

## EUROPEAN LESSONS LEARNT

# The major opportunities for Australian aged care providers.

**In May 2013, in conjunction with Marchese Partners, Thinc organised a European study tour for eight aged care/seniors living industry leaders.**

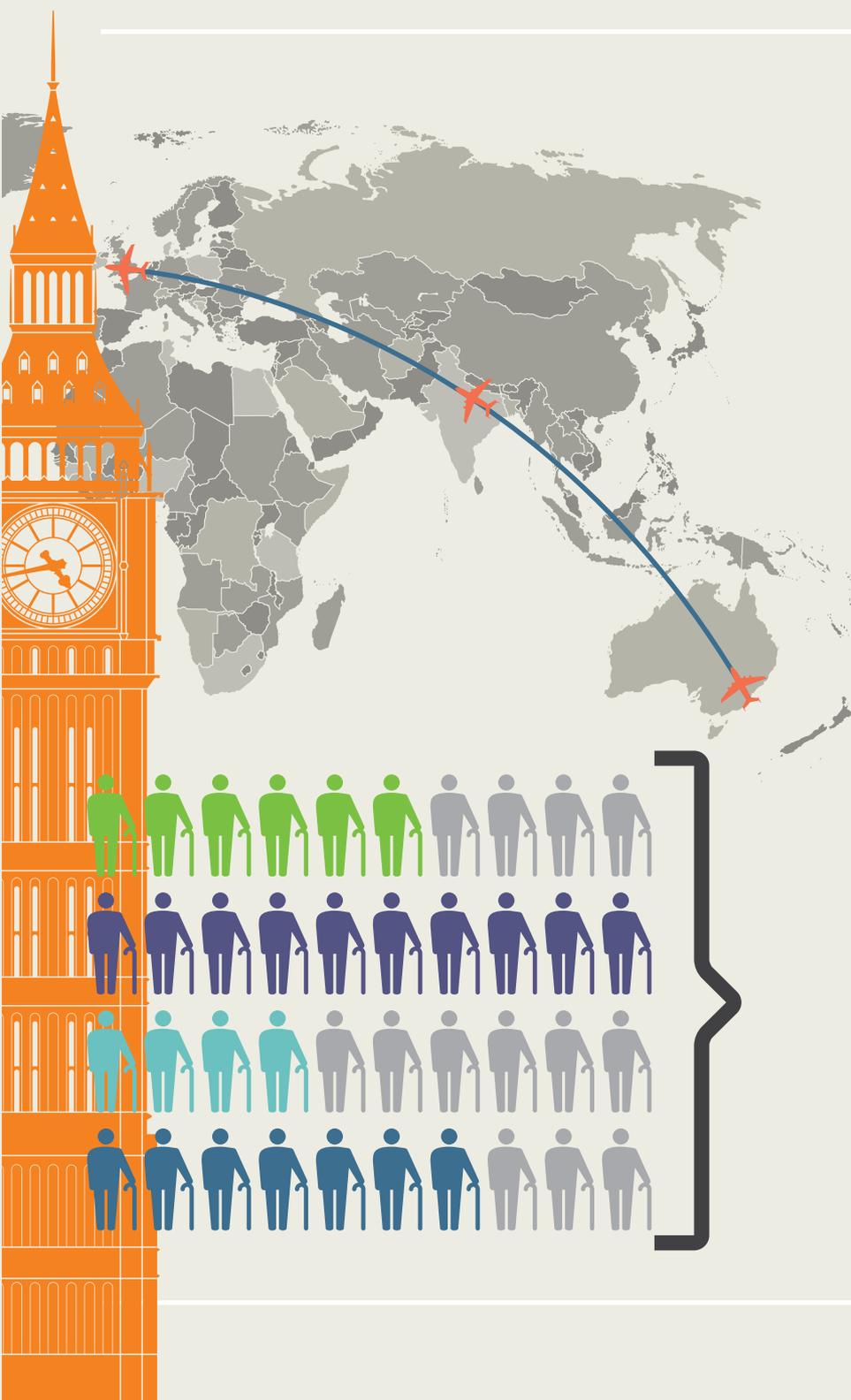
The trip took in three countries and the group visited eleven facilities across the UK, Germany and the Netherlands.

