



Culturally-appropriate Elders Village to be built in Adelaide following collaborative effort



Cheryl Axleby. (AAP Image/Roy VanDerVegt)

A purpose-built village for Aboriginal Elders that will be constructed at a culturally significant site near Adelaide may serve as a good model for governments that plan on developing similar spaces going forward, according to an Aboriginal housing expert.

The \$10 million Elders Village is a partnership between the South Australian government, the federal Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC), the Kurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation (KYAC), and Aboriginal Community Housing Limited (ACHL).

The village of 40 individual homes will be built close to Warriparinga, about 13km south of the CBD. The ILSC will grant the land to the Kurna Pangarra Property Trust, a subsidiary of the native title holders, KYAC.

Construction of the village will kick off in early 2022, with ACHL to oversee construction and provide tenancy management services once the village is built.

ACHL SA relationship manager and proud Aboriginal woman Cheryl Axleby told *The Mandarin* that the facility may be the first of its kind in Australia.

While Adelaide has an existing village for Elders in the north, Axleby noted that the planned village would give Elders the opportunity to live on Kurna country near a site that has very significant meaning for them, right near the river. She believes that the facility would improve Elders' quality of life.

“And it’s an independent living facility, so it’s for our Elders to be able to have their own space as a community living together, and connecting together in a very beautiful part of our country here in South Australia,” Axleby said.

“I think the sense of peace for our Elders will probably be the most important thing there, and the sense of community with Elders sitting together and yarning and gathering.”

She noted that many Elders live in social housing, and are often placed in large houses that are difficult for them to maintain. The purpose-built village, on the other hand, will have single bedroom units that will essentially be ‘maintenance free’ for the Elders.

The homes will have mobility aids and disability-friendly features, to allow residents to live independently as they age. The village will offer culturally inclusive features such as an outdoor fire pit, and will also be car-free, allowing Elders to ‘connect and walk around in a safe environment surrounded by flora and fauna that they love’, Axleby noted.

She said the initiative could serve as a good example for governments that are looking to create suitable living spaces for Elders, and potentially for other older Australians.

“For far too long, we’ve always been told where we can live and where we can’t live ... Kurna people know what it is that they want for the Elders. They want to have security, and Elders to be able to live in peace. Because our life expectancy for our people is actually a lot less in comparison to the rest of society,” she said.

“So I think, having that chance for peace, harmony and community is a really good model going forward, rather than looking at how we look at some of the other nursing home models. Maybe it’s something where governments

might start thinking outside the square in general, for the ageing population in general, so that there is a lot more stimulation and peacefulness, rather than people sitting inside and looking at four walls all the time.”

In a statement announcing the facility last week, ILSC CEO Joe Morrison said the collaborative approach to the initiative was ‘the key to successfully delivering a project which will provide long term social and cultural benefits for Aboriginal Elders on Kurna country’.

Axleby has acknowledged the leadership of the KYAC in particular, noting that they have been ‘quite visionary’ in what they wanted to achieve for the Elders.

“Aboriginal-led decisions actually create greater successful outcomes rather than governments thinking they know what’s in the best interest in building these public facilities without involving Aboriginal voice,” she said.

Kurna Nation Pangkarra Property Trust chair Garth Agius said the KYAC was appreciative of the support shown to allow the development to proceed.

“Adelaide has been our home for thousands of years. This is still our traditional lands, our Yarta, our country Pangkarra, but as the traditional owners we still do not own our own homes,” Agius said in a statement.

“The cultural safety of our Elders and their wellbeing is our highest priority and is well supported by the tailor-made design on land of cultural significance to the Kurna people. It is with tears of joy that KYAC will see Elders well cared for into the future.”

The ACHL is hoping to source funding to build a community centre at the site, so that services can be delivered within the village, and to enable events and families to come to the Elders rather than them having to go out into the community.

Online source: [Culturally-appropriate Elders Village to be built in Adelaide following collaborative effort \(themandarin.com.au\)](https://www.themandarin.com.au/114444-culturally-appropriate-elders-village-to-be-built-in-adelaide-following-collaborative-effort/)