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## A contemporary take on aged care norms: a designer's perspective

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When you enter Eva Tilley Memorial home in Melbourne's leafy North Balwyn, you immediately get a sense that it's different to other aged care residences. That's because it is.

We were tasked with rethinking and re-energising an existing offering, developing a thoughtful, inspiring narrative that contemporises aged residential living through social exchange and positive behaviours, whilst stimulating the senses.

Crucial to the project from the outset was the willingness of the home's CEO Sharelle Rowe to disrupt the accepted social norms of ageing in Australia and her willingness to being open to new ideas.

"I encouraged the Studio Tate team to push the boundaries and come up with something unexpected," says Sharelle. "I was open to new thinking and was ready to go out on a limb for great design." It's because of this bravery and eagerness that we were able to challenge the status quo and deliver a result that is a game-changer within the industry; smart in its function and aesthetically elevated.

When designing it was important to remember that these communal spaces are still someone's home, and with this in mind our approach took a very personal perspective.

Inspired to provide an elevated aesthetic mindful of both resident and staff, this meant requirements for spatial planning and zoning were priorities, as were using colour and cost-effective finishes to give an interesting and dynamic result to structure and wayfinding.

Working closely with the client was really rewarding as they were happy and open to any ideas and immediately bought into the ethos of why *shouldn't* there be colour and texture.

Our personalised approach was underpinned by an inherent understanding of how the new multi-faceted spaces were to be used, creating zones to accommodate a comprehensive lifestyle program with multiple activities such as art and music classes being able to run concurrently without disruption.

Unexpected design details such as natural stone and impactful pops of colour instantly enliven the space. Sheer window furnishings in the salon filter light on graphic terrazzo stone, with dusty pink walls that are offset by dark blue laminate and the curve of individual arched mirrors forming an inviting space for residents to take a moment for themselves.

Equally unexpected is the 'deep sea' blue fish tank in the memory support wing that acts as an interactive installation to be enjoyed by residents with limited mobility.

Individual character in each wing is provided by colour and form, while customisable features and decorative shelving encourage and add personalisation.

Our design in high traffic areas has a key focus on adaptability and dual purpose, enabling a seamless flow for internal and external organised events. Communal spaces and a range of seating options encourage movement and social exchange.

Our design lead on services such as a hair and nail salon were created to give an everyday perspective to the project and offer a genuine sense of life prior to living in care for residents. The kiosk with its shop, bar, communal coffee facilities and internal post box foster connection, while the upbeat multi-functional zone is perfect for Friday afternoon drinks and hosted events.

Being involved with the project from the initial feasibility stage and then over a subsequent three-year period, our collaborative approach and open design process ensured a long-term working relationship built on trust.

The final outcome resulted in a functional and aesthetic enhancement of everyday life for residents and their families, creating an environment they want to be in. Importantly, the bold, brave decisions undertaken by the client have been rewarded with an outcome that ultimately has given an immeasurable lift to the residents.

Alex Hopkins, Design Director, Interior Architecture - Studio Tate

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