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New Life Passages: Challenges for Ageing & Housing

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Concepts of an older generation, the aged, the elderly or older people are no longer relevant in considerations of the increasing numbers of Australia's ageing population. Life passages following departure from the full-time paid workforce are becoming increasingly diverse. There are, and will be, more people in retirement, they will live longer, their life experiences more varied in a far more complex occupational and family environment, they come from diverse cultural backgrounds and the very nature of retirement will be transformed. The diversity of older people presents challenges most particularly for housing planning and residential and urban planning policies. These are the findings of a major national quantitative and qualitative research project conducted in Australia on behalf of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI). More than 7,000 Australian men and women aged over 50 years shared their intentions and expectations in a sociological study, the largest such national study in Australia. The project comprised a national survey followed by focus group discussions, internet discussion groups and interviews in three Australian states in metropolitan and rural locations in the years 2004 and 2005. Such issues are largely under-researched, but the paper argues are of increasing importance in society, and have policy implications for government, community and private sector planners.