**The purpose of the tour was to seek out best practice and bring it back to Australia to advance the sector.** It also provided a great opportunity to benchmark the state of the Australian industry against European countries, typically perceived as having leading aged care facilities.

The group visited a wide range of old and new facilities in both inner-city and suburban settings. The sites catered for all levels of care and operated under varying funding models. The locations were deliberately chosen to offer the group as wide a perspective as possible, within the limited timeframe available.

This report considers the key findings from the study tour and the major opportunity areas for aged care/seniors living organisations to learn from each country. The results are compiled from a series of questionnaires completed by the respondents throughout the duration of the trip.

Ultimately we hope the findings will lead to both better organisational outcomes for Australian providers and better design, care and community outcomes for seniors across the country.





## Key findings:

- All participants agreed that the Australian industry is on par with the European countries visited, with similar sector skills and expertise.
- However, all respondents also recognised that there were still significant opportunities to learn from the European facilities/systems visited.
- The top three areas of opportunity for Australian providers to learn across all the countries visited were considered to be: the innovative use of design to encourage integration with local communities; social/cultural opportunities to ensure facilities are not only vibrant for residents, but also welcoming for their families and the wider public; and new developments to improve quality of care.
- It was also recognised that European providers face similar issues to Australian aged care organisations, particularly around funding, operating in fragile economic environments and providing effective models of care.

## United Kingdom

### Summary of sites visited:

#### ST MONICA'S TRUST – COTE LANE, BRISTOL

- Integrated retirement village and care facility set around and within historical buildings
- Inner urban setting
- Church and charitable provider

#### ST MONICA'S TRUST – WESTBURY FIELDS, BRISTOL

- Integrated retirement village and care facility built around an abandoned cricket oval
- Outer urban setting
- Church and charitable provider

#### ST MONICA'S TRUST – SANDFORD STATION, BRISTOL

- Integrated retirement village and care facility built around a decommissioned railway line
- Outer urban setting
- Church and charitable provider

### Opportunities for Australian providers

All respondents agreed that Australian providers can learn from the UK aged care facilities/system.

#### The top five areas of opportunity are around:

1. DESIGN
2. SOCIAL / CULTURAL
3. PARTNERSHIPS
4. QUALITY OF CARE
5. FUNDING

#### 1. DESIGN

All the facilities visited are intelligently designed around existing built assets to encourage integration with the wider community. The Cote Lane site is built around and within a historic Wedgewood family building; the Westbury Fields site is built around an abandoned cricket pitch and the Sandford Station site is built around a decommissioned (and subsequently refurbished) train station. St Monica's Trust has also adopted an innovative 'house-based' design for dementia care which provides residents with a high level of independence.

#### 2. SOCIAL / CULTURAL

Close community relations exist at all the facilities visited. The Westbury Fields site was particularly praised for its refurbishment of a cricket oval with training facilities and a licensed clubhouse. Local community cricket clubs use the facilities – as do residents – and this creates a real sense of community. Similarly at the Sandford Station site, the local rail preservation society uses the facilities and runs a small museum, which helps create a vibrant community environment for residents.

#### 3. PARTNERSHIPS

St Monica's Trust partnered with Sports England to develop its Westbury Fields site, along with the adjoining cricket oval and supporting facilities. This innovative partnership helped to overcome planning issues and creates a tangible connection between residents and the local community. All participants recognised there are opportunities for similar models to be explored in Australia.



St Monica's Trust – Sandford Station, Bristol

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### The Netherlands

#### Summary of sites visited:

##### DE RIETVINCK, AMSTERDAM

- Integrated assisted living facility
- Inner city setting
- Government subsidised

##### U2 BUILDING, AMSTERDAM

- Assisted living in modern urban renewal project
- Outer urban setting
- Government subsidised

##### DE BERKENSTEDDE, AMSTERDAM

- Integrated independent living and care facility
- Outer urban setting
- Government subsidised

##### HUMANITAS, ROTTERDAM

- World famous 'apartments for life' concept.
- Outer urban setting

#### Opportunities for Australian providers

All respondents agreed that Australian providers can learn from the Dutch aged care system.

