



23 July 2021

The Hon. Kevin Anderson MP
NSW Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation

Dear Minister,

Further information required on NSW's strategies to increase supply of accessible housing

We refer to your letter COR-03640-2021 of 15 July 2021 and seek further information on NSW Government's non-mandated approach to increase the supply of housing equivalent to the Livable Housing Design (Silver level)ⁱ.

We note your assurance that the NSW government has improved the supply of accessible housing as part of your commitment to the National Disability Strategyⁱⁱ, that is: "*An aspirational target that all new homes will be of agreed universal design standards by 2020 has been set, with interim targets and earlier completion dates to be determined*" (p. 34).

Most States and Territories have recognised their failure to meet this commitment, and will now implement the mandated standard in the National Construction Code (NCC). The decision was made with the acknowledgement of the costs identified in the Decision RIS, but a regulatory solution will result in significant and lasting benefit to Australians who need accessible homes not only to live in but to visitⁱⁱⁱ.

With this reform, it is expected that **80-90%** of all new dwellings will reliably meet the Silver level or above. New and refurbished residential environments will enable the social inclusion and economic participation of all people regardless of ability.

You do not support this reform and you assure us that the NSW Government has recognised the housing needs of its residents through its housing policies. Yet, consultations with officers from your Department, the Department of Planning Industry and Environment, and the Department of Family and Community Services, suggest that those policies currently result in **less than 10%** of new dwellings being built to Silver level. (Please see **Attachment** for details.)

Your assurance is of particular interest given the challenges facing NSW households, including:

- 34% of NSW households were renting their home (up from 31% in 2015–16)^{iv}.
- There is an over-representation of people with disability in social housing with 41% of households including at least one person with disability^v.
- The supply of social housing has declined from 5% in 2014 to 4.7% in 2020^{vi}.

- Commonwealth rent assistance has risen 25% in the last 6 years. NSW private rental assistance has risen 30% and home purchase assistance has fallen by 70% in the last 6 years^{vii}.
- 27% of people living in regional NSW are over 60 years old, yet most accessible dwellings are built in the Greater Sydney region.^{viii}

To understand how the NSW Government intends to meet its housing policy commitments with regard to accessibility, we would appreciate answers to the following questions:

- How will the NSW Government meet the commitments of the 2010-2020 National Disability Strategy that *all new homes will be of agreed universal design standards* and the Housing 2041: NSW Housing Strategy that *“homes in NSW [will be] accessible and suitable for different stages of life or changing circumstances”*^{ix}?
- Given the poor outcomes to date, what does the NSW Government plan to do differently from what it has done in the past?

We look forward to a prompt reply to anuhd@anuhd.org.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Margaret Ward PSM/ David Brant

Convenors

- cc Members of the Building Ministers Meeting
Government representatives on Australian Building Codes Board
Michael Said, Senior Building Codes Officer, Building Policy, NSW Government

Attachment

Expected supply of dwellings to Silver level in NSW in 2019/2020 (see Table 1 below)

- The total development approvals for dwellings in NSW in 2019-2020 is 48,426^x
- Social and Affordable Housing (SAHF) program is reported to provide 1000 new dwellings in 2019^{xi xii}
- Landcom^{xiii} reports they provided 125 Silver level apartments through their partnerships.
- There is no requirement for private family homes to comply with Silver level. It is expected that less than 5% of new housing to comply with Silver level or above^{xiv}.
- The NSW Apartment Design Guide^{xv} encourages 20% of the total apartments incorporating the Livable Housing Guideline's Silver level universal design features. No independent evaluation of the efficacy of this voluntary strategy is available, so a generous expectation of 50% compliance is used.

Table 1: Percentage of dwellings to Silver Level or above)

Source	Total	Silver level	% to Silver level
Total dwelling approvals for 2019-2020	48,426		
Private apartments	23,758	2,376	
Private houses	24,191	1,210	
Private unspecified	477		
Landcom	2500	125	
Social and Affordable Housing (SAHF) program	1000	1000	
Total		3,522	9.73

ⁱ [Accessible housing | ABCB](#)

ⁱⁱ COAG. 2010–2020 National Disability Strategy: An initiative of the Council of Australian Governments. In. Canberra: Australian Government, 2011. (p. 34)

ⁱⁱⁱ Building Ministers Meeting Communiqué April 2021

^{iv} [Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2017-18 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)

^v People with disability in Australia 2020 (aihw.gov.au)

^{vi} People with disability in Australia 2020 (aihw.gov.au)

^{vii} [Housing-assistance-in-Australia-summary-NSW.pdf.aspx \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

^{viii} [Regional population by age and sex, 2019 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)

^{ix} NSW Government. *Housing 2041: NSW Housing Strategy*. Sydney 2021.

^x Australian Building Codes Board. *Accessible Housing Options Paper Consultation Report*. Canberra, 2019

^{xi} [Land and Housing Corporation Dwelling Requirements \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

^{xii} Department of Communities and Justice Annual Report 2019–20 | VOLUME 1 – PART 2 – OUR PERFORMANCE (p. 33)

^{xiii} Landcom Annual Report 2019-20. <https://annualreport2020.landcom.com.au/assets/4d39491d5b/Landcom-Annual-Report-2020.pdf> . p. 22

^{xiv} Australian Building Codes Board. *Accessible Housing Options Paper Consultation Report*. Canberra, 2019.

^{xv} <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Guidelines/apartment-design-guide-part-4-designing-the-building-2015-07.pdf?la=en>