

Accessibility in Residential Buildings

Policy Background

- People with disabilities tend to have very specific needs; the level and type of support required varies
 depending on the nature of disability.
- The co-operation of people with a disability and their builder to produce a customised solution in their own home, is the most targeted and cost effective way to modify homes to suit the accessibility needs of an individual.
- The overwhelming majority of private homes will not be used, now or in the future, by people requiring wheel chairs.
- The BCA presently incorporates general accessibility requirements to provide minimum effective access to Class 2/5 to 9 buildings and the provision of other facilities for disabled persons, including reference to AS 1428 and other relevant Australian Standards.
- From 2011, the BCA will incorporate requirements for the public areas of Class 2 residential buildings to provide access in accordance with the Disability Discrimination (Premises - Access to Buildings)
 Standards 2010.
- The BCA does not incorporate any minimum requirements for the internal design of residential buildings, both Class 1a and Class 2.

Policy Issues

- Local governments are adopting AS 1428 Access for persons with a disability, AS 4299 Adaptable
 housing and other state based planning controls for aged and disabled housing as minimum requirements
 for residential buildings.
- Australian Standards and individual planning regulations which mandate accessibility provisions have not been subject to regulatory impact assessment or adopted by the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) for Class 1a buildings.
- The ABCB is under continued pressure to develop a position on mandatory minimum accessibility regulations for Class 1a residential buildings.
- The Victorian Government has released draft provisions for inclusion in BCA 2011 aimed at four accessible and visitable design features.
- The substantial private cost for public benefit necessary to support regulated accessibility measures would drive up the cost of housing, impacting on housing affordability.
- The most effective method of providing appropriate housing for people with a disability is via direct support
 from governments to incorporate relevant changes and fixtures to suit the particular disability and through
 the promotion of a range of design solutions that both builders and consumers can understand and select
 to suit their own housing needs.

- Accessibility features can be easily incorporated into new housing and should be done so at the choice of the consumer.
- For home buyers with significant disabilities, State governments could offer additional support through a range of initiatives, such as stamp duty concessions.
- HIA has participated in the National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design as a means of creating a
 nationally consistent set of inclusions that can be voluntarily promoted across the residential building
 industry, the aged care and disability sector and the community at large.

HIA's Policy Position on Accessibility in Residential Buildings

- Accessibility to private homes for people with disabilities needs to be addressed through voluntary marketbased incentives, improved consumer and industry information, and direct Government assistance to people with disabilities.
- The introduction of mandatory planning or building regulations which regulate accessibility in private dwellings is not appropriate nor cost effective to address concerns about accessibility for people with disabilities.
- The actual demand for accessibility features in private dwellings should be assessed through independent research and support the development of voluntary industry programs to meet these needs.
- The residential development industry should be assisted to develop low cost technical solutions to accessibility needs in private dwellings as an option.