

Colour for Engagement, Orientation and Wayfinding in Aged Care and Dementia Care



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Colour Design in Healthcare, Aged & Dementia Care

Learning outcomes:

- Colour attributes and their role in environmental visual literacy;
- Colour contrast – how it can improve orientation and wayfinding;
- Colour contrast – how it can be used to address the needs of people with declining visual capacity;



Colour Design in Healthcare, Aged & Dementia Care

Key aims for colour design:

- Encourage and improve engagement
- **Improve environmental visual literacy**
- **Orientation and wayfinding**
- Assist with the safe operation of daily activities



Colour Design

Construction materials, finishes, textures, painted surfaces, flooring, fixtures and fittings

- Some surfaces, finishes and materials are subject to regulation in healthcare and aged care

Colour design is always impacted by changes in ambient lighting and the intrusion of glare.



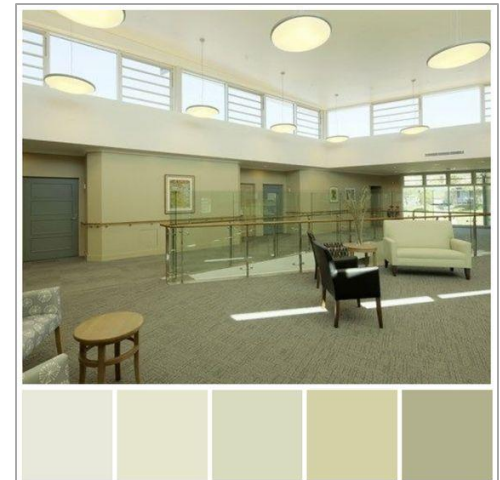
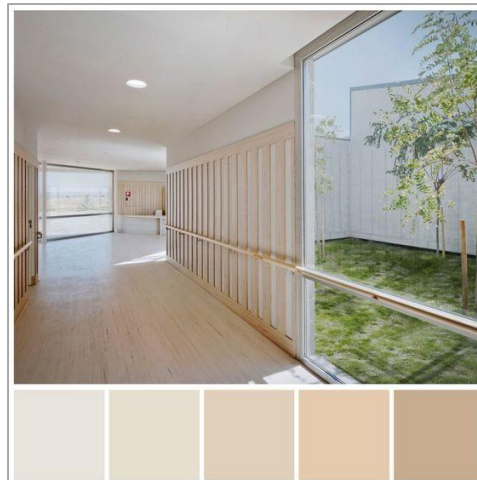
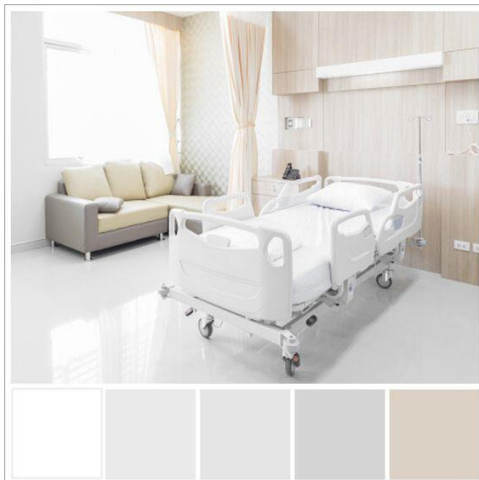
Visual Perception and Older People

Perception of light-dark contrast and colour contrast:

- Decline in sensitivity from middle age onwards.

