

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Accessible housing refers to housing that includes features which enable use by people either with a disability or transitioning through their life stages. It responds to the needs of all people, including those with mobility issues, vision or hearing impairments, learning or intellectual disabilities, and mental health issues.

The following terms may be used to discuss accessible housing:

- **Accessible:** means having features to enable use by people with a disability and providing safe, equitable and dignified access to housing, including the services and facilities within that housing.
- **Adaptable:** means having features that may be provided in new housing or readily retrofitted to existing housing, in accordance with one of the three classes of adaptable housing (Classes A, B or C) as defined in AS 4299. Adaptable housing accommodates lifestyle changes without the need to demolish load bearing elements or substantially modify existing services.
- **Livable:** means having features in accordance with one of the three levels of performance, Silver, Gold and Platinum, set out in the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* (LHDG). Livable Housing includes design that allows key living spaces to be readily and cost effectively adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants, including for disability, temporary injury and parenthood.
- **Visitable:** means housing that may be suitable for visiting but not occupation by a person with a disability, with at least one accessible entry, and an accessible path of travel to the living room and to a toilet, as defined in AS 4299.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

National Construction Code

The National Construction Code (NCC) includes access requirements for people with a disability for Class 1 to 10 buildings, however these **do not** apply to Class 1a, the interior of a Class 2 sole-occupancy unit and new Class 10 buildings under certain circumstances. The NCC does not refer to, or require the inclusion or exclusion of, accessible housing in any development.

NCC key accessibility performance requirements:

DP1	Access for people with a disability
DP2	Safe movement to and within a building
DP4	Exits
DP6	Paths of travel to exits
DP7	Evacuation lifts
DP8	Carparking for people with a disability
DP9	Communication systems for people with hearing impairment
EP3.4	Lift access for people with a disability
FP2.1	Personal hygiene facilities
H2	Public transport buildings (Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions)

Planning Instruments

State based planning instruments **may** trigger requirements for accessible housing, the implications of which should be understood early in the development process as there may be significant impacts on planning and detailing.

VOLUNTARY STANDARDS

While the NCC does not prescribe regulatory requirements for accessible housing, planning conditions and/or end user expectations may dictate compliance with voluntary standards. There are two voluntary standards that may be referenced when accessible housing is required for a development.



AS 4299 Adaptable housing

Classification Levels:

- Adaptable Housing must comply with a range of features (such as an accessible entry) listed in Appendix A of the standard.
- A feature is assessed as 'essential', 'first priority desirable' and 'desirable' according to its importance to an occupant with a disability.
- Adaptable Class A - all 119 'essential' and all 'desirable' features (highest level)
- Adaptable Class B - all 'essential', 50% of 'desirable' and all 'first priority desirable' features
- Adaptable Class C - all 'essential' features (most basic level)

Livable Housing

Seven core design elements:

- A safe continuous and step free path of travel from the street entrance and/or parking area to a dwelling entrance that is level.
- At least one, level (step-free) entrance into the dwelling.
- Internal doors and corridors that facilitate comfortable and unimpeded movement between spaces.
- A toilet on the ground (or entry) level that provides easy access.
- A bathroom that contains a hobless shower recess.
- Reinforced walls around the toilet, shower and bath to support the safe installation of grabrails at a later date.
- Stairways designed to reduce the likelihood of injury and also enable future adaptation.

Access requirements in the DDA and NCC

DDA

Section 23 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) includes requirements that public places be accessible for people with a disability. The DDA is supplemented by a series of Disability Standards and Guidelines, including the *Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards*.

Premises Standards

The *Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards* (known as the *Premises Standards*) provides information for designers, developers and builders information on how they meet their responsibilities for equitable access to and within buildings under the Disability Discrimination Act.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

AS 4299 Adaptable housing

AS 4299 provides guidelines for adaptable housing and the details required within a dwelling or sole occupancy unit. Adaptable housing design allows for future modification to satisfy the requirements of the standard, while housing that is accessible has the design features of AS 4299 already in place.

Adaptable housing is designed to a level of classification, prerequisites for which are certain *essential, first priority desirable and desirable features*. A complete list of these features can be found in Appendix A of AS 4299.

Certification of a proportion of housing units within a development as complying with AS 4299 may be required to satisfy state-based planning instruments.

Livable Housing Design Guidelines

The *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* (LHDG) describe 15 design elements which may be incorporated in housing design to better respond to the changing needs and abilities of occupants over their lifetime.

Guidance is provided on what performance must be achieved for either Silver, Gold or Platinum Level certification. Elements 1–7 cover the core elements of the basic Silver Level certification. Elements 8 – 12 cover the additional requirements for Gold, while Elements 8 – 15 cover the additional requirements for Platinum.

Certification of a proportion of housing units within a development as complying with the LHDG may be required to satisfy state-based planning instruments.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING IN THE NCC

Accessible housing project

As the Australian population ages, the number of people who need housing that is easier to access and move around in is expected to grow. In response to this, the Building Ministers' Forum requested the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) undertake a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) to introduce minimum standards for accessible housing through the NCC.

The details of any minimum accessible housing requirements, including any certification obligations, are not known, however are likely to be based on the LHDG. To what extent any change is implemented is the subject of ongoing discussion between the ABCB, government, community and individual stakeholders.

Amendments to the NCC involving accessible housing may be included for the May 2022 update.

ACCESS REQUIREMENTS IN NATSPEC

Standards referenced in NATSPEC

Separate from provisions for accessible housing, the NCC requires compliance with access related standards, through a Deemed to Satisfy (DtS) or performance-based pathway. Access related standards referenced in NATSPEC worksections include:

- AS 1428.1, AS 1428.2 and AS 1428.4 – stairways, ramps, walkways, accessways, handrails, doors/doorways and door hardware, luminance contrast of stair/landing nosings, abutment of surfaces, tactile indicators, sanitary facilities, signage, wheelchair seating.
- AS 1735.12 – lifts.
- AS 2890.6 – parking space dimensions, pavement slopes, headroom, access control, line marking and signage.
- AS 4586 – new pedestrian surfaces and finishes.
- AS 4663 – existing pedestrian surfaces.
- AS 3661.2 – pedestrian surfaces.
- HB 197 – pedestrian surfaces.
- HB 198 – pedestrian surfaces.

NCC

The requirements of the *Premises Standards* are aligned with the access requirements of the NCC and are distinct from provisions for Accessible Housing.

Related standards

Standards not referenced in the NCC are shown in *italics*:

AS 1428 Design for access and mobility

Part 1: General requirements for access - New building work

Part 2: Enhanced and Additional Requirements - Buildings and Facilities

Part 4.1: Means to assist the orientation of people with vision impairment - Tactile ground surface indicators

Part 5: Communication for people who are deaf or hearing impaired

AS 1735 Lifts, escalators and moving walks

Part 12: Facilities for Persons with Disabilities

AS 2890 Parking facilities

Part 1: Off-street car parking

Part 6: Off-street parking for people with disabilities

AS 3661 *Slip resistance of pedestrian surfaces*

Part 2: *Guide to the reduction of slip hazards*

AS 4299 *Adaptable housing*

AS 4586 *Slip resistance classification of new pedestrian surface materials*

AS 4663 *Slip resistance measurement of existing pedestrian surfaces*

HB 197 *An introductory guide to the slip resistance of pedestrian surface materials*

HB 198 *Guide to the specification and testing of slip resistance of pedestrian surfaces*

Other documents

Disability (Access to Premises Buildings) - Standards

www.legislation.gov.au

Livable Housing Design Guidelines

livablehousingaustralia.org.au