

Architect Innovator Series B:log 67. Key Worker Housing

"We don't need architects yet"

This is something I hear from time to time from people who consider architects to be just stylists or coordinators of consultants. However the insight and experience that architects bring can be very valuable to clients at early project stages when they may be:

- selecting an optimum site
- putting together a brief to meet operational needs
- properly engaging with stakeholders
- laterally thinking about alternative options
- considering orientation, location on site and access

Fees spent on professional advice at this stage can save hundreds of thousands later as well as getting a better solution. Here is an example:

Key Worker Housing Experience

A large hospital needed to accommodate around 240 single health workers and 25 with families that had difficulty finding housing locally. It already had a traditional "nurses hostel" with single bed sitting rooms, shared bathrooms and centralised dining facility. The rents required to cover providing this service together with extensive cleaning and maintenance for everywhere apart from the bed rooms was uneconomic and many remained unoccupied. There was also difficulty attracting staff to the hospital.

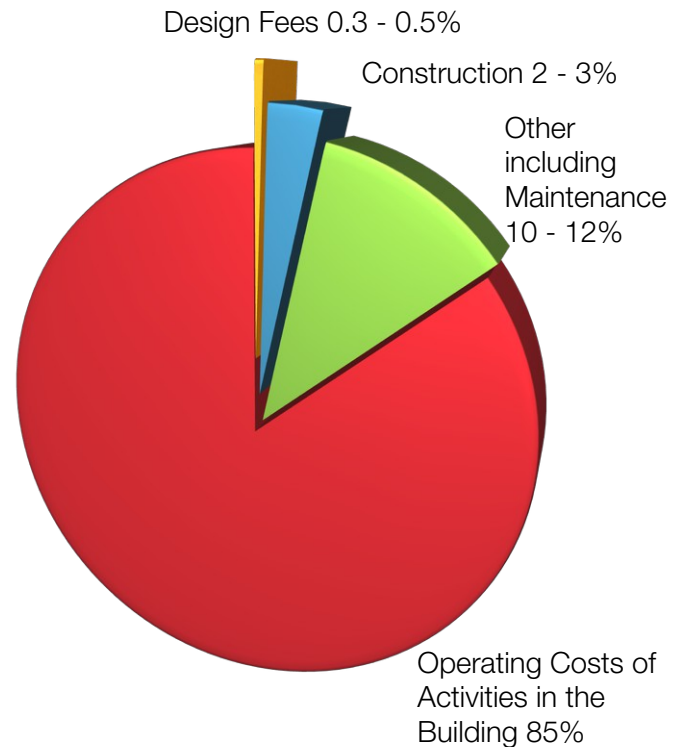
A shared apartment hybrid model was developed by us working with a housing association that agreed to demolish the hostel and provide the new facility on hospital land. Each "apartment" comprised four study bed sitting rooms, two shower/bathrooms and a small shared living/dining/kitchen. Entry was off a common staircase and behind each apartment front door the occupants were encouraged to develop a sense of ownership, managing their own cleaning and sharing metered energy costs. This provided comfortable and attractive accommodation, reduced loneliness and developed shared responsibility. The housing association's responsibility for lighting, cleaning and maintenance was limited to the entry and common staircases, significantly reducing costs and required rents.



It provided the housing association with the opportunity to let apartments to families if the demand by health workers fluctuated.

Perhaps this could be part of the mix to solve Australia's housing crisis.

Diagram is based upon a public service building over its lifetime. The source of this information is "Improving Standards Of Design in the Procurement of Public Buildings" published by CABE in UK 2002,



When good design reduces maintenance it is valuable

