



Free at last – The housing decisions of empty nesters

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Children leaving the parental home marks a time of freedom, spontaneity, time and satisfaction for empty nesters. Nesters don't see the children departing as being a 'life stage' as such, but rather a natural progression, another step forward. There are other events which they believe will trigger real change... retirement, the loss of a partner or financial difficulties are amongst these. This is a transitional time for this generation....children leaving, grandchildren being born, parents dying, retirement looming and old-age knocking. Like any time of change, there comes the fear of the unknown. The real concerns for this generation relate to finances, health and loneliness. Their new roles in life and the redefined structure at home has not necessarily resulted in any spare cash. The progression from child to adult has occurred – many costs associated with raising children diminished well before the children physically moved out. Whilst a number of changes have been brewing over time, the reality is that they have a house with no kids. The question is – are they ready to move on? To down-size? The answer to the question of whether they will move on is addressed in this paper. The research reported in the paper is derived from focus groups held in the first half of 2006 in Melbourne with both persons who have recently become empty nesters and persons who are on the verge of becoming empty nesters.