



The University of Sydney

Faculties of Health Sciences and Architecture

**The Home Modification:
Information Clearinghouse Project**

NEWSLETTER

www.homemods.info

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Our stated mission is “to develop a leading edge Home Modification Information clearing project designed with the assistance of, and accessible to, the full range of industry and consumer target groups.”

Feature Article: Group Home Guideline Revision Project for DADHC

Home environments are important in enabling occupants to perform valued activities. This is especially so for those with high medical support needs, those coming out of jail and those with challenging behaviours. Everyone responds to information derived from their environment.

To promote participation the environment should:

- afford appropriate circulation spaces
- afford privacy
- reduce territoriality
- enhance mood and relieve stress
- be clear and well-structured,
- reduce cognitive ambiguity,
- promote participation and choice.

To view an environment as ‘homelike’ and for it to be responsive to support needs is highly personal and subject to many factors such as age or cultural background. The relationship between design and its would-be impact on relationships (including the quality of relationships with staff members) is also critical but less well understood.

Therefore the production of more empirically based design guidelines is an important research activity. This project employing the skills and experience of a range of multidisciplinary researchers at the HMinfo Clearinghouse is currently underway. In order to analyse and communicate critical principles into design guidelines, the team has audited the plans associated with a number of ‘group home’ supported accommodation facilities, reviewed published international and national research

and/or guidelines, including current operational guidelines of DADHC and relevant regulatory authorities and is conducting interviews with a range of stakeholders including group home residents and their family members. The views of people living and working in group homes are crucial to this project.

In addition, a consultative reference group comprising individuals with acknowledged expertise and experience in the disability sector was formed to guide the revision project. Residential care workers and managers and people living in group homes, their allies and family members were also involved. Access to these groups early in the project gave an opportunity to establish the scope of the project with reference to an “expert” panel. The ongoing engagement of the reference group ensures that the needs of diverse stakeholders are recognized and understood at each stage of the project.

This group also included key working groups in DADHC, such as those involved in

- ▶ strategic asset management and procurement,
- ▶ accommodation and respite
- ▶ peak disability advocacy organizations and other advisory groups to government.

Outputs

- ▶ An understanding of how different aspects of accommodation design (such as spatial allocations) impact service outcomes to individuals and government.

- ▶ A robust set of principles to determine spatial design for people living in the accommodation, staff members providing support and families, friends and other visitors.
- ▶ A review of current guidelines in a systematic manner.
- ▶ Review of best practice for accommodation design, including the targeting of dimensional minima needed to ensure building performance outcomes; mechanisms for establishing local community standards and values as represented in the built environment.
- ▶ Revision and development of guidelines, key performance criteria and appropriate mechanisms for performance measurement with reference to the needs of important population groups including people with low and high medical support needs and people with low and high levels of challenging behaviour.

News Updates

The NSW HMMS State Council has recently appointed a Specialist Occupational Therapist to their team. Margaret Neuss comes to State Council with extensive experience and practical application knowledge of environmental modifications.

To contact Margaret please email her at ot@nswhmms.org or go to http://www.nswhmms.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=48

To visit NSW HMMS State Council's website, go to www.nswhmms.org

To the HMMS Coordinators...

All coordinators need to register to the HMinfo website to ensure your HMMS details are correct. If not yourself, a staff member from your service needs to be assigned to update the contact details of your service on the website. The staff member needs to register to the website and then email us for editing privileges to their service. The website address is www.homemods.info.

Upcoming Publications:

- ▶ Consumer Guide to Arranging Home Modifications *available now*
- ▶ Modification or Relocation: Summary Bulletin
- ▶ Home Water Management: Summary Bulletin
- ▶ Gardening at Home: Summary Bulletin
- ▶ Dementia Design Guidelines: Home and Community Care Capital Works Program 2nd Edition *available now*
- ▶ Research on the cost-benefits of caring at home
- ▶ Research on environmental determinants and interventions in the home pertaining to aggressive and self-injurious behaviour of people with a cognitive impairment

Go to the [Resource Library](#) to view these publications when they become available



Featured Web Site:

http://www.build.qld.gov.au/smart_housing/index.asp



The Queensland Government's Department of Public Works features a website dedicated to smart housing. The focus is on sustainable housing design and uses social, environmental and economic interventions as the key elements of design. The goal is to create housing that people at all stages in their life can utilize and move freely in, as well as being cost efficient and addressing environmental issues which have become a key concern of late.

On the site there is a downloadable checklist for the homeowner that allows them to self-evaluate the design features of their home and compare it to the ideals of a smart home. Also available on the site is a listing of Smart Housing professionals in Queensland whom consumers may be interested in contacting. For industry professionals there are tools available to help them accommodate the needs of people interested in designing a smart home. There are also numerous examples which the site provides as links of already developed homes with "Smart" design features.

In regards, to home modifications the idea of a socially sustainable home is the most important as it is based on security, safety and most importantly universal design. The concept of universal design also ties in with economic sustainability which is in part about how a universally designed home can minimise the cost of future modifications should they be required. One of the more interesting features on the site is the Research House, which users can take a virtual tour of (available at <http://www.build.qld.gov.au/research/research08.asp#research>) and find information on the design elements that make it a smart home. During the virtual tour users are able to pan around rooms and navigate through and around the house using tabs and icons to gain further insight on the different aspects of the design. What's interesting is that in many of the detailed descriptions the tour will actually provide links whereby users can

access information on the suppliers and manufacturers of the products and materials used. This allows those interested to not only gain insight but also to easily track down and obtain the same products that are show cased. An important attribute of the Research House is that it is fitted with 76 sensors measuring quantitative outcomes, as well as tenants providing weekly feedback to give qualitative information. These data collection tools may help determine the efficacy of design initiatives and lead to an improvement or new universal design guidelines which will benefit future practice. There is also a DVD available that provides further information on smart and sustainable housing, but more importantly presents a video representation of the elements and concepts used in the design. Keep in mind that this article has focused on the issues related to home modifications for the Information Clearinghouse and that smart housing also focuses on economic and environmental issues relating to housing design.

