

The dining room  
at Lendlease  
Retirement's Classic  
Residences Brighton.



## KEY TO SUCCESS

Attention to detail is all-important when it comes to retirement living design, writes ERIN MILLER

**B**uilding a sense of community and paying attention to details such as safety and security are the cornerstones of well-designed retirement living accommodation, according to a leading architect.

Billard Leece Partnership architect Emily Gilfillan (below) has worked on several retirement living projects in Australian cities.

Being part of the community — both wider and in the retirement development — is an attractive drawcard.

"It's incredibly important to build a sense of community," Ms Gilfillan says.

"Residents should remain connected and this can be achieved by creating environments that foster partnerships between local healthcare and community services that can support seniors."

These include access to nearby medical services and features such as concierges who can organise doctor's appointments so residents can be seen in their homes.

While being part of the community is valued, Ms Gilfillan says choice and flexibility are also important.

"They want the ability to engage with other residents — whether that's a coffee or a workout in a gym," she says.

"But they also want the flexibility to withdraw from those daily activities."

She believes successful projects are also defined by the provision of integrated services and age-appropriate amenities and provide peace of mind.

"Contemporary design should be modern, timeless and provide a welcoming and inviting place to live," Ms Gilfillan says.

"While the design should promote independence, movement and health, it needs to also be a place that feels safe and secure."

In the past decade, the design of metropolitan retirement living has changed to adapt to the expectations of residents and nature elements are in high demand.

Key features that are regarded as significant — physically and visually — are access to natural light and the outdoors.

"Residents are more active and healthy, and expect to continue their energetic lifestyle," Ms Gilfillan says.

That desire to lead an active life means facilities have been amended to cater to their desires — whether it's communal vegetable gardens, or bowling greens and tennis courts.

When it comes to internal community spaces, residents don't just want a one size fits all-style room or area that caters to several uses.

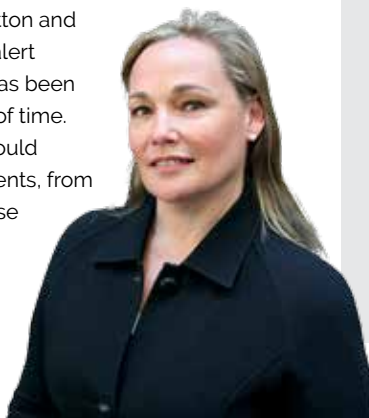
Instead they want spaces for particular purposes. "If a cafe is provided, it should look and feel like a cafe," Ms Gilfillan says.

"The same can be said for a library, cinema or games room."

Design features that allow residents to remain in their own home as they age are also important.

Inclusions vary, but can include an emergency call button and sensors that send an alert when no movement has been detected for a period of time.

"Design features should consider how all residents, from the most active to those with medical ailments, can maintain an active lifestyle with privacy."



# MAKE THE SWITCH

Plan ahead to downsize with ease. By Erin Miller

**S**aying farewell to a beloved family home can be daunting, but the process of downsizing doesn't need to become a burden if you plan the transition carefully and embrace the change ahead.

To ensure everything runs smoothly make sure you declutter before making the move, research what style of village you want to go into and be fully aware of any contractual obligations regarding the retirement accommodation.

Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria vice-president Lawrie Robertson says it is imperative people do their research first and select a home that suits their needs.

"Make sure you investigate the nature of the village — looking at things like the age profile and the activities on offer," Mr Robertson says.

Once the decision has been made about where you will be moving to,

consider getting legal advice to discuss not only selling your family house but also your new home.

"Get a solicitor who understands and can advise you on the implications of the retirement living contract," Mr Robertson says.

"Make sure you've got your eyes wide open, as many people don't take the time to get good advice."

The motivations and circumstances

that lead to downsizing vary.

A 2014 study by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute found the decision to downsize was driven by key factors such as a change of lifestyle, inability to maintain the home or garden, having an empty nest, illness or retirement.

The survey also identified the key features downsizers looked for when considering retirement living.

They included one-level dwellings, small gardens, good neighbours and proximity to family.

It's more than likely the retirement accommodation that becomes your new abode will be smaller than the family home, so people need to have a really good spring clean before making the move.

After you've settled in to your new home, accepting there will be a period of adjustment is another key factor to ensuring downsizing is successful.

"Being in a community of people your own age, and recognition of where you are in life, can be very supportive," Mr Robertson says.

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## FIVE TIPS FOR DOWNSIZING

### 1 CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

Make sure you look at several retirement living options to see which has facilities that best suit your needs.

### 2 GET FINANCES IN ORDER

Consult financial planners if you need advice regarding selling the family home and buying a retirement property, and make sure you take into account additional expenses, such as removalists and estate agent fees.

### 3 START EARLY, MAKE A PLAN

Make a list of your belongings, declutter and decide what you intend to take to the new home.

### 4 PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Make sure you measure rooms in your new home to ensure furniture will fit, and that it has adequate storage for your belongings.

### 5 INVOLVE FAMILY

Discuss plans with loved ones and seek their help regarding sorting your belongings and moving, if you need it.