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Project New Home (Part 1 of 2)

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Background

Grattan Institute are researching Australians' housing preferences. Early in 2011, they commissioned the Centre for the Study of Choice (CenSoC) to conduct a decision choice experiment in an effort to gain a quantitative understanding of how residents in Sydney and Melbourne trade off house size, type and location. To complement this quantitative analysis, the Grattan Institute sought qualitative research to provide a rich layer of insight into housing choice.

Sweeney Research undertook a series of six group discussions across Melbourne and Sydney to explore attitudes to housing and preferences of housing types. In each group an example of a new housing development was presented and discussed. This layout was presented as a single example of how housing design is changing.

There were 6-8 participants in each group and the sessions ran for 1.5 hours.

The overall aim of the research is...
 To provide insight into what type of new home (e.g. semi/detached or low/high-rise) different demographic groups prefer to live in; why they prefer this type and how strong their preferences are (i.e. under what circumstances might they consider another type)



Segment Understanding and Preferences

- What housing type participants prefer to live in...
 - Explore difference in mindset and aspirations of each demographic segment, and how this translates into preference for a particular housing type



Preference Drivers

- Whether this choice is based on...
 - Characteristics of a particular type
 - Emotional attachment to a particular type
 - Factors other than housing type, e.g. proximity to work and/or friends, or neighbourhood characteristics

Preference Strength

- Whether these preferences change when presented with information on...
 - Realistic estimates of what type of house they can afford where (stimulus to test this objective was not included in the study)
 - Common false assumptions about what is embodied in each housing types (e.g. backyards)
 - A walk-through of a different housing type, where good design allows for equal or higher amenity in a smaller amount of space (and which are currently not common in the marketplace)

Sample Structure

	Melbourne	Sydney	TOTAL
Methodology	 Groups	 Groups	
Younger couples (25-39 years) with children at home	1		1
Middle aged couples (35-50 years) with children at home		1	1
Older couples (45-59) with or without children at home	1		1
Lone person (45-59 years)	1		1
Older (60+ years)	1	1	2
TOTAL	4 Groups	2 Groups	6 Groups
	6 Groups		

Constraint: Qualitative research evolves creative ideas and generates hypotheses. It is not intended to be a precise and definitive index of what happens in the marketplace. This document should be interpreted with this constraint in mind.

This final report has been divided into two for the purposes of publication.

Part 1: Contextual information – Consumer Mindset, New Home Needs and Home Type Preferences

Part 2: Response to the new home design stimulus

Following is Part 1 of the findings from this exploratory study.

Segment Mindset

As Australians move through various life-stages, their home needs and expectations shift.

Although downsizing is apparent as Australians age, the underlying aim is still to retain as much space as possible – balancing what is both affordable and physically manageable.

Following is an overview of the key attitudes and sentiments that influence the needs of each segment when considering a new home.

Segment: Younger Couples (25-39)

▪ First family home no longer functional...

- As the family grows they become acutely aware of the need for more room, not only for family members but also visiting family e.g. grandparents

▪ Choices are governed by children...

- Conscious of setting their children up for the rest of their childhood, property decisions are decided on the basis of access to education and prevalence of family amenities

▪ Want kids to have the lifestyle they had...

- Familiarity with an area is important for some as they want their children to experience the same lifestyle. A country home during childhood often drives parents to want the same for their children

▪ Window of opportunity exists...

- Parents feel they have to make the move and commit to a certain area or suburb before their children settle in school. They need to set roots in an area before the pre-teen years

▪ Sacrifices accepted...

- While parents may feel comfortable and familiar in a certain suburb, they are undoubtedly aware that they may not remain there. They accept that they will need to sacrifice location for space



"My children are everything at this point in my life – I want to make sure they have the same opportunities that I had as a child. Getting the right place sets up our family lifestyle and having this sorted before the kids get too old is important. I'm conscious of not wasting time."

Segment: Middle-Aged Couples (35-50)

▪ Space is a luxury they don't have...

- With children approaching their teenage years, the benefits of space are exceedingly clear. They want to have the scope for a bit of distance between them and their children

▪ Everything is getting harder...

- Highly conscious of difficulties they have faced recently, be it job security or difficulties with finances. Day-to-day life presents challenges, even the daily commute adds significant hassle to their day. Distance between home and work becomes a consideration

▪ Feeling the property "squeeze"...

