



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 people with a disability, including reference to AS 1428 and other relevant Australian Standards.
- Since 2011, the BCA has incorporated 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

- State and Local governments are adopting AS 1428 – Access for persons with a disability, AS 4299 – Adaptable housing, silver level requirements from the Livable Housing Design Guidelines 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 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 should be done so at the choice of the consumer rather than it being mandated by Governments.
- 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

1. Accessibility features for people with disabilities, 'ageing in place', visitability or adaptability in private homes should be addressed through voluntary market-based incentives, improved consumer and industry information and education programs, and direct Government assistance to people with disabilities.
2. HIA supports the national guidelines published by Livable Housing Australia (first published in 2010 Edition 1) as a guide for home owners and residential builders seeking to voluntarily incorporate accessibility design features into new and existing homes.
3. The introduction of mandatory planning or building regulations which regulate accessibility features in private dwellings is not appropriate or cost effective to address concerns about accessibility for people with disabilities or increased accessibility.
4. The actual demand for accessibility features in private dwellings should be assessed through independent research and used to support the development of voluntary industry programs to meet these needs.
5. The residential building industry should be assisted to develop low cost technical solutions to accessibility needs in private dwellings as voluntary options.
6. Federal, State and Territory Governments should introduce targeted rebates and incentive schemes which support voluntary uptake of Livable Housing design features in new and existing homes to suit the owner's specific needs.