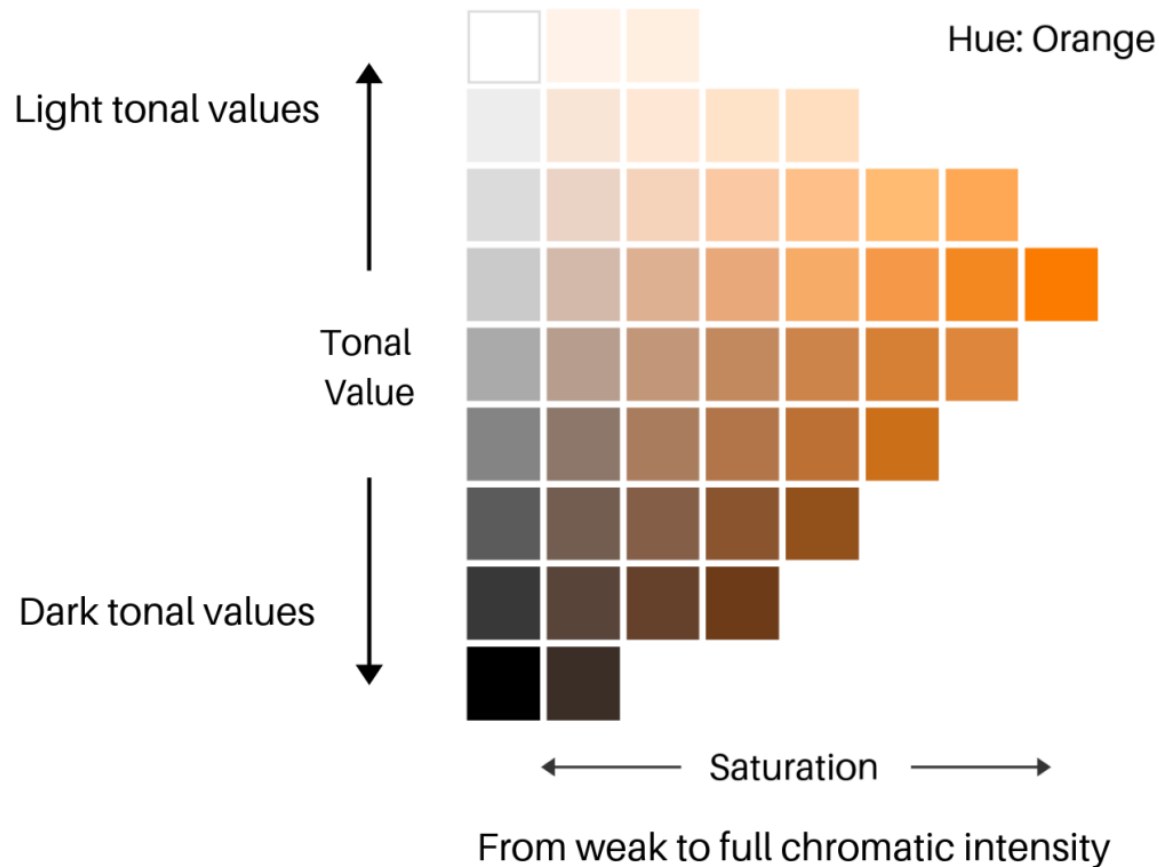
Declining visual capacity:

- Negatively impacts environmental visual literacy.



The Importance of Colour Contrast

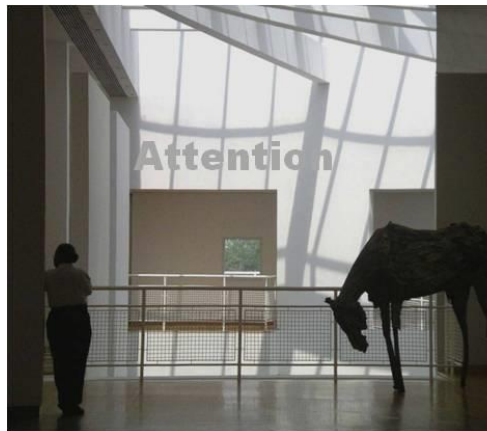
Quick recap of colour theory: Three attributes of colour



Colour Fundamentals

Tonal Value Variations

- Contribute to mood and ambience
- Strong contrast attracts attention
- Improves environmental visual literacy



Colour Fundamentals

Saturation Variations

- Create impact in the built environment – more so than hue
- Strong saturation contrast attracts attention



Visual Perception – The role of colour contrast

Studies indicate that people notice and look at:

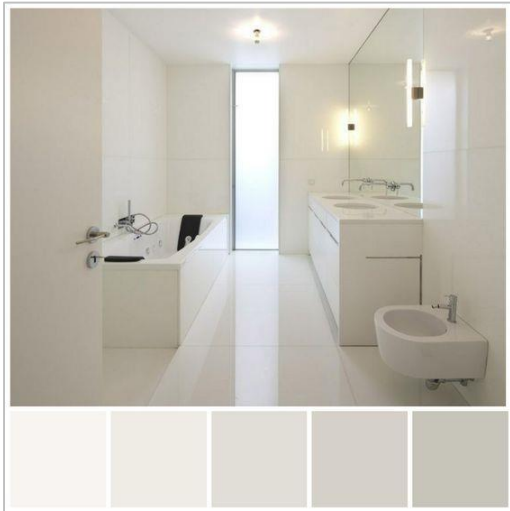
- Movement and areas of strong contrast
- Humans/faces and detailed visual information



