



An investigation of the IRT retirement community landscape: A pilot study

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This study was about:



- ◆ What the current literature says about retirement communities and housing for older adults
- ◆ Examining the areas in which IRT villages are located and the experiences of residents.

Methodology



- ◆ Review of current literature
- ◆ Analysis of general population statistics
- ◆ Analysis of statistics from IRT databases
- ◆ Survey of current IRT residents.

Review of the current literature:

1. What is a retirement community?

- ◆ many terms used: retirement village, self-care unit, ILUs, seniors' housing etc
- ◆ State based, consumer protection legislation
- ◆ NOT aged care, no government subsidies.



2. Who lives in retirement communities?

- ◆ Limited research into who considers relocating and who lives in retirement communities
- ◆ From ABS data, Towart (2013) found that :
 - 57% of residents likely to be full or part pensioners (but varied between regions)
 - less likely to need assistance with core activities than general population 65+ (but varies between states)
 - more likely to participate in volunteering (but wide variation between retirement communities).



Towart, L. (2013). *Who lives in retirement villages; Are they wealthy enclaves, ghettos or connected communities?*. Available from <http://www.stantonsresearch.com.au/pdf/nov13.pdf>

3. Perceptions of retirement communities

- ◆ *Negative* perceptions include fear of risk to privacy and independence, inequitable and confusing financial arrangements
- ◆ *Positive* perceptions include sense of security, opportunities to socialise and for a change of lifestyle
- ◆ Residents generally have positive perceptions of their communities.



4. Integration with wider community

- ◆ Older people generally prefer to be close to local communities, families and friends
- ◆ Price of land etc may push developments to fringes of suburbs
- ◆ Need for retirement communities to be integrated into surrounding communities to encourage healthy, active ageing.

5. Assessing age friendliness of environments



- ◆ Well being in later life is related to built, natural and social environments in which people live
- ◆ WHO “Age-Friendly City Guide” for indicators of cities & communities
- ◆ No assessments relate specifically to retirement communities.

World Health Organisation (2007)
Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide
Geneva: WHO Press

6. Factors influencing relocation to a retirement community

- ◆ Wide range of socio-demographic, community and social factors may influence housing choices
- ◆ Include changes in personal autonomy & independence, need for social connection, losing a partner, financial status & disincentives (effect on pension) and perceptions about retirement communities.

7. Benefits & effects of relocation



- ◆ Can affect older people, families & wider community in many ways
- ◆ A number of benefits have been found, including higher quality of life
- ◆ Unclear whether specific factors may influence apparent benefits, & effects on subgroups of older people.

8. Alternative accommodation

- ◆ 94% older people live in private housing, of which 78% were separate houses (decreases with age)
- ◆ Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCS) & cohousing may offer similar benefits to retirement communities – little is known
- ◆ Home modifications may be of benefit.



9. Ageing in place & retirement communities

- ◆ Many factors influence desire & ability to age in place
- ◆ May be disconnect between desire & ability to do so
- ◆ Baby boomers more attached to general location than the family home
- ◆ Perceptions of social cohesion & networks, safety etc associated with physical & mental health
- ◆ Policy action enhancing neighbourhood quality may assist older Australians to age well in place.

Locations for pilot study

1. IRT Macarthur (Campbelltown, NSW)
 - 262 apartments
2. IRT Kangara Waters (Belconnen, ACT)
 - 150 residences (including 94 apartments)

Both have co-located Care Centres with dementia specific accommodation.



