence and autonomy physically accessible spaces promote.

Importantly, residents also prioritised a number of 'other' features not related to physical access. According to residents, features that promote residents' privacy, a 'homely feel', carer workplace health and safety, access to nature, residents' comfort and health, social connectedness, and protection from the elements are also important to include in housing design. *Table 1* provides example features that represent the 'other' feature types. Collectively, more 'other' features were prioritised by residents than features that promote physical access (see *Figure 1*).

Interestingly, some residents prioritised technological features (e.g., automatic front door; automatic lights; electric blinds) citing improved physical access, safety, and ease of living. However, others considered technological features a burden: the maintenance involved, expensive cost, inconvenience experienced when the technology fails, and that the relative 'ease' residents face likely hastens physical decline for people with a degenerative condition.

Fast Facts



7,000

young people with high care needs live in aged care facilities.



700,000

people are being cared for at home by loved ones, often with limited support.

The following non-tangible features were also prioritised by residents:

(1) an individualized dwelling (e.g., dwelling suited to the person's needs; self-expression); (2) flexible design for later modifications or adaptations; and (3) security of tenure.

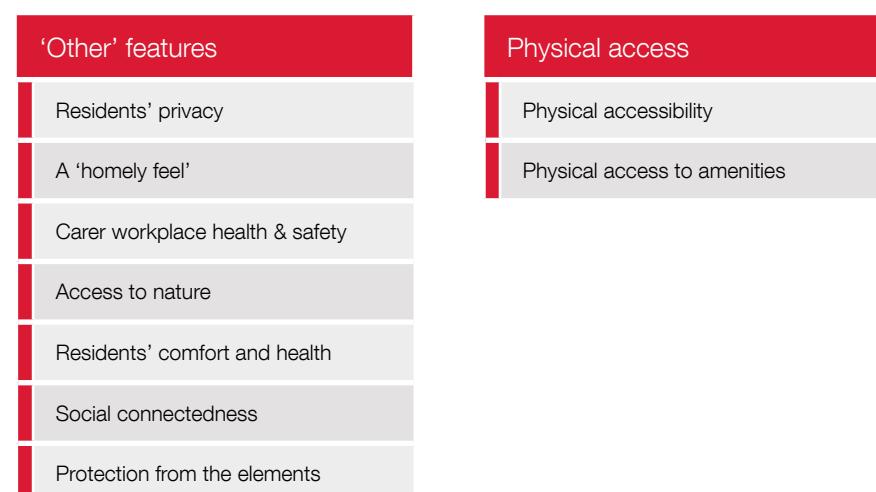
Table 1

Example 'other' features prioritised by residents

	'Other' features	Example features
1	Features that promote residents' privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensute bathroom Second bathroom and toilet for visitors and carers
2	Features that promote a 'homely feel'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bright colours Art within the dwelling Greenery within the dwelling Personalisation
3	Features that promote carer workplace health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An adjustable bed Ceiling / tracking hoist
4	Features that promote access to nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor veranda, patio, deck, or balcony Access to animals
5	Features that promote residents' comfort and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air-conditioning in the bedroom and lounge room Ceiling fans in the bedroom
6	Features that promote social connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spare bedroom for visitors
7	Features that promote protection from the elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undercover carport Garage

Figure 1.

Residents' prioritised dwelling features



Perspective of family members and non-family paid carers:

While family members and non-family paid carers also prioritised features that promote 'physical accessibility' and 'physical access to amenities', they were not the most important 'type' of feature identified. In contrast to residents, family members and non-family paid carers prioritised features promotive of 'safety' more than any other 'type' of feature. The 'safety' features identified enhance: (1) resident safety (e.g., limited obstacles, the padded nature of carpet for individuals with self-injurious behaviours), (2) carer workplace health and safety (e.g., accessible bench and table heights for both resident and carer; a motorised hoist into client's car), and (3) security (e.g., security screens on all windows and doors). While it is not surprising safety features were prioritised most by family members and non-family paid carers, it is interesting to note the differences in priorities between residents and family members / non-family paid carers.

The collective 'other' features identified by family members and non-family paid carers equalled the 'safety' features identified, in terms of relative importance (see *Figure 2*). According to family members

and non-family paid carers, features that promote residents' privacy, a 'homely feel', residents' comfort, access to nature, and residents' rehabilitation are also important to include in housing design.

Table 2 provides example features that represent the 'other' feature types.

Regarding residents' social environment, residents, family members, and non-family paid carers held different views in relation to appropriate tenancy arrangements and care packages for the individual. Preferences toward (and reasons for): (a) living alone with carer support; (b) living with one other person; (c) living with three to five other people; (d) living with other people with a disability; (e) not living with other people with disability; (f) the family knowing who the other residents are; (g) individualised care packages; and (h) shared care packages were identified. All participants viewed 'forced tenancy with a stranger' negatively.

Figure 2.

Family members' and non-family paid carers' prioritised dwelling features

Safety	Physical access	'Other' features
Residents' safety	Physical accessibility	A 'homely feel'
Carer workplace health and safety	Physical access to amenities	Residents' privacy
Security		Residents' comfort

Table 2

Example 'other' features prioritised by family members and non-family paid carers

	'Other' features	Example features
1	Features that promote residents' privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-contained living quarters
2	Features that promote a 'homely feel'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-clinical appearance
3	Features that promote residents' comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North-south orientation (siting): temperature control
4	Features that promote access to nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live near bushland• Access to animals
5	Features that promote residents' rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to a gym• Access to a swimming pool / hydrotherapy pool

The importance of location

All three participant groups regarded living in a central location important for independence and autonomy. Similarly, living within walking or wheeling distance to places of interest was also highly attractive to all three participant groups. Residents, family members, and non-family paid carers identified several positive (i.e., considered positive by all participants) and conflicting (i.e., considered positive by some participants and negative by others) places of interest (see *Table 3* for examples).

Whether participants regarded these places of interest as ideal to live near (or not) depended on whether the person associated the place: **(a)** with an enjoyed activity; **(b)** with a disliked activity; **(c)** with a local club or interest group; **(d)** as suitable to residents' capabilities; **(e)** with a restorative escape; **(f)** with a place of value and meaning; and/or **(g)** as an important amenity for 'everyday living'.

Table 3

Positive and conflicting places of interest identified by residents, family members, and non-family paid carers

Places of interest	Positive	Conflicting
A movie cinema		
Sporting fields and stadiums		
Local horse riding clubs		
Community gardens / botanical gardens		
The river waterfront		
Spiritual or religious havens		
A major shopping centre		
A newsagents		
A post office		
A butcher		
Bowling		
Restaurants		
Local parks		
Clothing retail shops		

The importance of neighborhood

In relation to the neighbourhood context, physical access (i.e., around the neighbourhood; accessible public places and spaces), a 'homely feel' (i.e., 'normal' homely sounds such as a dog barking; living on a relatively quiet, "peaceful" street), and a social environment welcoming of people with a disability were highly valued by all three participant groups. Differences in opinion regarding the most suitable means of transport for the person with a disability were noted.

Options included walking or wheeling, public transport (bus and train were most favourable), and private transport (own vehicle, taxi, service modified vehicle). Residents and family members also identified suitable and unsuitable suburbs in which to live. Suitable suburbs included the Bayside region (i.e., "Wynnum, Manly, Lota ... through to Wellington Point"), inner-city suburbs (i.e., Teneriffe, Bulimba), South Brisbane vicinity (i.e., South Bank, West End, Highgate Hill), and South-East Brisbane (i.e., Springwood, Mount Warren Park). Interestingly, the Bayside region and West End were disliked by some participants.