- Many are vocal about the challenges in the property market i.e. looking for a spacious family home and facing the significant costs associated with this. This can be off-putting

▪ Children are still number one...

- Although kids are starting to gain their independence, making sure they are set-up to receive the best education possible is still imperative to their choices in property



"It's getting harder to get ahead these days, especially in the property market. The past few years have involved significant sacrifices but now we're ready to move on to a new home with the space that we're all craving now."

Segment: Older Couples (45-59)

▪ Re-evaluating the family home... now the kids are starting to move on, most admit to reflecting on the family home and how it actually serves their needs – is there a more suitable option out there?

▪ Thoughts on the next phase of their life generate excitement...

- **Relaxing...** Looking forward to slowing down after running around after their children for as long as they can remember
- **Indulging...** Setting in place the plans that will enable them to achieve their dreams and ambitions e.g. living within walking distance of the MCG, travel overseas, living by the sea
- **Grandkids...** Relish the role of being a grandparent i.e. all the fun and joy of being surrounded by children without stress and worry
- **Simplifying their life...** House, finances, work, i.e. getting to the point where all the current concerns don't have to be a worry anymore

▪ Conscious of limitations that may rear up in the years ahead... looming health issues, financial constraints of retirement etc. mean they are looking to start doing the things they have always wanted to whilst they can i.e. fulfilling lifelong dreams and goals

▪ But still a little hesitant... they're not quite ready to embark on this phase yet...

- May still have older children at home who still rely on them and don't want to push them out
- Having to adjust to the idea of living without children and reacquaint with their partners!



"Looking forward to settling and slowing down in the long run – everything will be simple. I want to be involved in my children's lives but am also relieved that they will no longer govern every minute of the day. It's time for us to start making time to do what we want."

Segment: Lone Person (45-59)

- **Financial concerns dominate...**
 - Seriously considering their financial stability in the coming years and how to set themselves up
- **Retirement is on their minds...**
 - If not fully considering it now, then hoping to scale back work commitments and get greater job flexibility so they can start relaxing and enjoying life a bit more
 - Considering investment if they have a home or downgrading to free up some finances
- **Consolidation phase...**
 - Bolstering their financial position as they begin to ponder retirement – looking to make changes in investment strategy and perhaps taking a step back from high-risk (e.g. share market) to more sustainable, simpler investing (e.g. cash accounts, super, property)
- **Downsizing on the radar for some...**
 - Some respondents felt they could no longer justify the time and expense involved in maintaining a large home – looking for something more suitable to their needs



“I want to prepare myself for the years ahead and get into the best possible position for my retirement. I’m looking at smart investments that will work for me – the same applies to my home. It should set me up for the years to come.”






Segment: Older (60+)

- **Looking for fun and freedom...**
 - Their children have left (most of them) and they are enjoying this time to do as they please
- **Grandchildren are their pride and joy...**
 - Keeping involved in their grandchildren’s lives is important – this can take up a lot of their time as they take an active role in care
- **Strong focus on quality time and experiences...**
 - Taking the opportunity to travel, take spontaneous trips – as they recognise that opportunities will become limited in the future
- **Decision time...**
 - Many still living in the family home and the time has come to move on. They are wanting space that will work for them and not the other way around
- **Downsizing but not as much as you think...**
 - While they recognise the need to shift to a smaller space, they adamantly refuse to drastically downsize
- **Acutely aware of aging implications**
 - Recognise that it will be important to ensure easy access to health facilities, also that mobility will become more of an issue
- **Staying connected / avoiding isolation is critical...**
 - The desire for a sea change is balanced with the equally compelling need to stay in touch with friends and family. Moving to a new area can feel risky



“This time is about us and making the most of the opportunities we have. Grandkids are a priority but it’s also fitting in what we want to do. We’ve earned our freedom and want to make the most of it. We want to free ourselves up a bit financially but not let go of everything we’re used to.”

In summary, each segment has a unique set of needs reflecting their changing life status. This has direct bearing on what purpose a new home will fulfill in their lives what they consider to be essential requirements.

