



Calling a Spade a Shovel: Universal, accessible, adaptable, disabled – aren't they all the same?

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Introduction

- Terminology
- Two examples showing
 - Problems for practical application
 - Problems for policy development
- A possible solution



My Proposition:

We have too many
words and not enough
understanding





Where the words come from

- Some terms come from human rights legislation and are stuck there:
 - Accessible and visitable
- Some come from policy shifts:
 - Adaptable, ageing in place, flexhousing
- Some come from a person-centred view:
 - Usable, person-environment fit, universal

Example 1: Housing NSW

- Jobs Stimulus Package – call for tender
- Industry briefings emphasised the need for more universally designed housing
- Inconsistent use of terms in tender document
- Principles of universal design got lost in the detail and the terminology

SCHEDULE 3:

Seniors Living

General Living

Disabled Units

Adaptable Units

Visitable Units

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS:

Disabled (Fully Accessible)

Universal Design Principles

Visitable General Housing

Pensioner Housing

Adaptable Housing

SCHEDULE 8:

Adaptable Dwellings

Disabled Dwellings

Seniors Living SEPP

Visitable Dwellings

Family Housing

General Living

Housing for older people

Aged and disabled dwellings

Dwellings for the disabled

Example 2: research project

- Positioning Paper largely consisting literature review with full report to come
- Government funded, emphasis on ageing and housing policy
- Aim of one portion of funding: determine cost-benefits of adaptable housing and consumer interest in adaptable housing

