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MEDIA RELEASE

## ‘A Fairer Victoria’- Fairer for Whom?

The State Government's planned accessibility regulations will increase the cost of new homes and remove the free choice of Victorian home buyers, the Housing Industry Association says.

The Brumby Government today announced that all new homes constructed after May 1 2012 will be required to include new accessibility features, which have not been properly researched or costed.

The HIA fully supports improved accessibility in new homes and was a signatory to the Federal Government's Universal Housing Design standards, which is a voluntary and progressive approach.

"HIA members already voluntarily provide accessible homes where requested. But imposing this on everyone is not a fair or practical approach," HIA Victorian Executive Director Gil King said.

The HIA estimates these regulations (excluding the cost of the level entry shower, which HIA had not been given the opportunity to evaluate) will increase the cost of a standard 180 square metre house by about \$5000. In some cases it will cost many thousands more.

"Unlike the Federal Government's initiative, these regulations do nothing to address the bigger issue of catering for the disabled and elderly in the wider community," Mr King said.

"By forcing every new home in Victoria to comply with these standards, the Brumby Government has chosen to apply more cost and more regulation to Victorian home owners than in any other state," Mr King said.

"Today's announcement of these regulations, which could see every new home have a ramp to the front door, was buried in a document named, "A Fairer Victoria". But, how is it fairer, and for whom? It's certainly not fairer for the majority of home buyers who would prefer to make their own decisions about their home," Mr King said.

"It's also not fairer for first home buyers who are still struggling to gain entry into the housing market. "The Government's estimate of a cost increase of \$870 is just not realistic. HIA's \$5000 figure is based on adapting an existing standard house plan, and is far more reflective of the cost increase home owners face."

The features announced include a clear accessible path from the street or car park to a level entry, wider doorways and hallways, a limited mobility toilet on the entrance level, reinforced bathroom walls and a level entry shower.

"The Government has not listened to the concerns of industry. It has bulldozed this policy through and ignored housing experts. There are still many unanswered questions about how these regulations will be applied in a practical sense," Mr King said.

"Policies like these only add to the cost of housing and will further impact on the decline of affordability in this state."

**For further information:**

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