<p><i>Younger Couples</i></p> 	<p><i>Middle Aged Couples</i></p> 	<p><i>Older couples</i></p> 	<p><i>Lone Person</i></p> 	<p><i>60+</i></p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring kids have the best opportunities ▪ Considering family lifestyle needs – types of leisure activities ▪ Finding the right community fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting the increasing needs of a family without taking on too much extra burden ▪ Addressing some negative lifestyle factors if possible – commuting ▪ Trying to time the decision in a difficult to read market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conscious of the transition to retirement ▪ Have serious decisions to make but no great urgency ▪ Still driven by family needs ▪ Starting to consider different ways of living e.g. sea change, living closer to the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good investment decision ▪ Balancing their desires and remaining earning potential ▪ Assuming a single future ▪ Want flexibility to have pets ▪ Measured, well considered and cautious ▪ Prepared to wait for the right opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time spent on maintaining a home is now wasted time ▪ Recognise it will be their last home ▪ Need space to live together again (full time) ▪ Property has to facilitate their life, not hold them back ▪ Must allow them to stay connected
<p><i>Setting the foundation for the family</i></p>	<p><i>Allowing us space to grow</i></p>	<p><i>Rediscovering our lives and preparing for the step change</i></p>	<p><i>Preparing for my retirement</i></p>	<p><i>Maximising our quality of life</i></p>

New Home Needs

In the sessions we explored what consumers take into consideration when purchasing a new home.

There was a range of both emotional and rational needs that influenced their decision making. Many of these were common across the segments, with some rational needs being particularly important to certain groups (detailed later).

Despite some differences, essentially everyone seeks to achieve the ultimate combination of...

- + Optimum community
- + Best facilities
- + Best home they can afford

For many, particularly older, experiences with previous homes play a large role in informing future needs and expectations. Some become very particular in their needs and they can be quite adamant about what is important to them.

Space is one of the most critical dimensions in defining a livable home. It is a key determinant of whether a home will be considered and it is a primary reason for rejection. Well designed space equates to easier and smarter living. It means the home will adapt to changing lifestages, accommodate multiple needs and has no wasted spaces whilst not feeling unduly cramped or compromised.



New Home – Emotional Needs

There are four core emotional needs that drive much of the decision making around a new home...

1. Freedom

Largely stems from having a sense of 'appropriate space'. 'Appropriate space' is that which allows the individual or the family unit to 'be and grow' in a manner befitting their lifestage. It's not about excessive space or striving for mansions, rather, what is considered 'the norm'.

2. Control

Is linked to the desire to both engage and disengage with community, i.e. selective engagement. It's about being able to build connections, share spaces, accommodate friends and family in the home but also to retreat, shut the door and remove yourself at will.

3. Peace of Mind

Is derived from the reassurance of having made a good choice from the perspective of safety and security. It ranges from personal safety in the home and environment, to the public safety of the home and the financial security of the asset and having provided well for the family.

4. Ease

Is attributed largely to lifestyle amenity meeting the personal and lifestyle needs including; Health, Education, Entertainment and Transport. Being able to easily access and be accessible and not being cut-off or isolated. This need becomes increasingly important as Australians age and move into 'empty nester' status.

New Home Needs – Exploring Space

As stated, space is one of the defining qualities of what constitutes a feasible home...

- Space provides freedom and flexibility, can build a sense of luxury and directly influences the enjoyment of the home
- It is considered somewhat of a right!
- But also brings a cost i.e. maintenance

Space requirements do shift through lifestage and demographic group. At a simplistic level...

- Young couples / Couples with children – seek more
- Older couples/ Couples without children – shift down
- Lone – have the most modest needs

Many recognise that there are times they will voluntarily compromise on space...

- As they age
- If they want to move closer to the city
- Sometimes to stay in the area they prefer

As discussed, respondents are not necessarily seeking 'excessive' space but what they define as 'appropriate space'. What constitutes 'appropriate space' is driven by how well the space delivers 'privacy'. Privacy is critical, because it is associated with...

Privacy is linked to...



Peace of mind

(don't have to worry about what others see or hear)



Freedom

(can do what you want)



Serenity

(don't see / hear others)

New Home Needs - Space

As people prepare to grow a family, downsize or continue on as singles, the amount of space and how they want to utilise it, changes.

In meeting these space requirements, they are supporting important lifestyle needs...

- Lifestyle maintenance
- Freedom
- Flexibility
- Autonomy
- Connection

Lone Person



- Space to feel accommodated without undue sacrifice of lifestyle basics

For example...

