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Dulux® Colours of New Zealand®

Retirement Living & Dementia-Inclusive Collection

Dulux
Kohunui
Bay



The Dulux® Colours of New Zealand® Retirement Living & Dementia-Inclusive Collection brings together eight inspiring colour palettes to support safety, dignity, and improved quality of life for older people and those living with dementia.

In retirement living and dementia-supportive design, colour is more than just decorative - it plays a vital role in how people experience and navigate their environment. The Retirement Living & Dementia-Inclusive Collection demonstrates that design grounded in evidence can be both functional and visually appealing. Through the considered use of colour, we can help enhance clarity and spatial awareness, while also creating environments that feel warm, familiar, and supportive of independence - spaces that feel more like home.

Whether you're refreshing an existing care facility or planning a new project, the Dulux® Retirement Living & Dementia-Inclusive Collection offers a thoughtfully curated palette of eight unique schemes - each designed to help improve resident security and intuitive navigation through dementia-supportive colour principles.

The palettes incorporate the latest evidence-based guidance, such as contrast thresholds, wayfinding strategies, and emotional wellbeing to support orientation, reduce confusion, and foster a sense of calm, comfort, and familiarity in retirement living environments.

This collection has been developed in consultation with interior designer, Pamela Siau from Designgroup Stapleton Elliot Architects. DGSE is a New Zealand-based architecture practice with extensive experience in older-adult and dementia-inclusive design. Pamela's deep commitment to retirement living design, rooted in her personal experience with family members living with dementia, and reinforced by extensive research, has helped shape this collection.

Using the Palettes

Developed with the specific needs of retirement living environments in mind, these colour palettes are designed to support residents - particularly those living with dementia - by promoting safety, independence, and overall quality of life.

Each of the eight palettes in the Retirement Living & Dementia-Inclusive Collection includes five harmoniously curated colours from the Dulux® Colours of New Zealand® range and is suitable for both interior and exterior settings. This collection allows you, the designer, the creative freedom to layer and combine the colour palettes meaningfully to create a cohesive, retirement living and dementia-supportive scheme.

Each colour palette includes:

1. **A neutral colour** - for primary walls and ceilings
2. **A feature colour** - for feature walls and accent trims
3. **An additional feature colour** - for feature walls and accent trims
4. **A contrast colour** - for door frames, signage, zone demarcations, activity area cues, table edges, furniture and joinery
5. **An additional contrast colour** - for door frames, signage, zone demarcations, activity area cues, table edges, furniture and joinery.

Why colour matters

Accommodating Changes in Vision

As people age, the eye's lens naturally thickens and can yellow, which may reduce sensitivity to blue, green and purple hues. For people with dementia, these age-related vision changes can be compounded by changes in how the brain processes visual information, making colour differentiation and depth perception even more challenging.

Colours may appear washed out or indistinct, making daily tasks and navigating difficult. These changes impair depth perception, spatial orientation and surface distinction.

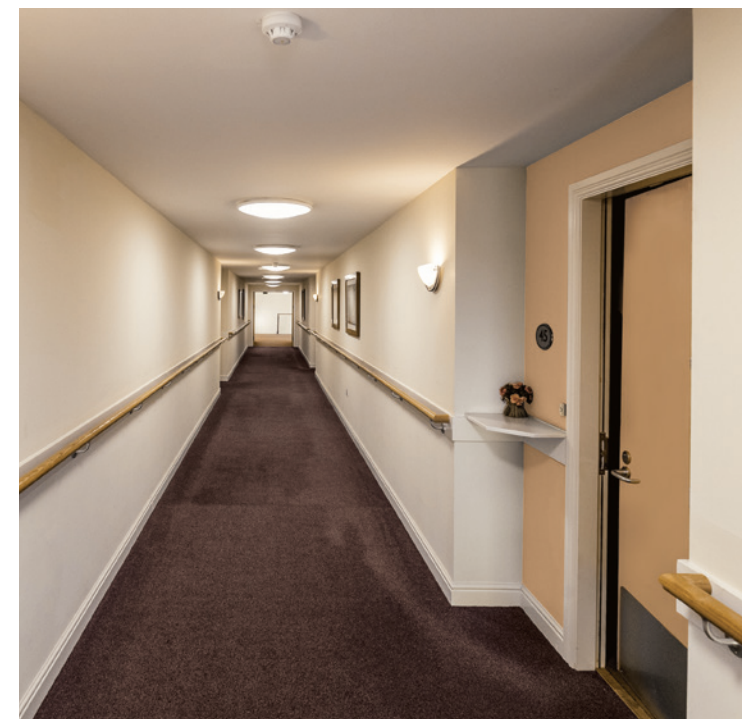
Age-related conditions, such as cataracts, macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and colour blindness, may exacerbate these effects especially among older and male residents, compounding challenges around recognition and security.

