



Older Australians on the move

Press Release

26 November 2009

A new report released today by National Seniors has found that two in three Australians are moving home between the ages of 55 and 75, challenging the traditional view that seniors stay put in later life.

NSA chief executive Michael O'Neill said the report, titled *Moving or staying put: Deciding where to live in later life*, disputed the common perception that older people will spend most of their later life in one home, and should serve as a wake-up call for policymakers, planners and developers.

"It is widely accepted that the majority of older adults prefer to live in the community rather than in residential aged care, however our general understanding of the housing preferences and choices of Australians in later life is underdeveloped," he said.

The research also found that older adults are pressed into decisions to either stay in their existing homes or to move due to various constraints.

Many individuals who choose to 'stay' indicate that they are influenced by financial concerns. On the other hand, many older individuals are thinking of moving because of the upkeep responsibilities of their existing homes.

"While older Australians are given support to stay in their homes such as being provided with home modification services and other help, they also need support for when they want to move homes," he said.

"For those over age 75, difficulties in maintaining the house or garden, or a decline in their partner's health are paramount factors influencing their decision to move. While those who make their homes more age-friendly are less likely to move, the reality is that modifications are not an option for everyone."

O'Neill said that more needed to be done to ensure older adults have a choice in where they 'age in place', whether this means moving or continuing to live in their existing home.

"Removing financial barriers to downsizing, such as stamp duty, and supporting older adults in making their homes more 'age-friendly' should be priorities for government," he said.

"As Australia experiences an increase in the number of older adults in the coming decades, policy responses are needed to support older adults who choose to stay in their existing homes as well as those who decide to move in later life.

"A more nuanced and detailed understanding of the diversity of housing, location and service needs and preferences of people in later life is clearly needed, and this report provides an important first step towards that understanding."

Michael O'Neill is available for comment on 0448 125 898. Media: Casey-Ann 0422 391 627.

With around 280,000 members aged 50 and over, National Seniors is the consumer lobby for older Australians. It is the fourth largest organisation of its type in the world.