Dwelling, land and neighbourhood use by older home owners,
Quinn et al, 2009

Accessible

Accessible Design,
Accessible Housing

Visitable

Visitable Design,
Visitable Housing

Universal

Universal Design,
Universal Housing Design

Adaptable

Adaptable Design,
Adaptable Housing,
Visitable

Terms Used

Lifetime Homes

adaptable

adaptable housing

Seniors housing

People aged 55 +

Flexible Housing

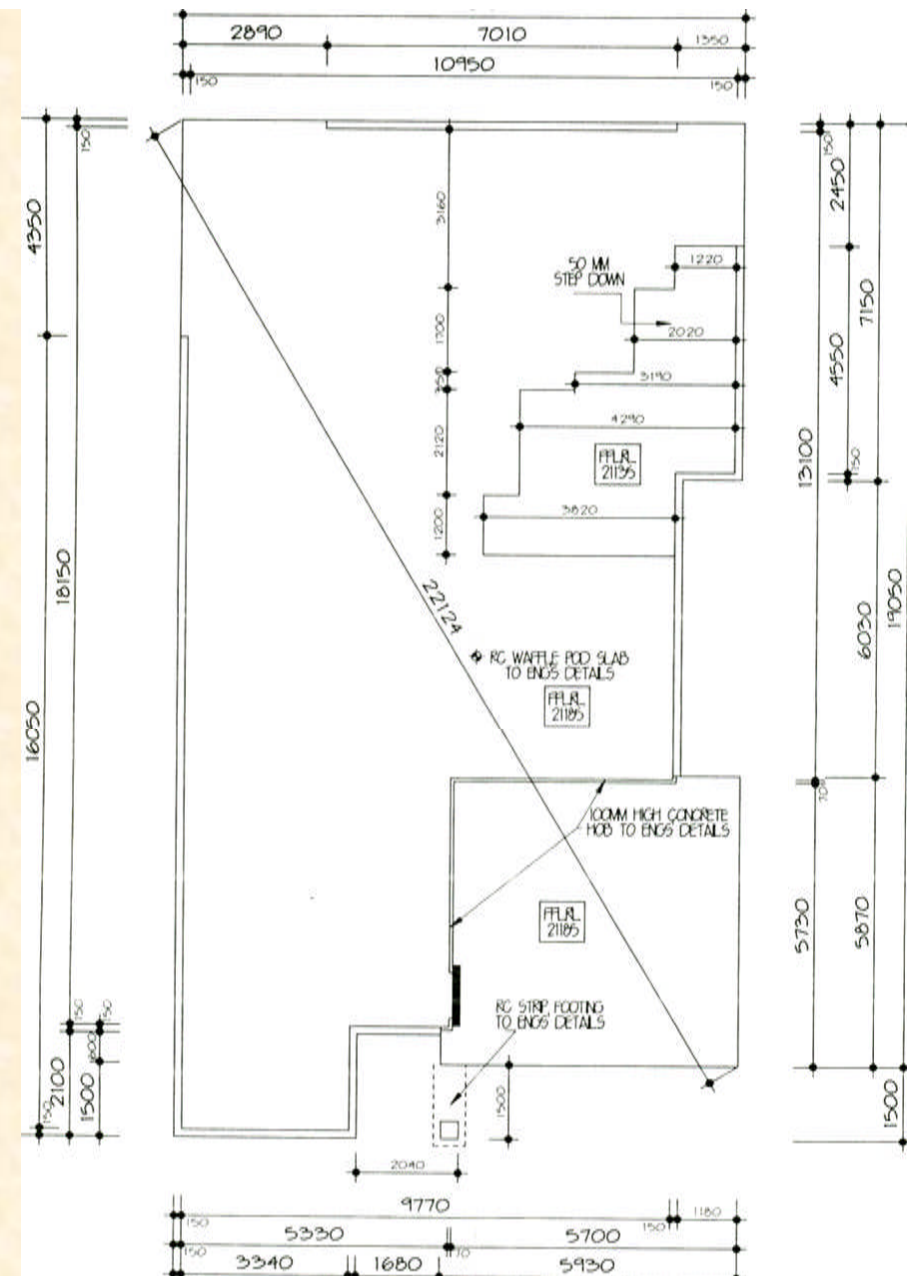
accommodate household changes



Do we need so many 'types' of housing exclusively for 'other' people?

Not if we start acknowledging that ageing, illness and disability are a part of being human, and...

Expect it,
and plan for it
in every home
from this point
forward.



Near enough is not good enough

- We use lots of different terms thinking we are all talking about the same thing, but sometimes we're not.
- This means we get mixed up messages – “Oh, I thought you meant...”
- Lack of clarity in language and terminology causes confusion and inefficiency
- Harder to make progress – policy, practice

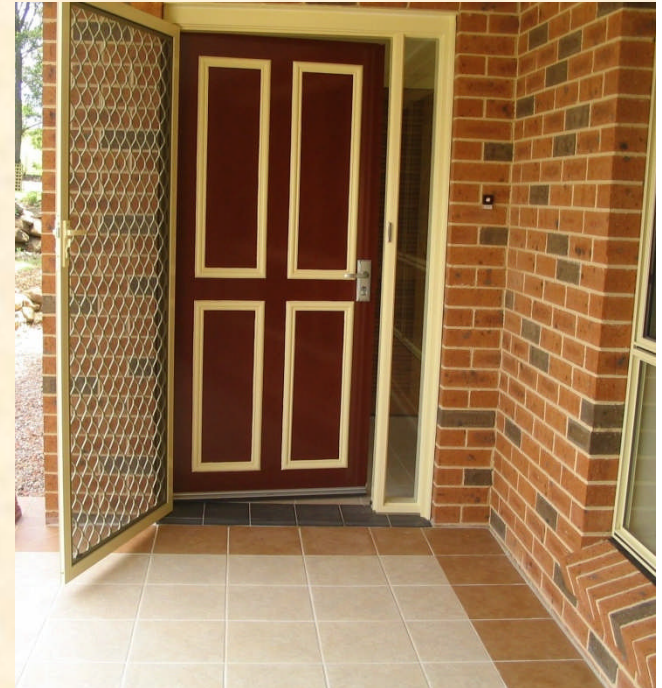
Let's go back to the drawing board

- Many of the design principles have the same objectives
- Agree on common principles with universal application
- Rationalise the language/terms
- Focus on usability for people
- Use Landcom Guidelines as a start?



Structural features for every home

- Level access throughout
- Car parking space
- Wider doors
- Wider corridors
- Main facilities on entry level
- Low window sills
- Circulation space in all rooms



Universal Housing Design
Guidelines, Landcom, 2008

Once we get clarity...

- We will stop focusing on WHO it's for
- Start focusing on WHAT it can do and
- HOW it can be implemented
- Then we can start researching ways to make it work better
- Cost arguments will disappear
- Everyone can capitalise on more functional environments and products!



We expect to get older
but don't plan to get old.

Accidents and illnesses happen –
it's just a matter of when.

Acceptance of the inevitable
changes the underpinning
assumptions of design.

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Some comments from research

“Universal design is virtually unknown in the industry. It is not something that enters our practice... it just hasn't come into any of the proposals we deal with.”

A consultant urban planner

“A lot of people I deal with feel that considering accessibility of a building is onerous and don't see why they should have to. In designing new buildings it doesn't have to cost any more or take any more time to design an accessible building.”

A town planner with a local council

Some comments:


Wheelchair users with a
spouses and children
talking about the
rehabilitation process and
the role of home and family.

“...just the thought
that you can’t even
go back home, it’s a
huge blow ... it’s not
recognised.”

“A room was added by
my dad, but it was just
a copy of a hospital
room, it was really
horrible.”

“going home...it’s
the one part of your
life you want to get
back to normal, and
just can’t do it.”

“...and my dad said, oh,
it’s only one little step. I
said, dad, I’m in a
wheelchair! I couldn’t
believe it – my own dad!”



Spot the deliberate mistakes!

How easy it is to use the grab bar, the toilet paper or the soap?
The bar is also too far from the toilet.
A toilet can meet Australian Standards, but be dysfunctional!