Older people often need substantially higher contrast than younger people to recognise objects clearly - sometimes two to three times more contrast is required for effective visual perception. An elegant neutral colour scheme may seem appealing, but the addition of colour and contrast may work better for an older person with weaker vision.

Supporting Wayfinding and Independence

Colour plays a vital role in creating environments that help people living with dementia navigate independently and confidently. Colour can act as signage. Painting doors to bedrooms or communal areas in specific colours, instead of using text-based signs, can help leverage visual memory over language-based cues, especially when cognitive and language processing is impaired.

Colour-coded door frames, zones, and signage can help residents navigate spaces more intuitively. When rooms or corridors use consistent colour themes - such as warm tones for dining areas and calming palettes for bedrooms - people living with dementia may begin to associate certain hues with specific functions or locations. This can support greater independence and assist in stimulating cognitive pathways, helping to reinforce memory recall and spatial awareness.



Ceiling, walls and trims: Dulux Howick
Door and surround: Dulux The Terrace

Enhancing Recognition and Safety through Contrast

High tonal contrast is essential. A minimum light reflectance offset of 30% between critical surfaces - such as walls and floors, doors and walls, or furniture and flooring - is recommended to support edge and surface perception. Where possible, aim for even greater contrast for key functional elements like toilet seats, grab rails, and door frames, as some individuals may require higher differentiation to perceive them clearly.

Complex patterns, shiny finishes, and intense geometric designs can be confusing or unsettling for some people with dementia. For example, a high-gloss floor may be misinterpreted as water, while a speckled carpet might be perceived as debris.

Simple, uninterrupted areas of consistent colour are generally preferred over bold patterns or complex textures, as these may be misread as obstacles or changes in depth and can be visually overwhelming for some residents.

Promoting Emotional Well-being

Colour has powerful physical and emotional effects. It can create a sense of warmth and sociability, stimulate appetite, reduce anxiety and enrich environments to make them more engaging and homely. Different colour tones can cultivate distinct emotional responses:

Cool, soft tones (light blue, lilac, green) may help reduce activity in the central nervous system for some people and can be well suited to bedrooms or rest areas. Blue tones, in particular, are often associated with calm environments and may contribute to lower blood pressure, which is why they are commonly used in spaces where quiet is encouraged. Soft greens are frequently linked with nature and, for some individuals, can evoke a sense of balance and tranquility that feels soothing.

Warm tones (peach, pink, coral, muted yellow, terracotta) evoke a homely, welcoming atmosphere, supporting comfort and ease across communal and personal areas. Peach and soft pinks are known to have a calming and reassuring effect, making them especially beneficial in environments designed for people living with dementia.



Yellow is often associated with happiness and optimism, though individual responses to colour vary. In dementia care settings, some people may find highly saturated yellows overstimulating, potentially triggering agitation, so it is advisable to use them thoughtfully and in combination with calming tones.

Stimulating hues (reds, oranges) can be effective for drawing attention to key elements such as table mats or call buttons. However, these colours should be used with restraint and balanced with softer tones, as overuse may be overstimulating for some individuals.

Walls: Dulux Pōhutu Geyser

Do's and Don'ts for Using Colour in Retirement Living & Dementia- Inclusive Design

Do's - Design for Clarity and Comfort

Use strong tonal contrast: Ensure at least a 30-point difference in Light Reflectance Value (LRV) between key surfaces - such as walls and floors, doors and walls, and furniture and flooring - to support depth perception and help reduce the risk of falls.

Contrast doors, handrails and fixtures: Paint doors, handrails, and light switches in contrasting tones to surrounding walls to improve visibility and support wayfinding.

Choose calming warm colours: Colours such as soft yellows, peaches, apricots, and muted greens create a calm, welcoming atmosphere. These hues are generally easier for older eyes to perceive. In lounges and communal areas, warm tones like soft peach, apricot, gentle yellow, or subdued greens can help uplift mood while maintaining a sense of calm.

