

Ageing In Place: *Modify your home not your lifestyle*

The Idea

With more than 23 percent of Australia's population heading towards retirement, the provision of adequate residential and aged care facilities is fast becoming an issue.

While many people wish to remain in their homes for the rest of their lives, most housing has not been designed for those with an impairment or of an older age. Consequently, the elderly, disabled and those suffering physical impairment are often forced prematurely into residential care facilities. This can be a very costly process and the sudden relocation to an unfamiliar environment can be traumatic and unsettling. Those that choose to remain in their homes without having the appropriate modifications made are prone to falls and other injuries, which can often prolong their recovery or even prove fatal.

The Opportunity

With more than 35 years' experience in the design and construction of aged care facilities, qualified architects Tanya Harris and Wim van den Herik joined forces to overcome these industry challenges. Together they saw an opportunity to reduce the cost, effort and stress involved in relocating the elderly and impaired from their homes to suitable facilities when their day-to-day surroundings became unsuitable.

After 4 years of research and hard work progressing their idea, Wim and Tanya attended a local Ideas2Market seminar over three days to find out more of what was involved in the process of commercialising an idea. This provided them with an opportunity to network with other like-minded entrepreneurs, gain access to industry experts and learn more about the pitfalls and challenges of the commercialisation pathway.

The Outcome

In the last 2 years, Ageing in Place has developed a pioneering building assessment and reporting system to enable seniors to stay living at home as they age. It provides Australia's first standardised set of building guidelines for aged planning in the domestic setting.

Based in Cairns, Tanya and Wim have successfully commercialised and tested their software, which is now being used effectively in the field. They recently received an AusIndustry COMET grant, allowing them to address other outstanding activities including;

- The development of a suitable website to complement the software and provide online support systems.
- The development of a comprehensive marketing strategy, and a
- Business planning review including a strategic audit of their existing intellectual property (IP).

They have also completed a training course for Field Officers and their first graduate, based in Far North Queensland, is making good progression in the field.

Ageing in Place co-founder Wim van den Herik said the Ideas2Market workshop provided him with the reinforcement, clarity and direction needed to help progress his business venture.

"Ideas2Market gave us greater focus in translating our ideas into marketable products and we attended at just the right time," Mr van den Herik said.

"It also helped us to see that relying on just one product might be very limiting and we have since diversified to actively explore other markets," he said.

“Probably the most challenging thing is to succinctly explain to potential investors and customers what it is we do. Ideas2Market was the first public forum at which we were required to do this and think critically about what we wanted to say.

“We are now confidently able to say that we help people to modify their homes and not their lifestyles and we are ready to launch our product in the Australian market.”

Ideas2Market is an initiative of the Queensland Government’s Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry and is delivered throughout Queensland by the Australian Institute for Commercialisation.

It is sponsored by Cullen & Co Patent Attorneys and AusIndustry. For more information on the workshops offered and a scheduled event in your area, visit www.ideas2market.com.au.