

Forget the Fluffy Slippers

Retirement might not be a four-letter word, but it might as well be. According to Jill and Owen Weeks, today's ageing 'baby boomers' are more intent on enhancing their lifestyle than slowing down.

Boomers with Bounce' is how Jill and Owen Weeks describe the current generation in their fifties and sixties – and they definitely know a thing or two about 'the Boomers'. Their books, including *Retirebizz* and their latest, *Where to Retire in Australia*, explore all the lifestyle benefits available at the end of a working life.

Well travelled, and very experienced in all matters pertaining to lifestyle change, the couple spent a substantial part of their year in 2000 venturing between more than 200 regional locations to profile communities with a high concentration of people aged over 65. The result was *Where to Retire in Australia*, which offers a comprehensive guide profiling the towns of regional and rural Australia.

"The Boomers have no concept of slowing down. This group is active, adventurous and keen on spending their kids' inheritance!"



Owen, a financial planner, grew up in Melbourne, whereas Jill, a widely-published author, has a great appreciation for the countryside. She grew up in various towns in regional Victoria.

"The number one message for people contemplating a Sea or Tree Change is that they need to do their homework," Owen says. The Weeks developed a 'checklist approach' as an effective method to encapsulate the significant factors involved in choosing a place to retire.

"People should think about available medical facilities, service centres, entertainment facilities, and educational establishments," he says. Transport links and logistics also play a big role in choosing a destination. "It's important that the grandchildren can come and visit," Owen adds.

Owen has more than 30 years experience in providing advice to retirees and those planning their retirement. "We recommend carefully researching the real estate trends in the town you are considering moving to, and comparing these to prices in your current home town," he says.

A lifestyle change of this scale clearly has substantial financial implications. "We advise people to first rent in the town they are planning to move to - for a period of a year to a year and a half - before they actually take the next step and buy property," Owen says. This provides a bit of a

buffer, and ensures that people have an accurate idea of what the town is like throughout the year - not just in the holiday season. "We think it's a good idea to experience all four seasons before you decide to move permanently."

Surprisingly, it is important to recognise that a Sea or Tree Change does not always involve a downsizing. "Sometimes when people retire, or make a Sea or Tree Change, they are moving to a place that is more expensive with higher real estate costs," Owen explains.

This disparity in real estate pricing between rural and urban Australia can have major consequences. "A common mistake people make is to move to a smaller community, where real estate prices do not keep up with capital city

SOUTHERN CITIES FURNITURE REMOVAL
 HOUSE HOLD REMOVALS
 QLD NSW ACT VIC
 FOR A FRIENDLY PROFESSIONAL SERVICE
1800 211 260
 02 649 59 200
 STORAGE & PACKING

FAMILY BUSINESS REMOVALIST THAT CARE
 FOR AN OBLIGATION FREE QUOTE
 EMAIL: SOUTHERNREMOVAL@BIGPOND.COM
 WWW.SOUTHERNREMOVAL.COM.AU
 FAX 02 649 59 204
 1800 211 260

"The number one message for people contemplating a Sea or Tree Change is that they need to do their homework."

price inflation," Owen says. "Then, ten years later, they encounter difficulties and want to return to the city." It is always advisable, therefore, to speak with a financial advisor, and consider all possible outcomes down the track, before making significant financial decisions.

And, alongside financial and property considerations, the Weeks emphasise the importance of a sense of community in country towns. "One of the main advantages of living in the countryside is the sense of community and responsibility among the residents," Jill says. "Rather than feeling anonymous, which can be common in big cities, people actually say hello to you, and they know who you are. They will look up and smile if they are tending their garden."

Jill and Owen also acknowledge the integral role that social clubs and rotary associations play when finding your feet in a new community. "Being a resident of a small town often means you are more inclined to join a local sports club or rotary group," says Jill.

To familiarise yourself with a new hometown the Weeks suggest getting in touch with local councils by looking at their websites and reading local publications. "Also, talking to local residents in the town is a really good way to find out what's going on," Owen adds.

Jill explains that life in a small town brings a host of benefits for young families as well as retirees. "There is more of a sense of freedom, which means children can grow up in a generally safer environment," she says. She also describes the different recreational opportunities commonly available in country towns. "There is more of a chance for the whole family to spend time together and do things as a family, like going to watch the football," she says.

"Living in the country provides a less stressful lifestyle," Owen adds. "There are no traffic jams, and less pollution means you can breathe clean air." Jill agrees. "In the city, it can feel like you are constantly being bombarded by noise and traffic."

There has been a noticeable shift in the concept of 'retirement' over the past couple of decades. Jill says that the image of people in their fifties and sixties "as a group sitting on a veranda, wearing fluffy slippers and enjoying discount meals", is certainly a thing of the past.

"We use the 'L' word (lifestyle), rather than the 'R' word these days," Jill and Owen emphasise. "These days the



Boomers are relatively a much more active group and are much more aware of the need to be active," Owen says. He attributes this to the evolution of superannuation and financial conditions. "Compared to 30 years ago, the superannuation that current Baby Boomers have makes a big difference to how we think about retirement today."

The Boomers are also savvy and up-to-date with current technology, which provides an array of professional and recreational opportunities. "The advent of technology and high-speed internet access means that people can use sites like ebay to shop online," Owen says. "Also, email allows people to keep in touch with their family and friends, even if they are living far away."

Professionally, the Internet gives more scope for establishing a small business, which can be an increasingly popular option for retirees. "Internet access enables people to run a small business from within their own home," Owen says.

Certainly, as opposed to reducing the pace of their lives and just taking it easy, the Boomers have no concept of slowing down. As Jill says, "this group is active, adventurous and intent on spending their kids' inheritance!"

www.where2now.net