Keep patterns simple or avoid them: Plain, solid-colour surfaces help reduce visual confusion and misinterpretation.

Use matt finishes: Specify Dulux flat or matt sheen levels. Reflective surfaces or glossy flooring may look wet or slippery. Matt finishes can be safer, as well as reducing glare and sensory confusion.

Leverage colour-coding for wayfinding: Consistently use specific colours or visual cues for different zones (e.g. red for dining, blue for bathing areas) to support orientation and reduce memory-related confusion. Use low-contrast colours to blend staff-only or exit doors into surrounding walls, helping to minimise visual distractions.

Don'ts - Avoid Confusion and Discomfort

Avoid medium-contrast monochrome schemes: When walls, floors, and furniture sit in similar tones, residents may struggle to distinguish between surfaces, which can increase the risk of trips and falls.

Avoid strong patterns or speckled finishes: Bold stripes, checkerboards, or speckled designs can be misinterpreted as changes in level, holes, or debris. Even small flecks may cause visual confusion, with busy floor and wall patterns appearing as obstacles to people living with dementia.

Use cool colours with care: Blues, greens, and purples can become harder to differentiate with age, often appearing washed out or greyish, particularly under poor lighting. These colours can still be used effectively when paired with warm accents and strong tonal contrast, ensuring they do not dominate a scheme or reduce visibility of key elements.

Avoid clashing colour use across functions: Using the same or similar contrasting colours for both hazards and points of interest can lead to misinterpretation. For example, avoid using red to indicate both hazards and engaging activity zones, as this may cause confusion.

Avoid similar-brightness colour pairings: Even when hues differ (such as red and green), colours with similar Light Reflectance Values (LRVs) can blend perceptually, making elements harder to distinguish.

Avoid predominantly pastel or cool palettes: Soft blues, greens, and lavenders can appear grey or indistinct to ageing eyes, which may compromise navigation and feature recognition.

01 Calm Comfort

Quiet Spaces

Designed to cultivate tranquillity, the Calm Comfort palette combines greige and warm light grey with mauve undertones as the primary colours, creating a neutral backdrop that minimises visual clutter. Accents of sage green introduce a natural, restorative element, while the deep ocean blue provides depth and grounding.

This palette aims to reduce central nervous system activity, helping to support relaxation and mindfulness, making it ideal for therapy and meditation spaces where a serene environment is essential.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Mt Hutt - LRV 83
- **Feature:** Dulux Ōpononi - LRV 65
- **Feature:** Dulux Roys Peak - LRV 62
- **Contrast:** Dulux Te Aroha - LRV 30
- **Contrast:** Dulux Lake Brunner - LRV 7



Left wall: Ōpononi, Right wall: Te Aroha, Ceiling, trims and fireplace: Mt Hutt

02 Sunlit Warmth

Lounges & Common Areas

Sunlit Warmth combines a soft neutral white with red undertones, terracotta-toned peach, and burnt yellow hues to evoke the warmth of sunshine and infuse spaces with a cheerful glow. Earthier notes, such as scoria red with burnt-orange undertones and maroon-brown accents, add contrast, enhancing spatial definition and supporting intuitive navigation.

This palette aims to create an uplifting, cosy and comfortable environment in communal areas.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Howick - LRV 67
- **Feature:** Dulux Broadway - LRV 46
- **Feature:** Dulux The Terrace - LRV 51
- **Contrast:** Dulux Rangitoto - LRV 14
- **Contrast:** Dulux Cumberland Street - LRV 8



Ceiling, trims and left wall: Howick, Right wall: Broadway, Fireplace and lower walls: Cumberland Street

03 Serene Retreat

Bedrooms

Serene Retreat combines soft neutral white with deep shades of blue and green, creating a soothing atmosphere that encourages rest and restoration. Beige and soft yellow tones add warmth, while deep teal green accents provide gentle contrast, aiding in navigating without causing visual stress.

This palette creates a restful environment, essential for bedrooms where relaxation and sleep are priorities.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Cardrona - LRV 85
- **Feature:** Dulux Sandrock Bluff Half - LRV 74
- **Feature:** Dulux Darfield Half - LRV 54
- **Contrast:** Dulux Waioeka - LRV 18
- **Contrast:** Dulux Karori - LRV 7



Left wall: Sandrock Bluff Half, Door: Karori Right wall: Darfield Half, Ceiling, trims and fireplace: Cardrona

04 Tranquil Horizons

Bathrooms

Tranquil Horizons features comforting neutrals combined with greens and warm blue, evoking a sense of both freshness and warmth. Deep navy-blue accents offer strong contrast for fixtures and fittings, enhancing visibility and safety. Beige, with pink and brown undertones, adds warmth and ensures the space remains inviting.