Latest Events & Training

- ▶ OT Australia NSW Level 1 Home Modifications 12/13 December 2008.
- ▶ Manual Handling and Hoists Workshop with Yvonne Duncan at ILC Melbourne.
- ▶ 5th National Housing Conference at The Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre Darling Drive, Darling Harbour, Sydney, Australia 20/21 Feb 2008.

For all training info, go to
<http://www.homemods.info/training>

For all events info, go to
<http://www.homemods.info/events>

Publication Review: Universal Design, Selwyn Goldsmith.



Goldsmith, S. (Ed.). (2000). *Universal Design*. Oxford: Reed Educational and Professional Publishing Ltd.

Reviewed by Tanja von Behrens

The preface and introduction to this thin volume describes universal design as such that 'the products which designers design are universally accommodating, that they cater conveniently for all their users'. This concept of universal design, therefore, relates not only to such things as building design, but also the design of equipment and assistive-technology that enable people to function more effectively and efficiently in their everyday life. The predominant focus of this book is universal design in the environmental sense.

The initial chapter introducing the volume opens with an interesting diagram illustrating the different levels of physical ability that people in a society may have – from the fit and agile, through to wheelchair users who require the assistance of more than one carer in order to go on an outing. This simple diagram clearly embodies the broad range of abilities that are experienced, helping the reader to consider the full range of populations in discussion, in order to design an environment that does not lead to 'architectural disability'. The premise of the text is that "the building users he or she is serving, including those with disabilities, are all people who can be treated as normal people.

The architect does not start with the presumption that people with disabilities are abnormal, are peculiar and different, and that, in order to make buildings accessible to them, they should be packaged together and then, with a set of special-for-the-disabled accessibility standards, have their requirements presented in top-down mode as add-ons to unspecified normal provision.' (Goldsmith, 2000). The intent is to encourage consideration of the built environment above and beyond the minimum building standards set for people with disabilities – in this case, the British Standards. Any use of the information in this book in an Australian context needs to consider the translation to Australian Standards.

Containing 9 main chapters on aspects of design of the built environment, one of the key benefits to this text is its emphasis on clear illustrations of the features considered in-text.

Each chapter contains information regarding the importance of that chapter topic, including comment regarding necessary measurements, and clearly drawn and labelled diagrams.

The chapters under discussion in this text include;

- Universal Design, buildings and architects
- Building users – mobility equipment
- Anthropometrics
- Heights – fixtures and fittings
- Horizontal circulation
- Vertical circulation
- Sanitary facilities
- Tiered seating, hotel guestrooms, car parking
- Housing

For those people who are entirely new to universal design the text provides a good introduction to key concepts and things to consider. For those with some background, the information builds upon existing knowledge, providing a clear background to various components of the built environment, and knowledge of people who may be impacted by lack of inclusive design.

The book includes many references to public access buildings, as well as a specific chapter devoted to understanding the impact of housing design upon occupants.

Update: Lifetime Care

The Lifetime Care & Support Scheme provides treatment, rehabilitation and attendant care services to people severely injured in motor accidents in NSW, regardless of who was at fault in the accident.

People who are eligible for the Scheme will have a spinal cord injury; moderate to severe brain injury; multiple amputations; severe burns; or will be blind as a result of the accident.

The Scheme began for children under the age of 16 injured in motor accidents from 1 October 2006 and will begin for adults from 1 October 2007.

The Clearinghouse did contribute to the review process as equipment and home modifications are interlinked. Our view is that housing and suitably prescribed equipment are equally important determinants of the quality of life of individuals, families, and paid carers. The quality and location of these is critical in influencing physical health, disposable income, engagement with the world of paid work, aspirations for family formation and the capacity to engage with broader society.

For more information go to <http://www.lifetimecare.nsw.gov.au/>

Home Mods Brochures

These are now available direct from the NSW HMMS website in a number of languages including Arabic, Chinese, German, Greek, Italian, Serbian, Spanish and Vietnamese .

Click [here](#) to access this page!

HMinfo Clearinghouse Staff

Our team brings together a range of experience. The Directors are Catherine Bridge from School of Occupation and Leisure Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney and Peter Phibbs from the Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney. Katrina Chaudhary is our librarian. Lyndal Millikan, Maree Porter, Navit Gohar and Yong Jung are the research assistants.

Staff are available Monday to Wednesday for telephone enquiries however contact via the website or email is preferred.

Editors: Tanja von Behrens & Lyndal Millikan

How to contact us

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Christmas & New Year

The Clearinghouse will be closed from December 21 until January 2, 2008. The website will still be available but responses to queries may be delayed until the team return in the New Year. Skeleton staff will be available for telephone enquiries from January 2 until January 7. The full team are back on duty from January 7th 2008.

Thank you for your support and use of the service over the past 12 months. We enjoy responding to questions and your submissions and hope to receive many more in the next 12 months.

The HMinfo Team