- Small yard/outdoor courtyard/ balcony
- Room for pets
- Big enough for current furniture

Lifestyle Maintenance

Younger Couples



- Space to accommodate changing needs of a growing family of members growing up

For example...

- Full backyard for the kids
- Front yard for security
- Garage for family 'toys'
- Rooms for visitors
- Internal play area
- Room to entertain
- Separate area for growing kids (teens)

Freedom

Middle Aged Couples



Older couples



- Space for themselves as individuals, but also to accommodate visitors. No room for others risks losing contact with family and friends

For example...

- Will trade down to 2-3 bedrooms !
 - One for them
 - One for the grandkids/ guests
 - A spare
- Personal space (in and out) e.g. garage
- Small yard
- Maintain same level of comfort

Autonomy

60+



Connection

New Home – Rational Needs

There are a litany of common practical and functional needs influencing new home selection, spanning both the external and internal home environment...

External

- Safety and security
- Public transport access
- Natural environment i.e. greenery, tree-lined streets
- Parks / walks
- Storage e.g. sheds
- Room for pets
- Sufficient parking for owners & visitors
- Yard space

Internal

- Orientation to best make use of natural light
- Room for visitors (i.e. family from interstate, grand children)
- Storage
- **Layout** ...good use of space, no wasted space, accommodates changing needs of family, needs of different users

Beyond these common needs, there are some that are particularly prominent amongst specific lifestage groups...

Young Couples

- Community engagement
- Public safety
- Education and family amenities
- Walking distance to some amenities

Middle Aged Couples

- Easy public transport and car access to support growing independence of their kids
- Home layout for parent /teen separation and privacy
- Storage

Lone Person

- Home security – especially females e.g. high fences, locked gates, security doors
- Room for pets

Older Couples

- Low maintenance - no major renovations
- Supports hobbies – bike riding, walking etc.
- Proximity to city (some)
- Good technical set up – wired for everything
- Quality appliances

60+

- Easy daily and ongoing maintenance – little cleaning, minimal ongoing maintenance
- Cheap to run / energy efficiency
- Single story / no stairs
- Able to 'lock and leave'

New Home Needs - Maintenance

Ease of maintenance is a particular need that becomes an increasing focus as people age. As they leave the DIY years behind, they no longer want to invest the time and money into working on the house or the yard. Moreover, they clearly differentiate between pleasurable chores around the home (i.e. pottering in the garden, minor painting) and regular, routine maintenance or major undertakings that become tiresome. For most, there is a clear aversion to spending time...

- Having to clean
- Doing extensive gardening

Modern homes are linked with low maintenance i.e. fresh, new homes that won't require repairs or extensive renovations.

As Australians age, their focus is on 'getting out doing' being active and engaged. They consider time spent on the home as 'wasted time' – denying them freedom and flexibility to enjoy life.

"We spent a lot of time on our homes when we were younger with gardening and adding things on so eventually we're looking to downsize and find something low maintenance. We want to spend less time fixing things and more getting out and enjoying ourselves." (Older, Melbourne)

"We're looking for something relatively new with mod cons – not anything fancy, just want good quality basics... We want to enjoy it and be able to just lock it up and go." (Older, Melbourne)



Home Type Preferences


Across the groups, we explored preferences for three basic home types: ‘apartments’, ‘semi-detached’ and ‘fully detached’ homes. They were referred to by these simple descriptors with no further qualification, so we could understand top of mind associations with each ‘type’.

NOTE: The majority were recruited with a preference for a fully detached home.

There was a clear hierarchy house type preference that is consistent across all segments...

- Apartments are least preferred
- Semi detached is a reasonable compromise
- Fully detached is clearly the ideal


Apartment



- Well entrenched barriers to most demographics...
 - Assuming an ‘average’ apartment
- Those most likely to consider...
 - Lone person
 - Older couples seeking proximity to city (lifestyle)
 - Those with limited means
- Rejected as an option for families
- Option of last resort for many
- Something you move on from

*Limited appeal...
Entry to a location
for lifestyle*


Semi Detached



- More aspirational
- Has ‘home like’ qualities – a legitimate house
- Provides more freedom and flexibility
- More lifestyle conducive
- Those most likely to consider...
 - Lone person – step up for some
 - Older couples / 60+ – acceptable step down
- Rejected by Younger couples/ families – too restrictive

*Worth considering...
Taps into
traditional home
cues*

Detached



- Meets all needs
- Will move away from large family home over time but still seek same characteristics – just smaller!
- Those most likely to consider...
 - Families
 - Older couples
 - Lone (if can afford/ not too large)

*The ideal... Will
strive for, will resist
letting go*

For each home ‘type’ we explored the ‘top of mind’ motivators and barriers to consideration.

