

Living in one's own home

It was Winston Churchill who said: ***First we shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us.*** This is especially true of the building we call 'home'. Two aspects of our home in our older years are the current focus of our attention:

Enabling people to stay in their own home even as they become physically frail and/or cognitively impaired. The two routes to this are through (i) universal design principles where homes are built to be livable in by people with the widest range of abilities (e.g., lighting, door handles, stepless entrances); and (ii) specialized technologies such as GPS-type person location monitoring; transmission of health self-test results and virtual doctor's visits.

What we are doing:

- attending the EFA and ASA conferences in the US ... especially the technologies: what is realistic both cost-wise and without turning home into a hospital. At the Environments for Ageing Conference we attended in 2008 some of the apparatus installed in a demonstration home, like high-powered hoists, were ludicrous to consider for the average home.
- desk research the so-called gold standard ... riff on dependence/independence (count how many times in EFA 2009 video people cited 'independence' as their goal in design; of course, that does save providing personal help) ... investigate the extent to which universal design is in place in Australia

Deciding whether to 'stay put' or downsize or relocate depends on many, often conflicting factors.

What we are doing

- We have conducted workshops for people thinking about relocating: to discuss the possibilities and which are the key factors in their decision. We've gained considerable insight from these workshops (as well as helping the people concerned) and we are keen to run more of these