Visual Perception – The role of colour contrast

Weak contrast impairs environmental visual literacy

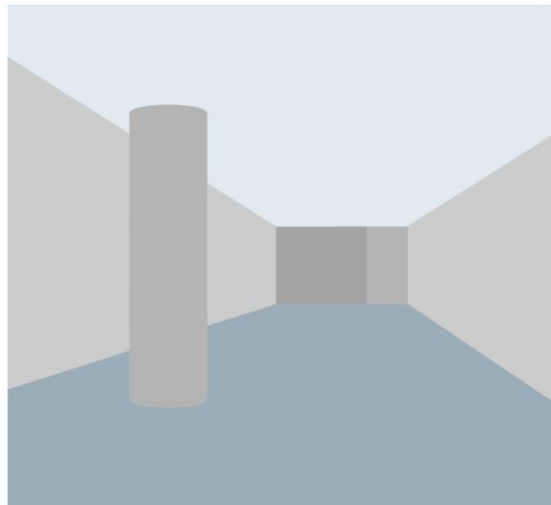
- Difficult to identify key design elements
- Poor lighting and glare add additional problems



Environmental Visual Literacy

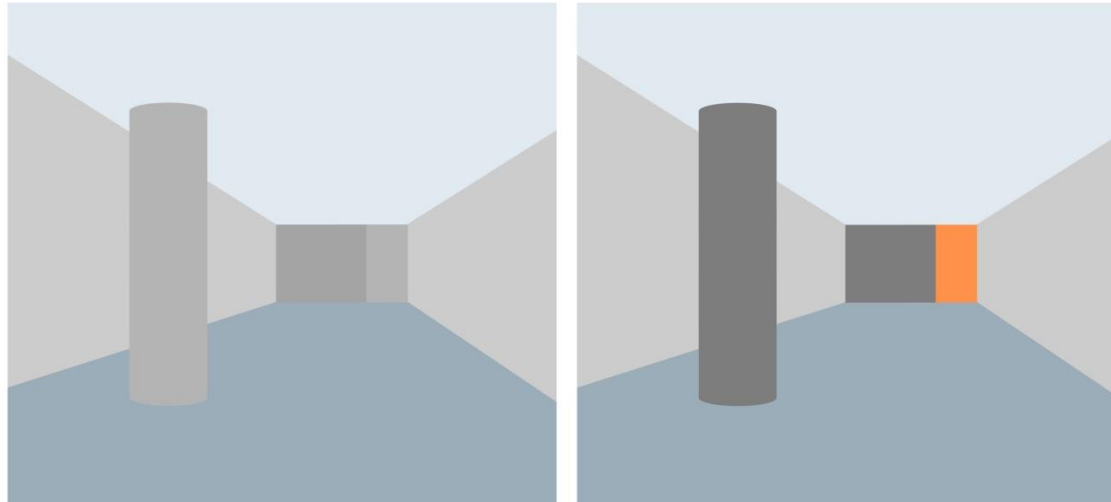
Visual perception involves memory and cognitive processing – We mentally construct what we see.

Colour contrast helps to identify shapes, objects and design features.



Environmental Visual Literacy

Environmental visual literacy is the ability to ‘read’ and make sense of the built environment in a meaningful way.



Environmental Visual Literacy

Negatively impacted by too much visual stimuli

- Cognitive overload can result in the misinterpretation of design details and features



