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Designing for Our Changing Families

Developers and builders are responding to demographic changes that will accelerate as the baby boomer generation approaches retirement.

Households are becoming smaller. Divorce continues to split families. Baby boomers are becoming empty nesters and retirees and younger adults are delaying family formation as they continue their education and establish careers. Despite the popularity of apartment living, many single and couple households prefer Torrens Title houses, usually with a reduced version of the Australian dream, a compact, easy to maintain backyard.

Smaller Lot Housing Options

Master planned community developers, such as Delfin Lend Lease and Stockland, have promoted housing types suited to smaller lots with frontages ranging upwards from 10 metres for many years. These smaller lot housing options can be a more affordable way for young singles and couples to enter the market. They appeal to busy couples wanting less outdoor maintenance and older couples and singles downsizing from family homes.

More recently Delfin Lend Lease has introduced to South-East Queensland various smaller lot options with areas <math><300\text{ m}^2</math>, some with frontages <math><10</math> metres. Springfield Lakes successfully introduced its Studio range of **freestanding** houses on lots of approximately

these single storey houses have an internal area excluding garage of

Located close to the Orion Town Centre, under construction for completion next year and the University of Southern Queensland's Springfield Campus in Brisbane's western corridor, Studio house and land packages were originally released from \$199,000 around 18 months ago. Prices now start at \$228,000. They have primarily sold to young singles and couples, including students.



Studio house at Springfield Lakes

The Gold Coast has seen many recent examples of lifestyle housing on smaller lots designed to appeal to the Double Income No Kids market, including business and professional couples aged 30 or 40 years plus, as well as older couples downsizing. Most projects offer freestanding or attached houses, often on Torrens Title and are part of waterfront or golf

course communities, such as Austcorp's Coomera Waters Marina Village, Nifsan's Emerald Lakes and Robina Land Corporation's Riverwalk.

The Quay on Varsity, developed by Delfin Lend Lease, has two bedroom plus study, two storey **attached** terraces on Torrens Title lots of 188 m² (7.5 x 25 metres), offering luxury fittings and fixtures, double garage and a master bedroom of approximately 5 x 4.3 metres plus ensuite and walk-in robe. The second bedroom is spacious, approximately 3.8 x 3.2 metres plus built-in robe.

The ground floor accommodates the bedrooms, laundry and study with a street-front covered patio off the master bedroom. The upper level includes a media room, lounge, dining and powder rooms plus two external living areas, one a large terrace of approximately 40 m², designed for entertaining.

Offering lake views, this terrace home of 219 m² with rear lane garage access is priced at \$705,000. A two bedroom, single garage home of 132 m² of internal area, without water views and on a 125 m² lot (5 x 25 metres) is priced at \$429,000. Located in the Robina/Varsity Lakes commercial precinct that is emerging as the Central Business District for the Gold Coast, The Quay on Varsity is also within the thriving retail and restaurant precinct known as Market Square, on the shores of Lake Orr. Bond University and Varsity College are nearby.

Home Offices

The business or professional couple downsizing from a large family home in the Robina area is attracted to this Gold Coast version of a city

lifestyle. Small families are also buying slightly larger SOHOs (Single Occupancy Home Offices) on 255 m² lots offering office areas of around 30 to 80 m², some with separate street access. These two and three bedroom terraces include central courtyards and single car garages plus car courts. Current asking prices start at \$600,000.

These smaller lot design solutions need to be offered to consumers as complete packages. If targeting the downsize market they require plenty of storage space. Many two storey designs offer under stairs storage and other solutions such as garage storage and walk-in linen cupboards. With broadband Internet access making working from home a practical option, this type of housing is expected to become more widespread over the next few years. Not only baby boomers downsizing, but Generation Y starting their own businesses will find this style of housing appealing, provided it is well located in respect of urban amenities.

Extended Family Housing

Parents of Generation Y often face a different challenge as these 20 to 30 year olds stay at home, driven by cost considerations as a result of HECS debts and being more at ease with their parents than young adults in the 1960s. Some households are also welcoming older relatives to share the family home. A review of a sample of builders' display homes and websites reveals the emergence of alternative housing types more suited to families with one or more older teenagers, young adults or elderly relatives.

Many builders offer generous sized second, third and fourth bedrooms of 11 to 12 m² plus built-in robes, providing sufficient space for a double bed and computer desk. This appears to be as much a response to increasing demand for larger areas and ubiquitous technology as it is to changing demographics.

The second sitting room, often an upstairs gallery, is also common. Parent retreats and separation of the master bedroom area from other bedrooms by the living areas have been commonplace for some years. The addition of purpose-built media rooms is now adding to the overall area of many houses.

