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The Ageing of Australia's Population: Challenges for the Housing Market

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At a national and state level in Australia there have been policies and strategies developed that focus on the challenges and opportunities facing the country as the population ages. Much of this focus has centred on costs to the public sector, in particular the cost of publicly funded pensions and projected increasing costs to the health system. Much less attention has focused on other aspects such as housing, though housing is essential to the current policy of 'ageing in place' and into the 21st century it will be the older age groups that will potentially provide the greatest impetus for change in the housing market. Housing careers in Australia have changed as a result of a range of factors and processes occurring within society. These processes are shaping the context within which individuals, and households, make housing choices and highlights the challenge of converting demographics into housing demand. This paper will outline the initial findings from a program of research examining 21st century housing careers that is being undertaken by the Southern Research Centre of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. The paper will discuss the nature of changing housing careers in Australia and some of the factors which will influence the choices older people make regarding their housing needs as they age.