Environmental Visual Literacy

Strategies that improve environmental visual literacy

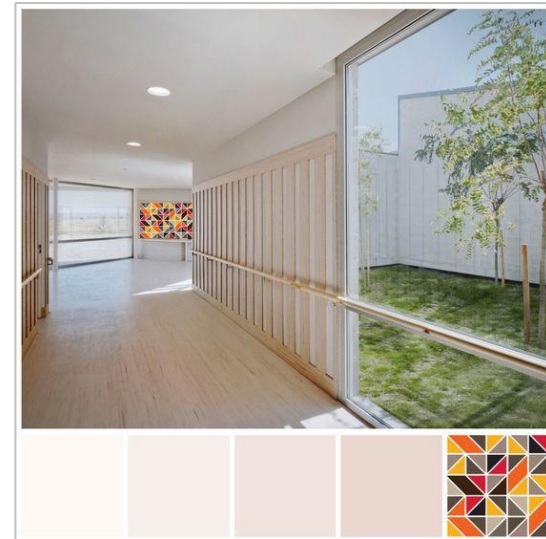
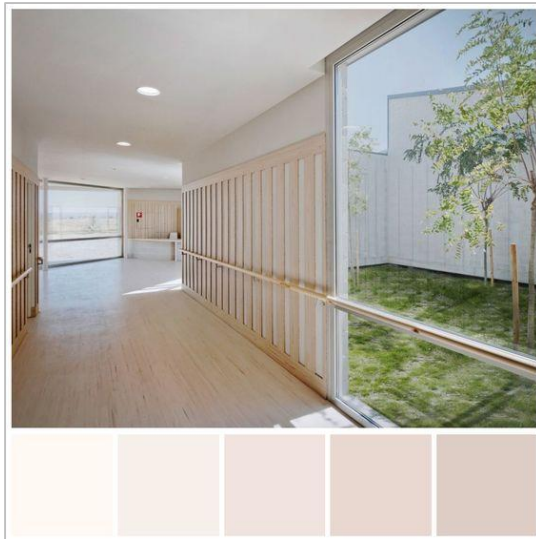
- **Strong colour contrast**
- **Mitigating glare and reflectance**
- Minimise visual clutter
- Build on familiar, existing mental models



Colour Design – Orientation and Wayfinding

Red and warm colours

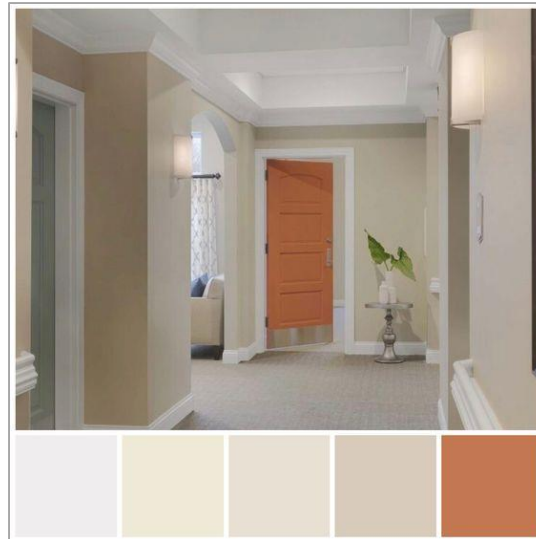
- Attract attention and draw people in
- Compare these two images



Colour Design – Orientation and Wayfinding

Red and warm colours

- This colour design strategy can be used to create landmarks and zones



Colour Design – Orientation and Wayfinding

Colour contrast, murals and feature walls

- Colour design strategies to create landmarks, zones and pathways



Colour Design – Orientation and Wayfinding

Colour contrast, murals and feature walls

- Unique-coloured resident doors, memory boxes and feature walls act as wayfinding devices



Colour Design – Orientation and Wayfinding

Create pathways, districts, zones, nodes and landmarks

- Large-scale colour-coding plus coloured murals enhance wayfinding



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Saturated ‘pops’ of colour

- Welcoming and friendly – diminishes anxiety



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Saturated ‘pops’ of colour

- Welcoming and friendly – diminishes anxiety



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Familiar, Homelike Colours

- Help to reduce anxiety and enhances wellbeing



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Familiar, Homelike Colours

- Important for Quality of Life in hospice design



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Familiar, Homelike Colours

- Colour schemes – Similarity vs. Contrasting
- ‘Natural’ tonal allocation of colour



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Nature-inspired Colour Design

- Underpinned by universal preferences for nature
- Calming, restorative effect of nature

VIDEO

Biophilic Design: How Interiors Can Improve Human Health (6:44mins)