There is also evidence that builders and developers are catering specifically to blended families with older children or older relatives. Examples include:

- Ingles Group design The Seychelles, a four bedroom house with ground floor master bedroom with walk-in robe and ensuite and upstairs second bedroom of 3.69 x 3.43 metres plus walk-in robe, total internal area of 223 m² and suited to a 600 m² plus lot;
- Coral Homes' Barbados and Montego Series designs with four bedrooms plus study houses of approximately 279 m² offering ground floor or upstairs master bedroom with walk-in robe and ensuite, another ensuite to a second bedroom of 10 to 14 m² and a two-way bathroom shared by the remaining two bedrooms;
- Clarendon Homes' two storey, four bedroom plus ground floor guest bedroom Savannah 43 design of approximately 342 m² of internal area. The four bedroom plus study Savannah 49 is larger (approximately 373 m²), with a three car garage, a 30 m² master

bedroom plus walk-in robe, large ensuite and a 3.89 x 3.4 m² Princess suite with its own ensuite;

- Metricon Homes' Fontane 37, a two storey four bedroom house with ground floor guest suite or study of 3.89 x 3.27 metres with its own ensuite, has an internal area of 290 m²;
- AV Jennings has a number of designs that offer four bedrooms or four bedrooms plus study, with a second bedroom or study having a walk-in robe, including some single storey plans; and
- Adenbrook Homes, with its Nuvo two storey design of four bedrooms plus a study takes this concept further, offering small walk-in robes to each of its second, third and fourth bedrooms, each of which is a minimum of 11 m², suited to a double bed and desk. This house has an internal area of 327 m² and is suited to a 630 m² plus lot.

Even on a smaller lot of 345 m², with 11.5 metre frontage, Devine Homes at Nautical Edge at Coomera shows that it is possible to offer an alternative to the standard three smaller bedrooms of 3 x 3.2 metres, with a two storey, four bedroom double garage design having a 4 x 3.6 metre second bedroom suited to an older teenager. The house of approximately 193 m² of internal area is priced at \$429,900 for the house and land package.

Custom-designed Housing

Most builders offer to incorporate customers' ideas and those catering to upper price brackets include many of the above ideas. David Reid Homes, established on the Gold Coast for 18 months from New Zealand, is offering two storey

designs suited to 800 m² plus waterfront lots. Its Fontana design has four bedrooms plus study with ground floor guest bedroom with two-way bathroom, and a large ensuite to a second upstairs bedroom, as well as master bedroom, ensuite and walk-in robe. With an internal area of approximately 340 m² the house also has approximately 58 m² of covered patios and balconies.

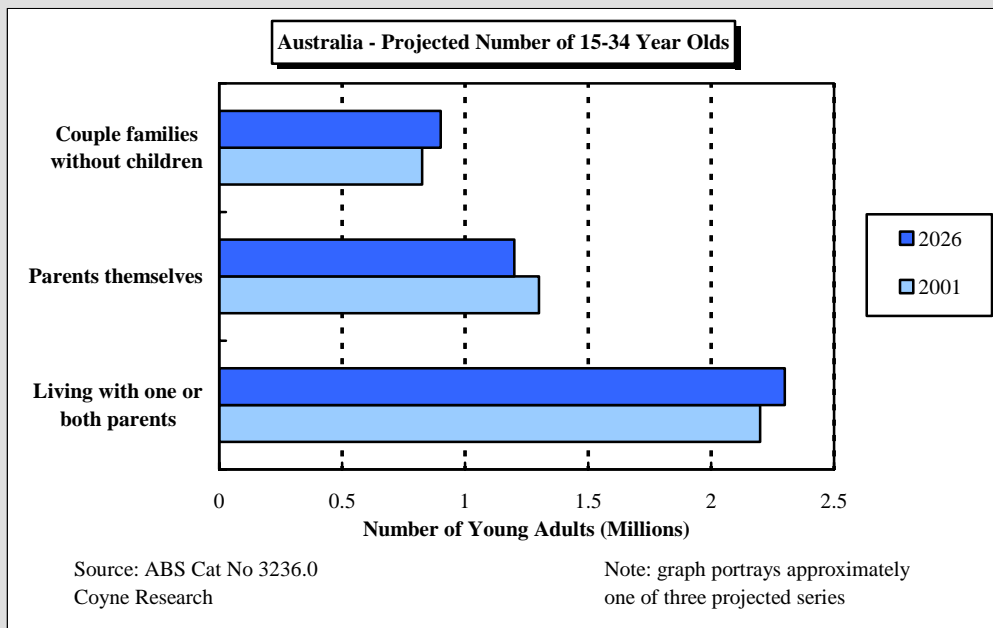
Home Renovations

Apart from the new home market, the demographic changes are driving the renovations market, estimated by BIS Shrapnel as worth \$20 billion to the Australian economy in 2003. This alternative no doubt appeals to many baby boomers who can minimise their capital outlay, perhaps through inclusion of an independent studio within their existing house.

By 2026, Australian households are projected to increase from 7.4 million in 2001 to between 10.2 and 10.8 million, an increase of between 39% and 47%. Lone person households are projected to show the greatest increase of between 57% and 105%, from 1.8 million in 2001 to between 2.8 and 3.7 million in 2026.

The average household size is projected to decline from 2.6 persons per household in 2001 to between 2.2 and 2.3 persons per household in 2026.

The number of children aged 0-14 years in Australia is projected to decline from 4.0 million in 2001 to 3.8 million in 2026. The graph shows projected changes in the household formation patterns of young adults, based on one of three alternative series.



Those aged 75 years plus accounted for 1.1 million people in 2001 and represented 6% of Australia's population. This group is projected to more than double by 2026, to 2.5 million people, or 10% of the population.

Source: ABS Cat No 3236.0 – Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2001 to 2026

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