Apartments

Despite improvements in apartments, encountering examples that confirm their fears is not uncommon (either directly or through hearsay). Just one incidence that confirms a negative association, is sufficient to keep apartments as the least preferred option for most.

Motivators

The key motivation to consider an apartment is that it provides a more affordable option for those wanting inner city living...

- ✓ Are located within close proximity to the city...
 - Inner city location is a major draw card for apartment living
- ✓ Require next to no maintenance...
 - Sole benefit of body corporate is that maintenance is taken care of (especially relevant in retirement village scenario)
- ✓ Provide security...
 - Secure access with intercom and neighbours are close-by to keep a look out
- ✓ Offer the potential for a spectacular view...
 - The very nature of being in high rise means you have the benefit of views which can be very appealing
- ✓ Have balconies...
 - Some debate about whether this is common but most modern designs include an outdoor space
- ✓ Can have concierges
- ✓ Provide a sense of community...
 - Can be an important factor for elderly residents

Pro’s...

“I would consider an apartment if I was by myself and could have a small animal... I like the idea of having people around and having a concierge.” (Older, Sydney)

“Would perhaps look at a small apartment near the Gardens, close to the city and the theatre... It’s so close you don’t need a car, you could cycle.” (Older Couple, Melbourne)

“Advantage in that when you get older and you’re not capable of gardening, maintenance or painting – someone else will look after it.” (Older, Sydney)

Apartments (Cont.)

Barriers

Size, concerns about privacy and the hassle of body corporate are the main barriers to apartments for most...

- ✗ Neighbours all around you
 - Noise implications – people walking around, flushing toilets
 - Always need to be conscious of behaviour to make sure it doesn't disrupt neighbours
 - Problematic renters – they come and go, don't worry about the space or neighbours
 - Inability to control the demographic mix
- ✗ Nuisance and expense of body corporate organisations
 - Ongoing fees
 - Approval required for any changes – detracts from feeling of ownership
- ✗ Are often too small inside and lack outside areas
 - Not a suitable environment for children
- ✗ Quality concerns
 - Modern apartments are often poorly built and finished
 - Have to be wary of “dodgy” marketing campaigns i.e. deceitful sales tactics exaggerating room size
- ✗ Are a nightmare for parking
 - Extremely difficult to have guests around
- ✗ Don't provide potential for capital growth

Con's...

“Used to live in flats so I want to stay away now – if someone goes to the toilet in the middle of the night, everyone enjoys the flushing.” (Older, Sydney)

“(Body corporates) add to the expenses, you're not your own boss because you always have to go to someone. There are a lot of arguments and you're not independent.” (Older, Sydney)

“Been there, done that. In a complex of 30 units, you only need one arse hole to make your life miserable and the odds of one in 30 aren't that great.” (Middle-aged Couple, Sydney)

“I've had a look at some of the apartments in the city and my sister's dog's kennel is bigger!” (Lone Person, Melbourne)

“The proximity to neighbours – either side, above and below – means you have to be cognisant of them. Have to have rules in place, you can't have parties... standard areas of courtesy.” (Lone Person, Melbourne)

“Don't know if you get the same capital growth with an apartment... the building just gets old and needs money spent on it. Unless you're in a really great spot, there's not always growth in an apartment.” (Older, Sydney)

“A lot of rentals... you can't get them along to the body corporate meetings because they don't care.” (Older, Sydney)

Semi-Detached

Semi-detached are a more affordable option if you can't afford a detached home in a particular area.

Motivators

For many (especially Sydney), the ability to balance space and location was the key motivator to consider a semi-detached

- ✓ Are often in a good location, close to the city
- ✓ Have yard space whether it's front or back...
 - Important factor for those who have grandchildren over regularly or want to keep a pet
- ✓ Provide greater security as neighbours are close by...
 - Keeping an eye whilst you are away; an advantage for the elderly
- ✓ Have generally been modernised / renovated (Sydney)
- ✓ Have interesting design features...
 - Older semi-detached homes have features such as high ceilings and double brick facades – general feeling of “character”
- ✓ Give you the potential to add an extension...
 - Long and narrow block still allows room extend out the back
- ✓ Offer more privacy and space than a flat or unit...
 - No one looking down on to your space / no one living above

Pro's...