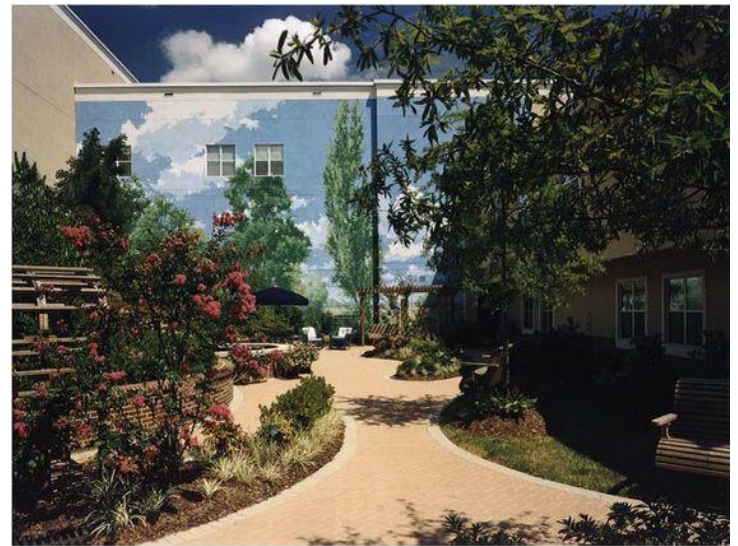
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwnwUPsdICU>



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Nature-inspired Colour Design

- Colours and murals inspired by nature



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Nature-inspired Colour Design

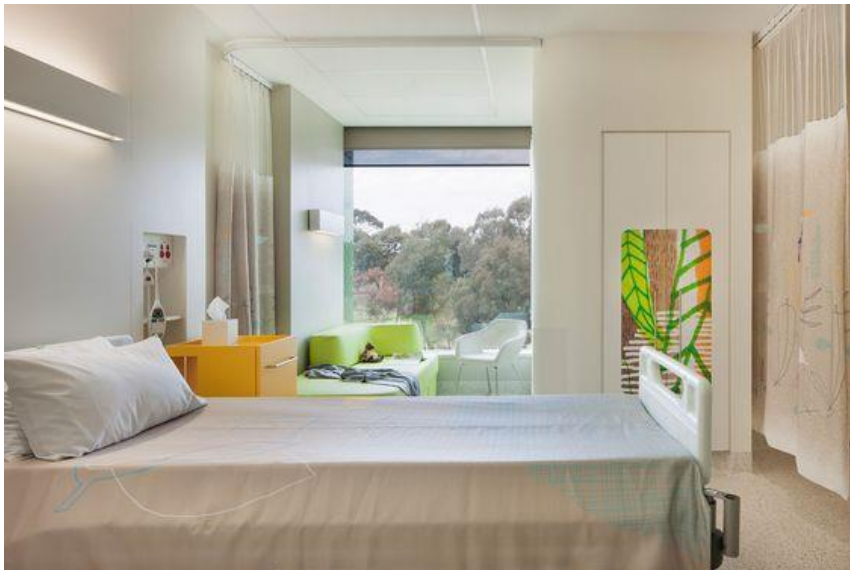
- Colours and murals inspired by nature



Colour Design – Enhance Engagement and Wellbeing

Nature-inspired Colour Design

- Colours and murals inspired by nature
- Offsets the otherwise clinical colour scheme



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Inappropriate environmental design

- Two most common triggers for severe behaviours in people living with dementia:
 - Inappropriate environmental design
 - Unidentified pain issues (Judd, 2016)



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Visual issues that impact people living with dementia

- Slower visual processing
- Misinterpreting visual information
- Sensory overload: double vision, ghosting
- Visual hallucinations

VIDEO

Agnes Houston: Dementia and sensory challenges (3:45mins).

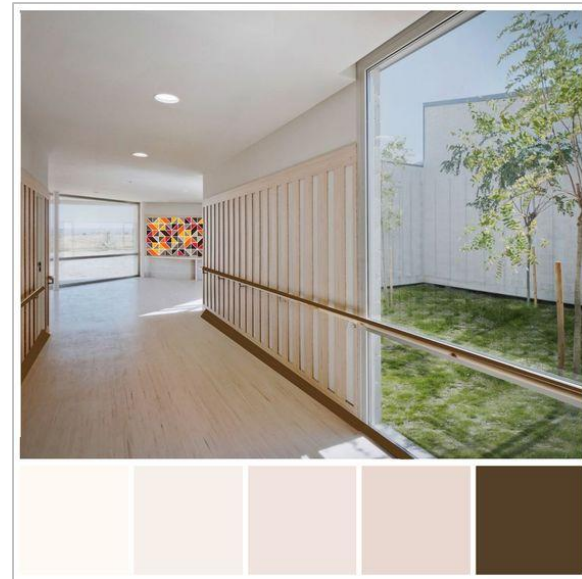
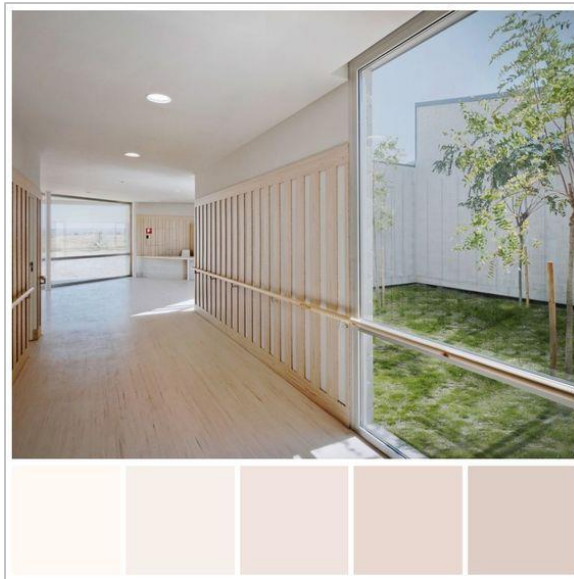
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH_QpmH_lhU



