



Webinar series: Home matters – Rethinking aged care design Questions & Answers

Webinar 5: Principle 3 – Access the Outdoors

30 April 2026

Thank you to everyone who attended and submitted their questions. This document provides answers to questions that were not addressed by the panel during the live session. If you have any further questions please contact: design.dementiasupport@health.gov.au

Design

Please discuss the importance of easy access to suitable walking paths and cycle tracks from aged care residences, as well as nearby parks. These allow relatives, friends and community groups such as Cycling Without Age Australia (cyclingwithoutage.org.au) to support residents in spending enjoyable time outdoors.

It's great to hear about community groups like [Cycling Without Age Australia](http://cyclingwithoutage.org.au) and how they support older people to spend time outdoors and connect with their community. The [National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines](#) recognise the importance of accessing the outdoors and building community connections to improve wellbeing. They emphasise the need for outdoor spaces that are easy to navigate, safe and inviting with opportunities for meaningful

outdoor activities. Guideline 3.5 – Clear Paths recommends that garden paths are simple and clear, have seating and are wide enough for different levels of mobility. Well-designed paths support safety and accessibility to outdoor spaces.

Additionally, the Principles and Guidelines aim to support people to connect with family, friends and community, and continue to participate in meaningful activities. Guideline 4.1 - Neighbourhood Access suggests, where possible, to locate homes near neighbourhood centres to reduce the risk of social isolation, loneliness, stigma and boredom. Practical considerations could include:

- connecting with local community groups to develop aligned services
- providing sufficient parking for motor vehicles and bicycles, as well as accessible end-of-trip facilities for staff and visitors
- locating homes within easy walking distance and in view of places of interest.

I have seen things like murals used in gardens – what are your thoughts on the use of murals?

Murals can be misinterpreted as real objects or spaces, which may increase anxiety, confusion or disorientation for people living with dementia. Guideline 1.1 therefore recommends avoiding realistic prints on walls and murals such as bookcases, nature or street scenes. Murals may also require ongoing maintenance to keep them clean, undamaged, and visually appealing. That said, many homes still use murals successfully when they are designed carefully, ideally with resident input.

If space is limited, what are some small outdoor improvements that would help?

The [National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines](#) include design strategies to support people to see and access the outdoors where space is limited. This may involve:

- providing small gardens or useable balconies that are an extension of residents' living areas, rather than larger decorative gardens that may be harder to access (Guideline 3.1 – Dedicated Outdoors)
- ensuring residents can easily see and go outside if they want to, and for less mobile people, considering small private gardens off bedrooms (Guideline 3.2 – Garden Connections)
- creating shaded, sheltered areas immediately outside the doors to the garden, with furniture for small group activities such as morning tea, potting or birdwatching (Guideline 3.3 – Garden Verandahs)
- designing outdoor areas with clear purpose, that encourages participation in meaningful domestic activities such as hanging out laundry, barbequing, gardening and dining (Guideline 3.4 – Garden Destinations)
- ensuring outdoor areas are accessible for people with different levels of mobility by providing clear, wide, level paths with seating (Guideline 3.5 – Clear Paths)
- supporting connection to nature indoors where outdoor access is limited, particularly for low mobility residents, through large operable windows, Juliet balconies, indoor plants, and pets (Guideline 1.11 – Nature Indoors).

Additionally, limited on-site space can be offset by stronger connections with the local community. Guideline 4.1 - Neighbourhood Access encourages locating homes near neighbourhood centres and places of interest to reduce isolation, stigma and boredom. Being nearby and having views of parks, gardens and streetscapes can help residents connect with outdoor environments in the local community. Providers can also connect with local community groups to support outdoor access through activities like cycling groups, men's sheds or group outings.

You referred to a couple of books – can you please include the title and authors? Thank you.

The books referred in this session are listed below:

- Designing Outdoor Spaces for People with Dementia edited by Annie Pollock and Mary Marshall and is available at <https://shop.hammond.com.au/products/designing-outdoor-spaces-for-people-with-dementia>
- The Room Outside by Annie Pollock with Colm Cunningham and is available at <https://shop.hammond.com.au/products/the-room-outside>