



# Five-star development sets new standard in aged care

**Gary Smorgon House in Melbourne may look more like a hotel than an aged care facility, but it's the way architectural design integrates style with comfort, support and service that Jewish Care and architects V Arc are most proud of. If this is what aged care of the future looks like, there is much to look forward to, as Bella Katz reports.**

**S**ituated amongst beautifully landscaped gardens in Caulfield, the heart of Jewish Melbourne is a unique residence that showcases the evolution of aged care. This 120-bed facility, which opened in June last year, is a beautiful home that allows seniors to enjoy an exceptional lifestyle while receiving the highest quality care.

The 4100m<sup>2</sup>, three level, \$27-million facility takes design cues from luxury hotels rather than traditional aged care homes. It is fitted with first-class amenities such as a movie theatre, shared computer room with internet connection, hair salon, therapy areas and even its own synagogue.

But it is how V Arc design champions Jewish Care's active service model and ageing in place principles, supporting residents' individuality, lifestyle and choices, while delivering appropriate care in the same physical space or room to suit changing needs, that truly befits its status as a 'dream residence'.

Bill Appleby, CEO of Jewish Care, says the facility design reflects Jewish Care's progressive approach to aged care.

"We are seeing significant changes in the provision of aged care services, for which architecture needs to creatively accommodate," Appleby says. "The aged population is increasing, life expectancy is extending, and at the same time, community expectations of aged care are evolving. People want choice, flexibility and quality.

"Gary Smorgon House delivers the latest approach to service delivery for older people, where staff work alongside clients, encouraging their ongoing involvement in day to day activities. It aims to help people strive to the highest level of independence that they can achieve, which includes active involvement in decision making about their own life."

Managing director of V Arc, Frank Bambino, agrees people want choice and quality of life in today's facilities and that good architectural environments greatly aid healthy ageing. He believes environments such as Gary Smorgon House assist independence and challenge preconceived notions of provision for older people, as residents do more for themselves rather than passively accepting staff assistance to meet their needs.

"A healthy mind leads to a healthy body," Bambino says. "The architecture we believe in, and design, is about giving the mind an opportunity to exercise and make choices. Infrastructure and environment should encourage healthy, independent living, and allow people to choose how much care and support they need.

"As architects, when working in this area we ask ourselves 'how do we get people excited about their new home in the knowledge that they have the support and potential to build a new social network?'"

## Social interaction

From the moment you enter Gary Smorgon House, the first impression sets the tone and announces what Jewish Care is all about.

A welcoming and spacious foyer greets you upon arrival, with a palette of colours that draws inspiration from the Israeli countryside, a key feature reflected throughout the building and room interiors.

The facility welcomes family and encourages social interaction when residents so desire, while also creating many serene, more intimate spaces and tranquil outdoor areas.

Both indoor and outdoor spaces are created to allow residents time to themselves as well as vital connections to the community.

Generous therapy spaces, common areas to facilitate social exchange and an active living philosophy that encourages independence, combine to support the resident's physical and emotional well-being as they age.

Gary Smorgon House offers comprehensive 24-hour care, including full or partial assistance with a wide range of medical, clinical and lifestyle requirements.

It employs a team of dedicated, qualified staff, experienced in the provision of quality aged care, who are available full-time depending on residents needs. The design

## SPECIAL FEATURES

- 4100m2, \$27-million facility takes design cues from luxury hotels rather than traditional aged care homes
- Architectural spaces support innovative new active service model of care for older people
- Includes first-class amenities such as a movie theatre, computer room with internet access to encourage online communication with family and friends, hairdresser and its own synagogue
- 120-bed facility
- Environmentally sustainable features, incorporating hydronic gas heating, low energy efficient lighting, rainwater

also reflects the changing needs of residents as they age and aims to do this without them having to change rooms.

Additional features that enable residents to maintain their Jewish traditions include a pre-programmed lift that stops automatically on each floor during the Sabbath and Jewish holy days. As with other Jewish Care facilities, Gary Smorgon House also maintains close links with Jewish schools, youth and community groups. A volunteer group coordinates a regular schedule of Jewish concerts and cultural events, tailored to residents' tastes and interests.



The interior of Gary Smorgon House.

tanks, double glazed windows and increased insulation

- Flexible engineering design allows for future refurbishments
- Private ensuite bathrooms with in-built safety features and interconnecting rooms for spouses or siblings.

Appleby says Gary Smorgon House is part of Jewish Care's long range strategy to meet the changing needs and wishes of the Jewish community of Victoria. He suggests aged care providers should work together to raise the collective bar on future aged care developments to benefit the broader community.

"Every project undertaken provides us with opportunities for improvement for the next development," he says. "We encourage the establishment of a dialogue to share key learnings and experiences through our peak industry bodies so the whole industry can benefit from other's experiences." **HA**

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