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Strong colour contrast

- Improves environmental visual literacy
- Details are easy to distinguish in image at right



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Strong colour contrast

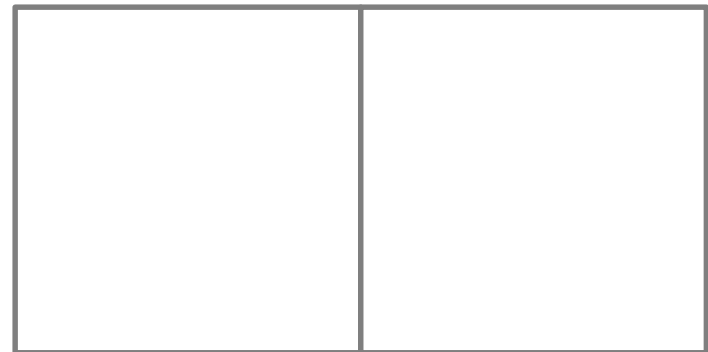
- Use LRV values to achieve strong colour contrast



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Strong colour contrast

- Use LRV values to achieve strong colour contrast differential in painted surfaces



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Familiar homelike colours and design archetypes

- Colour variety and bright, saturated colours



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Murals and Supergraphics

- Add a sense of joy and playfulness
- Orientation and wayfinding devices



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

Murals and Supergraphics

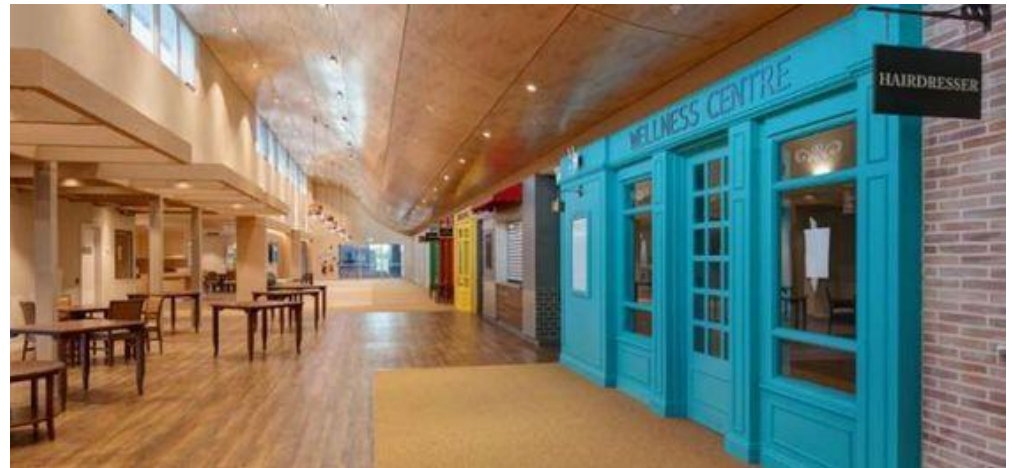
- Obscure rather than camouflage doorways



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

‘Streetscape’ interiors

- Creates a new reality based on familiar memories
- Strong, saturated colours + colour contrast



Dudley Foord House, The Ponds, NSW by Gilmore Design



Colour Design – People Living with Dementia

‘Streetscape’ interiors

- Saturated colours + strong colour contrast



Lantern Group assisted living residences for people living with dementia



Colour for Orientation and Wayfinding in Aged Care and Dementia Care