#### The top five areas of opportunity are around:

1. DESIGN
2. SOCIAL / CULTURAL
3. TECHNOLOGY
4. QUALITY OF CARE
5. FUNDING

##### 1. DESIGN

Despite its 48 year old design, the Humanitas building, with its 'apartments for life' concept, was celebrated for truly offering residents the opportunity to age in place. The innovative use of design to promote independence amongst dementia residents was also praised at De Berkenstede. The facility provides 'clusters' of six rooms in residential settings that have a very non-clinical look and feel.

##### 2. SOCIAL / CULTURAL

All the facilities were praised for the way they encouraged interaction between residents, their families and the wider community. At the De Rietvinck site, a full commercial kitchen has been installed and meals are enjoyed by the local community as well as residents. The Humanitas site has extensive community facilities, with welcoming café, bar and billiard areas in addition to shops, a doctor's surgery and a dental practice. It also has a petting zoo for children, residents and the community to enjoy.

##### 3. TECHNOLOGY

The De Berkenstede facility is undertaking ground-breaking research into the way seniors use space and has installed sensors in people's rooms and across communal areas to monitor residents' movements. It is hoped the results will be used to improve future design for De Berkenstede and also for the wider sector.

### Germany

#### Summary of sites visited:

##### GUERTELSTRASSE 33, BERLIN

- Integrated assisted living and care facility
- Inner urban location
- Government subsidised

##### BETHANIAN HAVEL, BERLIN

- Integrated independent living and care facility
- Outer urban renewal project
- Private

##### KWA STIFT IM HOHENZOLLERNPARK, BERLIN

- Assisted living
- Outer urban location
- Private

#### Opportunities for Australian providers

The vast majority agreed that Australian providers can learn from the German aged care system.

#### The top five areas of opportunity are around:

1. DESIGN
2. FIT OUT / INTERIOR DESIGN
3. QUALITY OF CARE
4. SOCIAL / CULTURAL
5. ADDITIONAL SERVICES

##### 1. DESIGN

It was agreed that the general standard of design was high at all the German facilities visited. Particular attention is paid to external details of the buildings to ensure they 'fit' with the surrounding areas. Light is also used cleverly and there is a clear focus on creating 'views' overlooking different parts of facilities. Smaller communal areas are also clearly preferred to bigger spaces and this creates a more intimate feel.

##### 2. FIT OUT / INTERIOR DESIGN

All the facilities visited have a high standard of fit-out and use interesting fabrics and colours to create spaces that felt very non-clinical. The smaller more intimate communal spaces lead to less noise and create a peaceful environment for residents to enjoy.

##### 3. QUALITY OF CARE

High quality care is provided at all the sites with high 'staff to resident' ratios. It was felt that this provided residents with greater freedom and dignity to enjoy their lives.



U2 Building, Amsterdam



Guertelstrasse 33, Berlin

# The major opportunities for Australian aged care providers.



The Australian aged care sector is as advanced as its European contemporaries.

However, there are clearly opportunities to take best practice from Europe to improve outcomes for Australian providers and their residents.

A number of consistent themes were drawn from the site visits and the top four opportunities for providers can be summarised as followed:

- **Consider innovative design ideas** to intelligently open up facilities to local communities by creating welcoming spaces that residents, their families and local communities can enjoy.
- **Embrace technology**, which is helping to optimise space and improve outcomes for residents. Innovative providers are also helping to bring the community to residents in real time, for example by streaming local church services to sites via webcams.
- **Explore partnerships** with local and national sports bodies; heritage providers; and universities to create vibrant aged care facilities, potentially overcome DA issues and offer community services that encourage greater interaction with the general public.
- **Exploit international best practice** in the design for and care of dementia residents – new models in both the UK and Germany are leading to better outcomes and should be considered when creating and refurbishing existing facilities. Both systems are creating ‘clusters’ of rooms in extremely domestic style settings and also providing secure areas between clusters (for example using atriums) to allow residents greater freedom.

It is recognised that the depth of market is not the same in Australia as it is in the European markets visited and cost may be a limiting factor when exploring the viability of these opportunities. However, with both a growing and ageing population, those organisations that embrace innovation now are likely to be those that perform well in the medium to long term.

To find out more information on the tour or the sites visited, please get in contact.

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TOP: St Monica's Trust – Cote Lane, Bristol.  
 BOTTOM LEFT: De Rietvinck, Amsterdam  
 BOTTOM RIGHT: De Berkenstede, Amsterdam

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