Experiences of residents

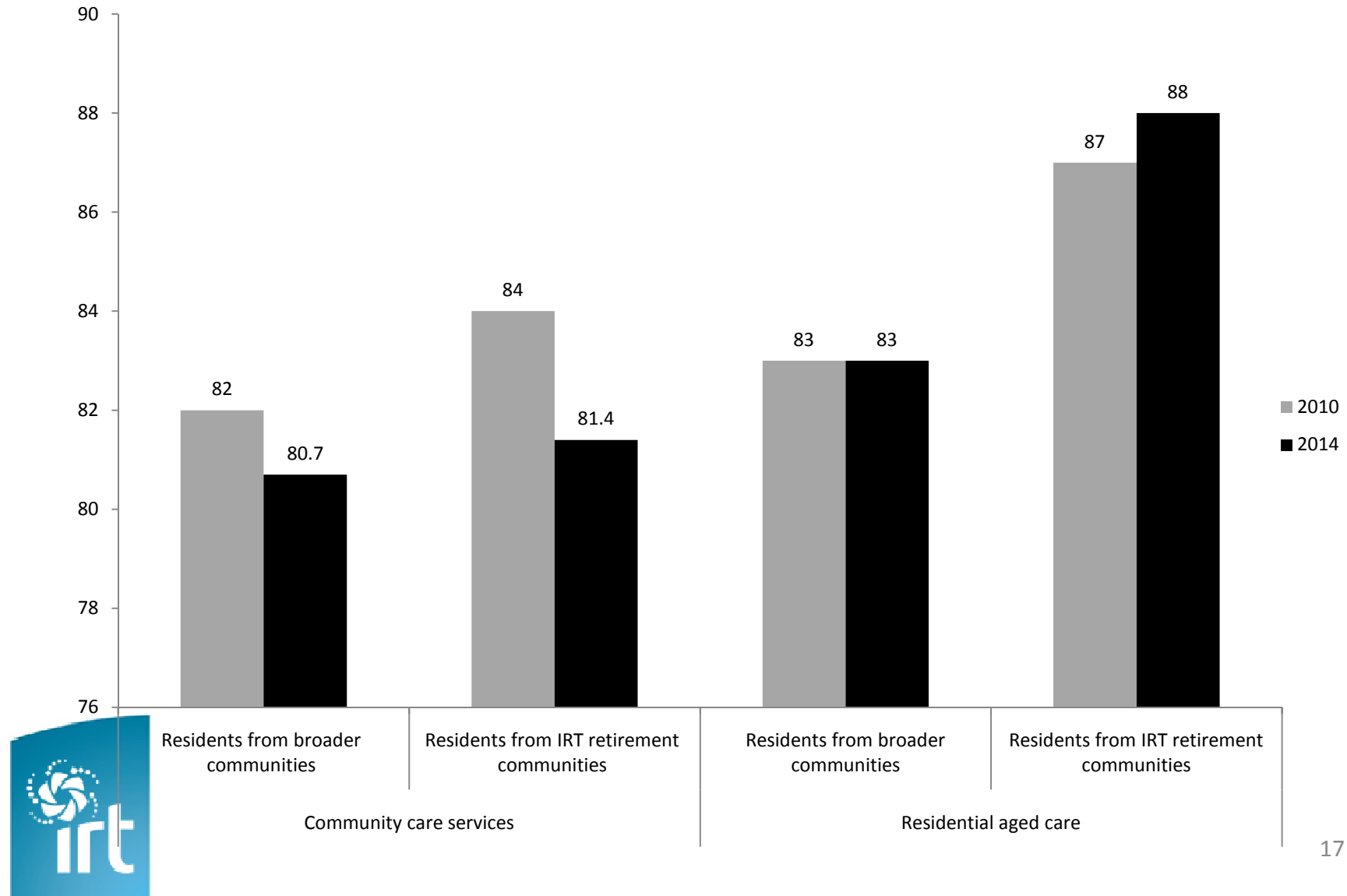
- ◆ Majority reported *improved quality of life* since moving in and found the environment easy to move around in
- ◆ Greatest benefits:
 - less cleaning & maintenance
 - increased social contact
 - feeling of community
 - social activities available.



