

# universal housing design guidelines fact sheet



For Landcom Projects



# Universal Housing Design Guidelines

## Fact Sheet

As people get older they want to stay living in their own homes and as part of the community they know, for as long as possible. To do this they need: independence and security; easy access around the house; a house designed to minimise the risk of trips and falls; and to avoid having to use stairs.

Landcom has prepared these guidelines to encourage the design of homes that meet these principal needs, to create and maintain strong and socially sustainable communities as the profile of our population changes over time.

## What is universal housing?

Universal housing refers to homes that are practical and flexible, and which meet the needs of people of different ages and abilities over time. A universally designed home generally avoids barriers that may discriminate against people living in or visiting the

home. Universal housing is designed to be useable by most people over their lifetime without the need for major adaptation or specialised design. Universal design includes many of the features specified in the Australian Standard for Adaptable Housing.

## Landcom's position on universal housing

Landcom aims to influence the design of mainstream housing so that a greater proportion of new homes built will be suitable for older people to live in for a longer period of time, in order to create and maintain strong and socially sustainable communities.

Landcom aims to include a proportion of universal housing in each of its projects wherever appropriate and financially viable. Landcom will also showcase universal design in projects by encouraging display homes that meet at least the Key Design requirements as set out in the guidelines.

Universal housing can be achieved with simple modifications of existing designs.



## Structure of the guidelines

The principles of universal housing have been separated into two categories: the Key Design Features that are critical to build in up front, during the house design stage, and other design features that are basic good practice. The guidelines focus on the Key Design Features – the minimum structural and spatial requirements that cannot be changed later without

major expense. The other 'good practice extras' are features that will make a home more flexible and practical to live in, but that can reasonably be fitted or modified later, without major expense. They have been included on a CD-ROM, also downloadable from [www.landcom.com.au/theguidelines](http://www.landcom.com.au/theguidelines)

## Relationship to the Australian Standards

Australian Standards for access and adaptable housing already exist, and indeed many of the local government areas Landcom works in have policies that reference the Standards. Why does Landcom not just require compliance with these?

Landcom's aim, over time, is to see a large scale shift in new housing design so that an increasing proportion will be suitable for older people. They believe the best way to achieve this is by focussing on the critical design features first – those things that cannot be changed

later without major expense. These are addressed in the Australian Standard for Adaptable Housing, but the Standard also includes other features that could be fitted or modified later.

In preparing these guidelines Landcom did not want to develop a 'different' approach that would complicate the existing landscape. So, the Key Design Features and best practice principles are actually derived from the Australian Standard for Adaptable Housing.



Grandparents provide care for 18% of all children aged 0 - 11 years. Universal housing will help them to stay living in their own homes for longer.

## What are the Key Design Features?

The guidelines include design principles and spatial requirements for the following Key Design Features:

1. Direct access
2. Space for car parking
3. Wide front door
4. Wide internal doors
5. Wide corridors
6. Main facilities on the ground level
7. Circulation space in the living room
8. Space in the bedroom
9. Bathroom designed for easy and independent access
10. Enough space in the kitchen
11. Enough space in the laundry
12. Low window sills.

The guidelines include designs for five homes that demonstrate these design features. They include innovative approaches to design for people with limited mobility.



An example of how a long straight corridor may be broken up to improve accessibility.

**Circulation nodes:** this house is planned around three circulation nodes.

**Shorter corridors:** corridors are shortened between circulation nodes.

**Access to rooms:** directly from circulation nodes.

**Circulation in living rooms:** direct connection between circulation nodes and wheelchair spaces.

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