

Shift in apartment culture

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The sharing economy is changing apartment design, with buyers accepting smaller dwellings in exchange for facilities that they share with other users, such as private dining rooms, guest rooms that can be booked and even car-share facilities.

Driven by rising dwelling prices and a greater willingness to share, rather than own outright, apartments are being designed with more communal space, in a trend that has been growing in recent years.

Common gyms and pools were the start. At SMA Projects' Yorkshire Brewery residential development in Melbourne's Collingwood, residents can book onsite guest apartments for visiting friends and relatives. At Lend Lease's Studio Nine residential development in Richmond, residents have access to car-share scheme GoGet. It's all part of a careful trade-off buyers are making, says architect **Ann Lau**.

"Do I want to spend another \$80,000 to \$90,000 to have an extra room of approximately 10 square metres, which is what another room



Economics and culture.

costs?" says Ms Lau, a director of Hayball architects. The move is driven as much by economics as it is culture, says Callum Fraser, a co-founder of architect firm Elenberg Fraser. "For what we used to build a 70 sq m apartment, we can now build a 60 sq m apartment," he says. "To maintain your mortgage repayments and rental costs at the same percent-

age of your income, people are accepting a little less space."

That acceptance can be seen in the growing proportion of communal space being designed into apartment buildings. Designed five years ago, developer Hamton's FiftyAlbert residential tower in South Melbourne has a ratio of 1.9 sq m of communal space per apartment, Fraser says. In later developments like CEL Australia's planned Tower Melbourne, the figure is 2.5 sq m.

"You no longer need to have an eight-person dining table in your apartment because you can hire out one of the private dining rooms in the building and just pay a cleaning charge," Fraser says.

Malaysian developer Mammoth's My80, a tower with 487 apartments on Melbourne's Elizabeth St, was designed five years ago with one square metre of communal space per apartment. In its Empire development planned for across the road, the ratio is up to 1.5 sq m.

There is a greater area of communal space and two-thirds the number of private car parks.