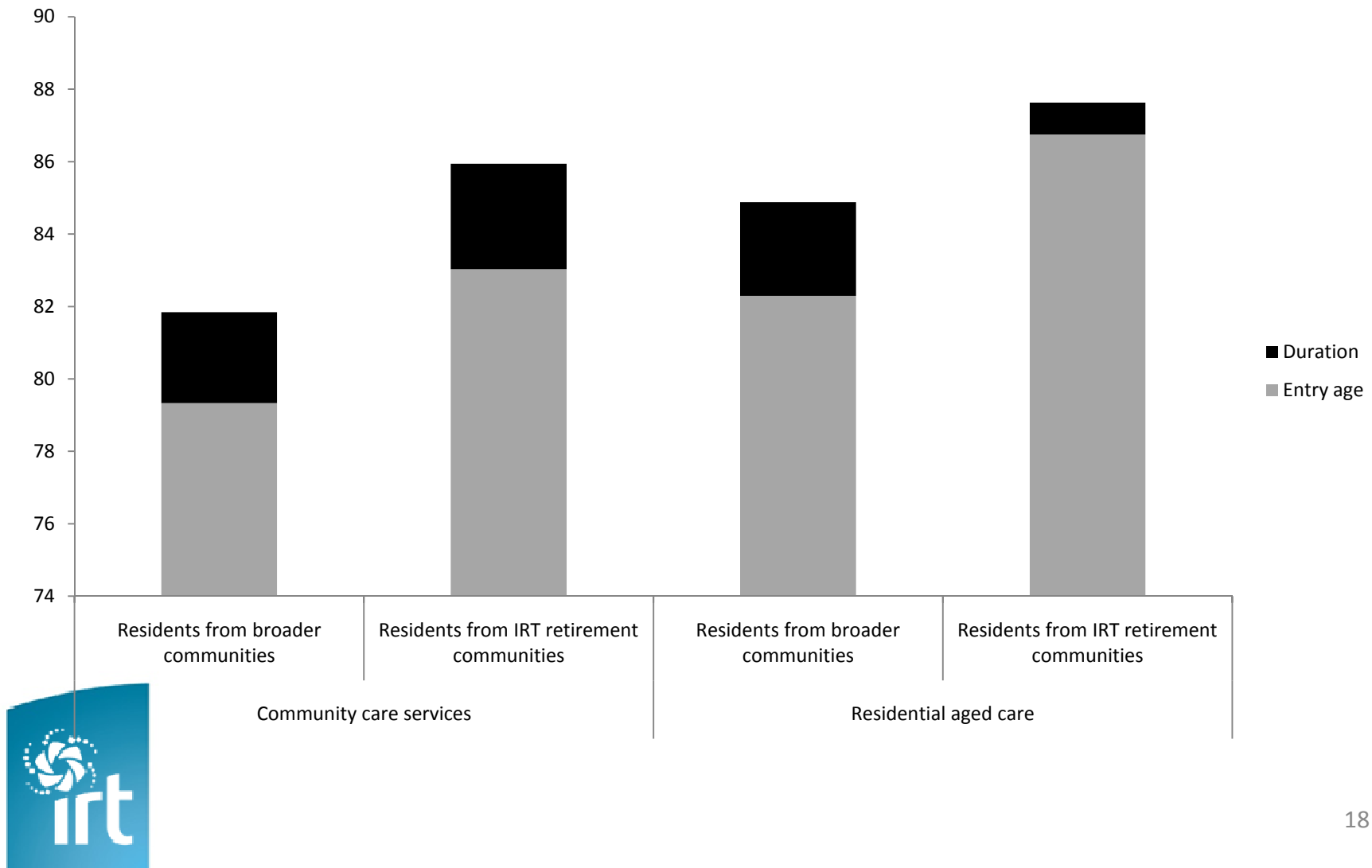
Accessing aged care services



Age at commencement of aged care services - 2010 and 2014



Age at *commencement* of aged care services and *duration*



Conclusion



- ◆ Retirement communities support older people to live longer in a familiar place independently or with some assistance.
- ◆ Important implications for ageing in place service provision & for aged care sector – potential cost savings for Australian Government.
- ◆ This research needs to be extended across IRT and the retirement community landscape more generally.

The full final report is available at:

www.irtfoundation.org.au/past-grants/46-irtcommunitylandscapepilot.html

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Thank you!