

MEDIA RELEASE

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Territorians look forward to more aged care beds

The Chief Minister, also the NT Health Minister, has today released the Expressions of Interest (EOI) for a new 60-bed aged care facility which incorporates dementia facilities.

“This is an excellent start as over 100 Territorians in Darwin alone are waiting on aged care beds, “says Sue Shearer, CEO of COTA NT. “With the EOI, we would urge government departments, especially the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, to give this much-needed development an urgent status.

“We would also encourage EOI to include designs such as the Dutch concept of the *dementia village*, where residents live in small cluster homes and continue to live as close to a regular life as possible. It is already well-established in other parts of Australia and research has shown that these styles of homes mean people have a better quality of life and fewer visits to hospital. These homes put people first and by focussing on the key features of small, domestic and familiar with a non-institutionalised environment.

“We would also like to see space designed for couples to move in together. We often see seniors with partners needing aged care being left alone when their partner is moved into an aged care facility. Understandably leaving a life-long partner - the source of greatest comfort, safety and familiarity - can cause a great deal of distress and anguish which can be avoided.

“It is vital that developers think outside the square, think carefully about the needs of older people and perhaps simply think about how they would like to be cared for and how they would like to live as they age.

“The proposed new facility is a win/win situation as it will free up much-needed beds at the Royal Darwin and Palmerston hospitals where most seniors waiting on availability in aged care residential homes or in need of specialised dementia care are currently being accommodated. We look forward to its development, hopefully the start of continued planning and development for building the Territory’s age care capacity.”

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Media contact

Sue Shearer COTA NT 08 8941 1004 ceo@cotant.org.au

COTA Northern Territory is the peak advocacy and representation organisation for senior Territorians advocating for and working towards an age-friendly, just, inclusive and equitable society since 1969

COTA NT Inc
GPO Box 852
Darwin NT 0801

65 Smith Street
Darwin NT 0800
ABN 86 316 991 800

P: (08) 8941 1004
E: admin@cotant.org.au
www.cotant.org.au

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<https://hellocare.com.au/village-style-dementia-homes-improve-quality-life/>

<https://www.hammond.com.au/location/hammondcare-caulfield>

Key features of dementia villages:

- Small, domestic accommodation removes long, confusing corridors and unfamiliar institutional elements.
- Patterns on carpet and walls are avoided because these can add to confusion.
- There is good contrast between walls and floors to aid wayfinding.
- Commercial kitchen and laundry fittings and appliances would not be found in regular homes, so they are not found in these homes.
- Taps look like taps – not space age implements.
- Toilet seats have good contrast to surrounding tiles because when perceptions are affected by age and dementia.
- Toilets in ensuites are visible from the bed because this aids continence, especially at night.
- Staff equipment and resources are kept behind ‘Harry Potter doors’ which look like part of the wall so they do not distract residents.
- Locked doors are kept to a minimum.
- There are no ‘staff only’ areas in the cottages.
- Beautiful, safe outdoor spaces are visible from within the homes and are freely accessible – this is very important for quality of life for people with dementia.
- Kitchens are domestic and accessible (but with safety considerations) and are where residents’ meals are cooked, the aroma being a vital cue to come and enjoy mealtime.
- The kitchens and meal prep allows residents to participate and engage with others.

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