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WA's Amana Living offers residents a room with a view

Creating a caring environment that was not only warm and welcoming, but also had the luxurious feel of a boutique hotel was the major requirement when Amana Living made the decision to extend its Salter Point residential facility, located close to Perth's iconic Canning and Swan Rivers.

As part of the \$5.8 million extension that took two years to complete Amana Living, one of Western Australia's largest aged care providers, allocated a sizeable interior design budget, which allowed for a range of custom-made furniture, striking artwork, soft furnishings and a contemporary open plan kitchen on each of the facility's two new levels.

Mr Alan Gray, Amana Living Project Manager said that whilst the original facility, built in the 1980s, had a traditional cottage feel, the brief was for the major extension to have a contemporary style, to maximize the sweeping multi-million dollar river and city views, and to prepare for the future requirements of the baby boomer demographic.

"Amana Living was very clear from the start that they wanted to do something very different with the interior design of the Peter Arney Home extension, and in fact do something that had never been done before," said interior designer Ms Sandy Brennan from Sandy Brennan Designs.

"As a consequence we were really able to experiment and the end result is one of hotel style luxury which mixes a modern contemporary feel, with a homely and comfortable atmosphere."

To create the required look and to break up the open plan layout, feature walls were an integral part of the design, with a mixture of American walnut paneling, metallic wallpapers, and bright and bold paints used to differentiate living areas, hallways and the two kitchens.

Whilst a timber floor was the initial preference, concerns regarding safety and ease of maintenance drew the designer, in close conjunction with Amana Living's Occupational Therapist, to research a vinyl alternative. Polyflor 'Expona Superplank' became the preferred choice.

"We chose the colour Whiteoak because it looked very realistic and had a very appealing warm honey colour which we felt was calming," said Amana Living's Project Administrator Karen Rogerson, who was largely responsible for the interior budget and worked closely with the designer.

"This particular product was very different to others we had looked at which were invariably darker, grainier and quite busy. What we also liked about the Polyflor choice was that it had a grain running through it which heightened slip resistance," she said.

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To compliment the flooring and to increase the homely feel, carpet inserts in the style of rugs were used as a feature of the lounge areas. These were laid as inserts to ensure a seamless transition between the two floorings, an important consideration to eradicate any tripping hazards.

Over a 12 month period, the furniture needs were identified and then custom designed by a range of suppliers to ensure their ergonomic and practical design. As well as needing to fulfill strict criteria for residents' needs, consideration for the requirements of staff members, particularly carers and cleaners, was also a priority for Amana Living.

These criteria were also applied to the design of the two kitchens, situated on the upper and lower levels of the extension. Contemporary in design and complemented by stainless steel appliances, the kitchen areas were viewed as one of the most important areas of the facility.

Whereas the initial design mandated that the kitchen be lockable, subsequent revisions ensured that they be open to all occupants, where low care residents in particular could be encouraged to enter and make themselves a cup of tea – just as they would in their own home.

"Changes were made to ensure that residents could be as involved in the kitchen areas in much the same way as they would be if they lived in their own home," said Ms Rogerson.

"The kitchen is a hive of activity within any home and residents are interested to see what is going on which is why both the kitchens on the upper and lower levels were changed to be open-plan and accessible," she said.

Another unique decision made by Amana Living was to fully furnish all 32 bedrooms. "This decision was made for a couple of reasons, not least because very often an incoming resident can have older furniture which is not particularly ergonomic, safe or easy to clean," said Mr Gray.

"Also, by furnishing all of the rooms we could ensure that they retained that contemporary feel while also preserving the calm, clean and uncluttered look that is present throughout the entire extension."

"Having said that, residents are of course encouraged to personalise their room with ornaments, keepsakes and any other items that make it feel like a home," he said.

All 32 bedrooms have custom-built matching furniture in American oak, a flat screen television and an ensuite bathroom. Low care residents also have their own in-built bar fridge and a foldout desk for a laptop computer.

In keeping with the custom-made design and the contemporary style of the rooms, the decision was also made to steer away from beds of a clinical-looking hospital design. As a result beds that had the standard melamine head and foot rests were replaced with a fully upholstered, leather-look vinyl bed head and bed ends were sourced. Although still complete with all of the usual aged care design features, including height adjustments and electronic controls, the aesthetic changes have resulted in enhanced visual appeal for the piece of furniture which is at the focal point of the room.

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To complete the overall look of the new extension, a budget of \$20,000 was allocated for artwork. In addition to a selection of original paintings and limited edition prints, a unique initiative was forged with art students from Applecross Senior High School to procure three additional art pieces.

The inter-generation project saw the students visit the residential facility and interview residents about their memories of childhood and of growing up by the river. The group of students then used this knowledge to create three large paintings which are displayed in the hall areas of the facility.

“We were extremely pleased to get this partnership off the ground and the collages which were created as a result are both beautiful and striking,” adds Mr Gray.

“The images promote many happy memories for our residents with the images depicting local beach scenes including Matilda Bay and Rottnest Island. They continue to evoke a great deal of reminiscing and our residents love them.”

“They really do add a fantastic finishing touch to the overall design, which we are extremely pleased with – as are our residents,” he said.

The extension to Amana Living’s Peter Arney Home was undertaken by architects Loughton Patterson, with Cooktown Constructions undertaking the building work.

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