

New South Wales

You are here: Home » NSW » Article

Search here... smh.com.au

High-density without high stress

August 21, 2010

Join the conversation

You're the only person reading this now. Tell your friends

- [Add to Facebook](#)
- [Email this story](#)
- [Comment on Twitter](#)
- [Read tweets](#)

Top NSW articles

1. Teen shot dead in home invasion
 2. Outdated medical procedure behind catastrophic epidural injury
 3. Skydiver plunges to ground as jump goes wrong
 4. Over budget and out of time: slow trains from China
 5. Daughter arrested over father's shooting
- + [More NSW articles](#)

NSW Topics

- ▶ [Places \(2361\)](#)
 - [All Places \(2361\)](#)
 - [Sydney \(1608\)](#)
 - [Parramatta \(169\)](#)
 - [Newcastle \(115\)](#)
 - [Liverpool \(102\)](#)
 - [Penrith \(102\)](#)
- [More Places](#)

Story Tools

- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Email this story](#)
- [Print this story](#)

SMH Jobs



Two children in a two-bedder ... Jacqui Swinburne in her apartment in Waterloo. Photo: Peter Rae

Good design can prevent trivial disputes, writes Kelsey Munro.

IT MIGHT be the sound of the giant plasma television your neighbour has installed on a common wall or the red Toyota that steals your carspace. Perhaps it's the clatter of high heels on the hardwood floor above. They are all little irritants that can, over time, make high-density living unbearable. Yet closer living is Sydney's future, and today's trivial disputes could be tomorrow's widespread social problem, new research warns.

"The government is focusing on urban consolidation but if that's going to be successful then quality of life and residential satisfaction in high-density properties needs to be taken seriously. It's a huge issue - it's about the future of Sydney," said the study's lead author, Hazel Easthope.

At present, one in four Sydney residents lives in apartments or townhouses. But under the state government's Metropolitan Strategy, hundreds of thousands of new dwellings must be built for an extra 1.3 million people by 2026.

So far, the debate has focused on where to build apartments and how high developers can go, Dr Easthope said. But her report, *Living Well in Greater Density*, looks at how to make high-density living work for residents. One thing is clear: better building standards, proper soundproofing and smarter design will be crucial.

Apartments have been seen as a stepping stone on the way to living in a detached house. "But with the sort of growth the Metropolitan Strategy is talking about, that's not necessarily an option," said Mary Perkins, from Shelter NSW, who commissioned the study. "Development must be planned that incorporates some sense of it being someone's [long-term] home and what design attributes would help make it that."

The problems were not just about neighbours not getting along, but related to the design of buildings and quality of construction,

Latest Video

Selections Video

[More video](#)

Becoming erotic dancers



Van Gogh sought by Egyptian police



Sly tops box office again



Trapped miners face three-month rescue

Blogs

Latest Blogs

iiNet and iPrimus launch 1TB plans

More news
NBN, Australia's ISPs ...

[« Prev](#) | [Next »](#)

Today's bank rates

	promo interest rate
Virgin Money <i>Virgin Saver</i>	6.75% bonus rate for 4 months
UBank <i>USaver Reach</i>	6.51% 18-29 year olds only
ANZ <i>Online Saver</i>	6.00% bonus rate until 31/12/2010
AMP <i>First</i>	5.15% no conditions

Compare all savings accounts

Credit Cards	annual fee
Virgin Money <i>Virgin No Annual Fee Credit Card</i>	\$0
ANZ <i>First</i>	\$30
Suncorp Bank <i>Clear Options Standard</i>	\$39
NAB <i>Low Rate</i>	\$49

Compare all credit cards

Home Loans	comparison rate
MyRate.com.au <i>Advantage Loan</i>	6.64%

said Dr Easthope, who is from the University of NSW City Futures Research Centre.

In the literature review and roundtable discussions conducted by the researchers, noise complaints were a key issue.

"Private-sector residents were talking about buildings where the wall only went up as far as the cornice, so every conversation you have is overheard by your neighbour," Ms Perkins said.

Crucial design elements needed to be addressed from the construction stage, including soundproofing, layouts ensuring balconies did not face on to neighbours' bedrooms and the provision of adequate storage.

Noise issues could also be improved by community initiatives and education, Dr Easthope said. Some high-rises have had success with creating online communities for residents, with Facebook-style profiles and messaging facilities to connect people with their neighbours.

The report also found a widespread assumption within government and the property development industry that apartments were for childless couples or singles; but this was increasingly not the case, and building design needed to be adapted for families.

Jacqui Swinburne lives in a two-bedroom apartment in a low-rise development in Waterloo with her partner Nick Connelly, their two sons, Taj, 4, and Toby, 2, and their pet cat. Ms Swinburne, who grew up in Paddington, says despite a lack of space for drying the mountain of washing that comes with children, high-density living with little ones can work well.

Crucial to it are having some private outdoor space, buildings which allow pets, good design, privacy and neighbours who are considerate, she said.

"I have friends who've grown up further out who have this idea that when you've got kids you need more space - which would be good -but we have no problem with it, we really enjoy living here," she said.