This palette is designed to deliver effective contrast, creating a bathroom environment that is both safe and calming.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Ōpononi Quarter - LRV 79
- **Feature:** Dulux Hopelands Half - LRV 57
- **Feature:** Dulux Balaena Bay - LRV 40
- **Contrast:** Dulux Cook Strait - LRV 14
- **Contrast:** Dulux Ōhaupō - LRV 7



Door: Ōhaupō, Bathroom walls: Balaena Bay, Main Walls: Ōpononi Quarter, Feature wall: Hopelands Half

05 Memory Lane

Lounges & Common Areas

Memory Lane combines warm white with subtle beige undertones, sandy apricot, and golden yellow, creating a warm and welcoming ambiance. Rich deep plum and muted teal green accents introduce familiar, nostalgic tones that can stimulate memory and conversation.

This warm and energetic palette is designed to encourage social interaction and comfort in lounges and common areas.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Haast Half - LRV 78
- **Feature:** Dulux Baylys Beach - LRV 56
- **Feature:** Dulux Tāmaki - LRV 53
- **Contrast:** Dulux Danseys Pass - LRV 10
- **Contrast:** Dulux Wiroa Island - LRV 17



Wall: Baylys Beach, Wall surrounds into dining room: Danseys Pass, Window trims: Haast Half

06 Balanced Focus

Quiet Spaces & Bedrooms

Balanced Focus harmoniously blends warm, soothing creamy beiges, grey-green, dusky pink and aubergine, promoting calmness and concentration. Green and purple accents serve as subtle focal points, aiding in spatial orientation without overwhelming the senses.

This palette is designed to encourage focus and relaxation, making it suitable for reading rooms, bedrooms and quiet areas where residents can engage in solitary activities.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Tōrere Quarter - LRV 75
- **Feature:** Dulux Tōrere - LRV 60
- **Feature:** Dulux Trentham - LRV 59
- **Contrast:** Dulux Pencarrow - LRV 23
- **Contrast:** Dulux Opunake - LRV 11



Door and lower wall: Pencarrow, Upper walls: Tōrere

07 Soft Social

Activity Areas

Soft Social features calming beige, dusky pink and lilac tones, which can help reduce agitation and promote relaxation. Red accents are strategically used to stimulate mental activity and engagement during tasks. Complementary grey balances the palette, ensuring a harmonious environment that facilitates focus and creativity in activity areas.

This palette is designed to be uplifting, encouraging both focus and sociability.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Mason Bay - LRV 65
- **Feature:** Dulux Kohunui Bay - LRV 48
- **Feature:** Dulux Prebbleton - LRV 54
- **Contrast:** Dulux Red Jacks - LRV 12
- **Contrast:** Dulux Lion Rock - LRV 11



Main wall: Prebbleton, Pillars: Lion Rock, Ceiling: Mason Bay

08 Warm Embrace

Dining & Kitchen Area

Warm Embrace utilises warm deep red and earthy terracotta with brown hues to stimulate appetite and encourage socialisation. Warm yellow accents add brightness and energy, while warm natural beige and mid-toned yellow-green elements introduce a sense of calm and balance.

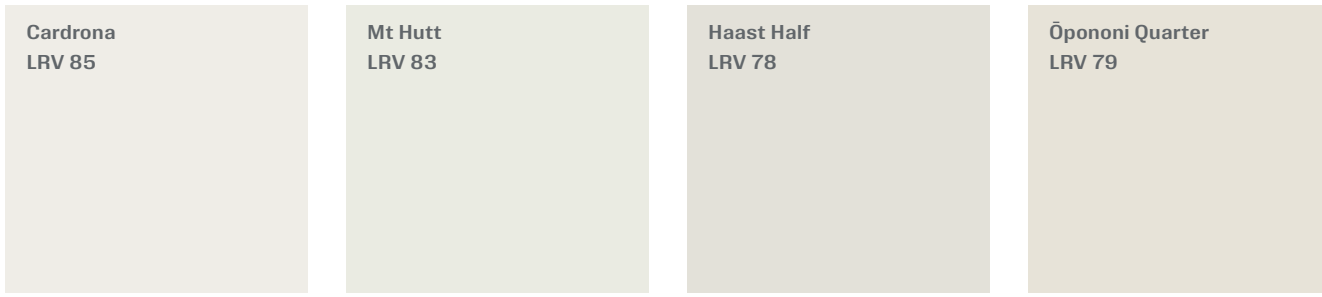
This palette is designed to create an inviting and comfortable dining experience.

