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# Evaluating the characteristics of public and commercial buildings that are enabling and disabling for people with dementia

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# Evaluating the characteristics of public and commercial buildings that are enabling and disabling for people with dementia

## **Abstract**

Abstract presented at the 30th International Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International, 15 - 18 April 2015, Perth, Australia

## **Disciplines**

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**Topic: Developing Dementia Friendly Communities**

### **EVALUATING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS THAT ARE ENABLING AND DISABLING FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA.**

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**Objectives:** To develop a tool to assist with the evaluation of the characteristics of public and commercial buildings that enable, or disable, people with dementia.

**Methods:** While there are tools available for the evaluation of the enabling and disabling characteristics of residential aged care and hospital facilities for people with dementia there has been relatively little progress made in the development of tools for evaluating shopping centres, banks, libraries, etc. This paper will describe an environmental audit tool developed for this purpose through systematic consultation with a group comprising people with dementia, their carers, town planners, graphics designer, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and community development officers.

The development process was designed to bring together four sources of information; that generated by research on the evaluation of residential aged care facilities for people with dementia, the existing literature on evaluating public spaces and buildings used by people with dementia, the views of potential users of the tool, i.e. professionals likely to be involved in evaluating buildings and users of the buildings, i.e. people with dementia and their carers. The process began with a literature review which resulted in the first draft of the tool. This was then refined in a series of walk-throughs by the group where the tool was used to evaluate a building and the results and experience discussed. This iterative process gradually refined the content and usability of the tool.

**Results:** The development of the tool revealed the inadequacy of using a simple checklist to describe the characteristics of a building. The building is experienced dynamically as the person identifies it from a distance, approaches it, enters it, moves through it, carries out the required task and exits. The final version of the tool captures this journey and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of buildings as perceived by the person with dementia.

**Conclusion:** It is anticipated that this tool will prove useful to owners and managers of existing buildings, and planners of future buildings, in their efforts to make town centres places that assist people with dementia to go about their daily lives. The format and content of the tool will be fully described and copies will be made available.

**Disclosure of Interest:** None Declared

**Keywords:** dementia friendly environment, design, Evaluation