"I can walk to childcare and the local school, and then walk to work. I wouldn't let the kids roam in the common area because it's a big block and I don't know everybody. But we have a little courtyard, it's not huge but it means the kids can have different activities."

Ms Swinburne is on the strata committee which has run a communal Christmas barbecue and puts out a newsletter to keep residents in touch.

Taj and Toby have the big bedroom and their parents the smaller one, but they are not sure what they will do when the children get older.

"My four-year-old sometimes says we could just buy a bigger place. I explain to him we'd have to move further out of the city and then he decides he wants to stay here," she said.

HSBC Variable (PowerVantage)	6.83%
Aussie Standard Fixed	7.35%
RAMS Fixed Rate	7.37%

Compare all home loans

Term Deposits	
	interest rate
Citibank 5 years annual	7.25%
Suncorp Bank 1 year annual	6.35%
UBank 180 days	6.41%
Citibank 90 days	6.05%

Compare all term deposits

Real Estate



Home repossessions on the decline



Jobs



10 jobs that will keep you trim



Essential Baby



No more sex? What really happens after parenthood



Holidays



Find accommodation in Avoca Beach



Relationships



Meet Single Sydney Women



- Buy real estate
- View SOLD properties
- Do flatmates and romance mix?

- Social sites come to the party
- Apply for jobs from your iPhone
- Follow MyCareer on Twitter

- Ovulation calculator
- Due date calculator
- Discuss pregnancy

- Last minute deals
- Avoca Beach stays
- Weekend getaways

- Meet Sydney Men
- Party with Sydney Singles
- Free Online Dating

Compare and Save

Broadband | Energy | Mobile | Home Loans | Savings Accounts

New Home Loans



Get an intro rate of only 5.69% from HSBC

[Compare all Home loans](#)

For a limited time...



Grab 2.9% balance transfers on all ANZ credit cards!

[Compare all Credit Cards](#)

Health Ins Deals until Aug 31



Great specials on health insurance, but you must sign up before August 31.

[Compare Health Cover Now](#)

iPhone 4 – Plan Finder Here



Compare iPhone 4 plans here and find the right one for you.

[Compare Mobile Phones](#)

Broadband Speeds 4x Faster!



New Broadband plans which are 4X faster than standard cable.

[Compare Broadband Plans](#)

Readers' most viewed

brisbanetimes.com.au

Top 5 NSW articles

1. Outdated medical procedure behind catastrophic epidural injury
2. Over budget and out of time: slow trains from China
3. Money stream has done little to enrich life for Aborigines
4. How could this happen? Hospital blunder turns a family's joy into heartbreak
5. A stolen generation of our young in detention

WAtoday

Top 5 NSW articles

1. Teen shot dead in home invasion
2. I saw Kiesha being bashed, witness says
3. Woman, 91, killed while hanging out washing after being pinned against garage wall by car driven by friend
4. Pair charged over death of Kristi McDougall
5. Tempers flare as search continues for Kiesha

theage.com.au

Top 5 NSW articles

1. Of course, I lied: MP lives to fight another day after admitting friend's baby is his
2. Cat set on fire
3. Tempers flare as search continues for Kiesha
4. Bin used in bikie attack: witness
5. Infant's body found dumped in a shoebox

smh.com.au

Top 5 NSW articles

1. Teen shot dead in home invasion
2. Outdated medical procedure behind catastrophic epidural injury
3. Skydiver plunges to ground as jump goes wrong
4. Over budget and out of time: slow trains from China
5. Daughter arrested over father's shooting

Videos

1. Hung parliament: so what happens next?
2. Gillard vows to stay on
3. Julia Gillard live
4. Labor campaign 'atrocious': Kenealy
5. Labor can't govern: Abbott

SMH Home | NSW | National | World | Environment | Opinion | Business | Technology | Digital Life | Entertainment | Life & Style | Travel | Cars | Exec Style | Sport | Weather

Sydney Morning Herald

[Herald](#)

[Sitemap](#)

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Conditions](#)

[Advertise with Us](#)

[Photo Sales](#)

Products & Services

[AM Today](#)

[Last 8 days](#)

[High Contrast](#)

[Text](#)

[Newspaper subscription](#)

[Shop](#)

[Events](#)

[SEO](#)

Connect

[Mobile](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[RSS](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[SmartEdition](#)

Classifieds

[Accommodation](#)

[Cars](#)

[Dating](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[Property Price Data](#)

[Tributes & Celebrations](#)

[Place an ad](#)

[Special Reports](#)



Our Sites

[The Sydney Morning Herald](#) | [The Age](#) | [MyCareer](#) | [Domain](#) | [Drive](#) | [RSVP](#) | [Essential Baby](#) | [InvestSMART](#) | [APM](#) | [Stayz](#) | [Weatherzone](#) | [The Vine](#)

Our Partners

[Business](#) | [Canberra](#) | [Computer Repairs](#) | [Darwin](#) | [Finance Broker](#) | [Lawyers](#) | [Mobiles](#) | [Perth](#) | [Stock Brokers](#) | [Tax Refunds](#)

Copyright © 2010 Fairfax Media