- **Neutral:** Dulux Waiau Bay - LRV 67
- **Feature:** Dulux Matauri Bay - LRV 62
- **Feature:** Dulux Paeroa - LRV 60
- **Contrast:** Dulux Pōhutu Geysers - LRV 24
- **Contrast:** Dulux Red Rocks - LRV 12



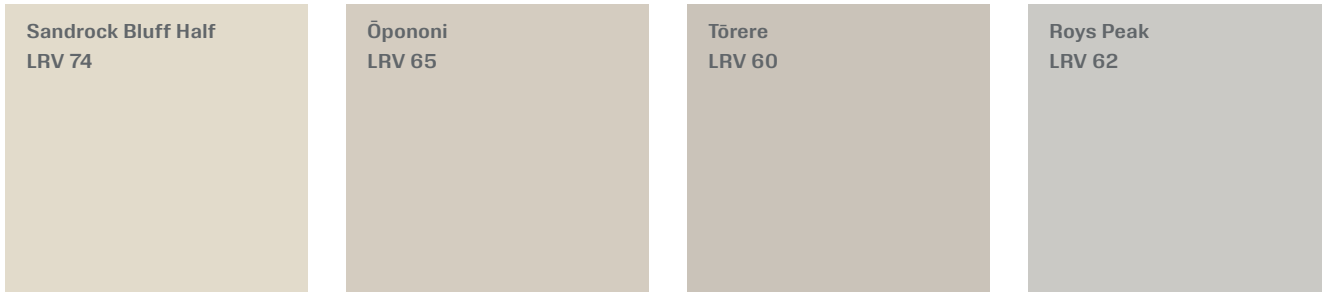
Walls: Matauri Bay, Ceiling and trims: Waiau Bay

Neutral Colours



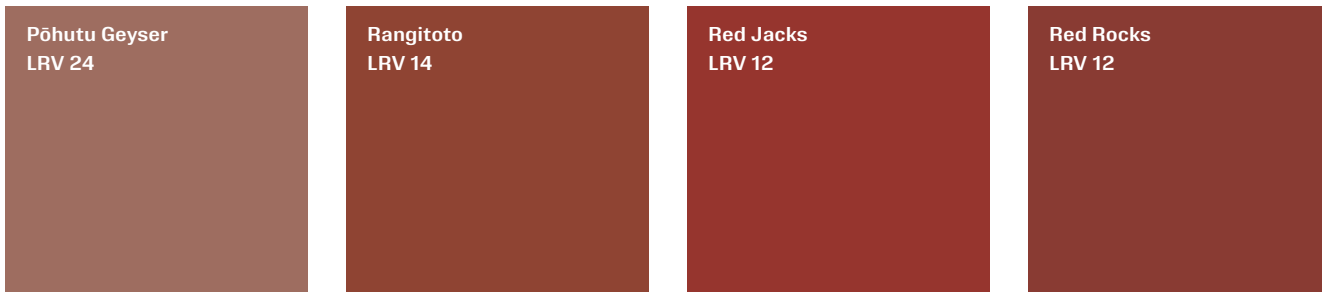
Aim for at least a 30-point difference in LRV between neutral and contrast colours. Consider higher contrast for critical features such as door frames, handrails, and fixtures.

