

Session 3: Housing

Summary by Livia Tan, Research Assistant, LKYCIC

Speakers in this session spoke on the issue of housing and the ageing population. Their presentations were framed by the question: how can we provide affordable and accessible housing options to support ageing in place?

Professor Julie Byles, presented findings from her study, *Housing for Older Australians: Changing Capacities and Constrained Choices*. She described housing as a major, but untapped, asset in Australia due to the lack of affordable and suitable housing options for older adults and a preference for ageing-in-place. Through the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, a decline in average physical function over time was observed. This corresponded to a large proportion of older woman moving from houses and apartments to retirement villages and who needed higher levels of care over time. Interestingly, it was also observed that retirement villages tend to be a transition to residential aged care, despite notions that retirement villages are protective against ageing.

Based on the Housing and Independent Living Study (HAIL), Byles also reported that most people had high levels of perceived suitability and satisfaction with regards to how well their homes and neighbourhoods were designed to allow them to manage daily living activities. When utilising objective standards to analyse the suitability of homes for ageing, many homes were found to provide less supportive environments for ageing. Byles concluded that more needs to be done to devise methods for designing homes for the ageing population and to provide more housing options in later stages of life.

The second speaker, Dr. Satoshi Kose, presented *Ageing in place: Japan struggles toward its realization through appropriate housing provisions* which illustrated the context of Japan's ageing population and its challenges in developing age-friendly housing. Through his observation of the various stages of Japanese policy towards age-friendly housing, Kose highlighted the importance of policies that support ageing-in-place. This is particularly due to governmental limits in providing adequate and affordable housing catered to older adults. Understanding Japan's failures, Kose suggested general requirements to enable ageing-in-place but could not define a solution for age-friendly housing. However, despite their limitations in providing sufficient standards to support an ageing population, Kose described universal design guidelines as an important starting point for future interventions.

The third speaker, Dr. Joshua Comaroff addressed the visual challenges of older adults in his presentation titled *Towards a Visual language for Aging*. Comaroff described the contemporary urban environment as "visually challenging" for the ageing population and highlighted the limited standards for visual code in cities. He explained how visual conflicts in the built environment could serve as a barrier for older adults, especially the cognitively impaired, who could potentially become discouraged from navigating the city and thus constrained to their homes. Based on Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City*, Comaroff suggested the development of a system of legibility for intuitive wayfinding in the neighbourhood scale. In the context of Singapore's Housing and Development Board (HDB) estates, Comaroff identified the frequent lack of elements that provide legibility and configurations that potentially discourage use by older adults. To conclude, he emphasised the importance of achieving visual clarity and made recommendations to achieve clear hierarchy in the urban environment.