“I live in a townhouse now and privacy isn't an issue. I rarely see my neighbours and I never hear them... maybe we're lucky.” (Older, Sydney)

“I'm looking for a two bedroom townhouse with a small garden – you get more quality for that rather than looking for a detached home.” (Lone Person, Melbourne)

“I'm in a semi-detached with two other terraces and my neighbour's great. She looks after the garden when I go overseas.” (Lone person, Melbourne)

Semi-Detached (Cont.)

Barriers

The lack of complete privacy in a semi-detached home is the key concern...

- ✘ Are risky because of reliance on neighbours...
 - Conscious of neighbours at all times
 - Hearing neighbours is a major concern
 - For some, it's simply a sense of their presence
- ✘ Create difficulties with disputes over shared title / resolving problems...
 - Issues over who is accountable for shared walls etc.
- ✘ Have too much concrete, without enough greenery...
 - Modern semi-detached homes (i.e. duplexes) often have a small concrete courtyard
- ✘ Can be like a 'tunnel' – long and narrow, doesn't fit with desire for open plan
- ✘ Definitely not suitable for most families (Melb)

Con's...

"Wouldn't think of a townhouse – don't like the idea of sharing common walls. With a holiday house we used to own, there were all sorts of problems with downpipes so from past experience we don't like that sort of living." (Older, Sydney)

"I wouldn't consider a semi-detached home because you're very dependent on your neighbours." (Older, Melbourne)

"To a degree it restricts you, you are aware of others around when you step out the front door and immediately see them." (Older, Melbourne)

"My sister lives in one and the neighbours are hell, there's been some cracking in the ceiling so they've been at war." (Lone Person, Melbourne)

"Wouldn't even look at it... you're living in their pocket with the half back yards and front yards." (Older, Melbourne)

Detached Homes

Detached homes are undoubtedly the first preference for home type in Australia. Even for those who are considering other home types, this tends to be a matter of circumstances rather than choice.

Not only does a detached home facilitate a better lifestyle – particularly when spending time in the home is a key priority, it's also considered a more valued asset.

The motivators clearly outweighed the barriers for detached homes.

Motivators

- ✓ Privacy
- ✓ Quiet
- ✓ Better asset - more highly valued in the property market
- ✓ Greater flexibility...
 - More choice in aesthetics/design
 - Ability to change and tailor
- ✓ Lifestyle...
 - Outdoor entertaining area and garden
- ✓ More storage – internal, external
- ✓ Independence - no body corporate

Barriers

- ✘ Upkeep and maintenance
- ✘ Higher rates

Pro's

"You have your own little plot – it's yours. When you get home from work and you're tired, you don't need to worry about anything else." (Lone Person, Melbourne)

"Flexibility to do whatever you want within the bounds of bureaucratic council rules." (Middle-aged Couple, Sydney)

Conclusions

Housing needs do shift as people age (children leave home) and the necessity for space diminishes. The physical, financial and time cost of maintaining larger homes is a strong driver to downsize. As well as freeing up some income and facilitating a more active / externally focussed lifestyle.

However, associations with small spaces are still predominantly negative – with ‘the average’ apartment representing the most challenging end of the spectrum.

Although there is a realisation that available land is shrinking and we, as a community, need to be ‘smart’ about housing options of the future – there are strong rational and emotional drivers that still fuel the preference for detached housing...

- Owning a fully detached home is expected (particularly for families), it is part of building a life, something that is earned and relished and the best property option

Outside of the pull to detached houses are the push factors away from attached homes of which ‘neighbours’ is the major barrier.

Australians want a sense of community and select suburbs on this basis. They seek to engage and enjoy community facilities that allow this to occur. However, there is an equal desire to retreat and having the option to disengage is important. In many regards, despite the easy going bravado, Australians have pronounced private streak. They don’t want their pleasure or pain heard by neighbours and resent being drawn into the daily lives and ‘ablutions’ of those around them.

Good neighbours are worth their weight in gold. However, it is the one factor that can’t be controlled when it comes to selecting a home. Living in smaller, communally orientated spaces brings this fear to the forefront.



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