Feature Colours

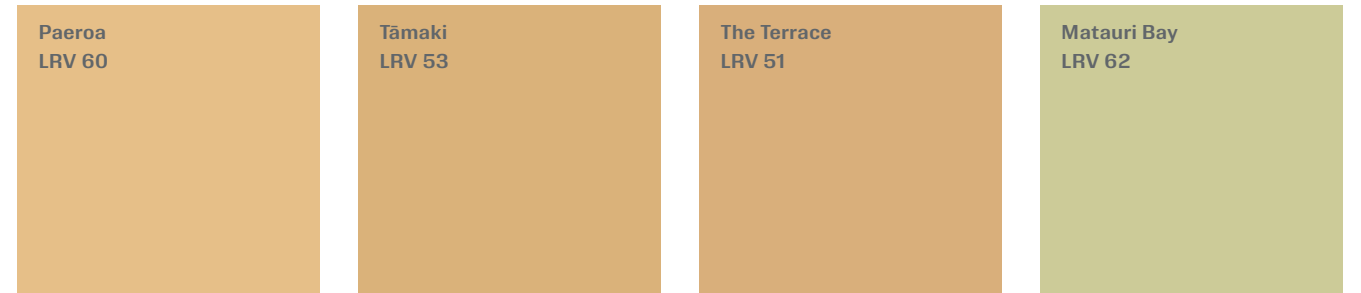
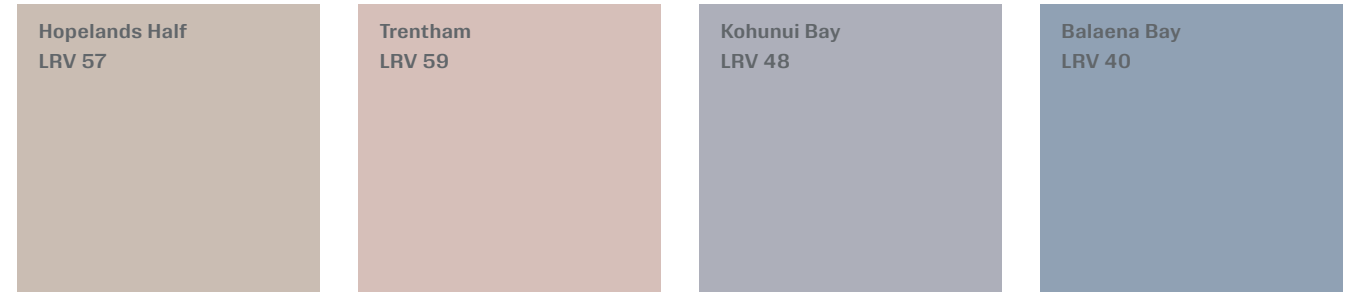
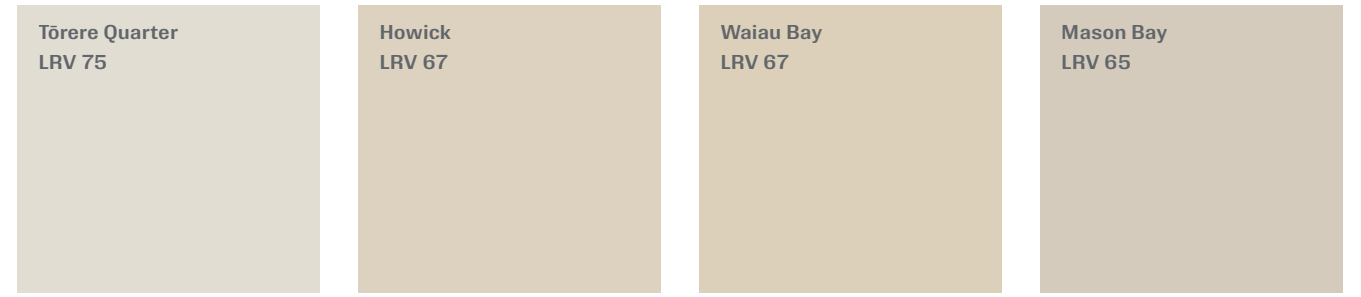


Aim for at least a 30-point difference in LRV between feature and contrast colours. Consider higher contrast for critical features such as door frames, handrails, and fixtures.

Contrast Colours



Aim for at least a 30-point difference in LRV between contrast, neutral and feature colours. Consider higher contrast for critical features such as door frames, handrails, and fixtures.



Dulux®

Worth doing, worth Dulux.

Creating Better Spaces for Retirement Living & Dementia Support

The Dulux® Colours of New Zealand® Retirement Living & Dementia-Inclusive Collection is designed to support safer, more comfortable environments for older adults and people living with dementia.

Selecting the right products is just as important as choosing the right colours. Our range includes durable, low-sheen, low-VOC finishes designed to meet the specific needs of retirement living environments.

**For more information and specification support, including free colour swatches and product recommendations, visit: dulux.co.nz/retirementliving
Dulux® Help & Advice 0800 800 424**

Colours shown are as close as possible to the actual paint colours as the printing process allows. Always confirm your final colour choice with Dulux sample pots.

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