

Dispelling the myths about cost and difficulty in applying universal design features to new homes

Myth	Response
You can't do level entry to the home on steep sites or on small lots.	Steep sites are exempted from dwelling access requirements. Or you can make the entry via the garage.
You can't do Livable Housing features in a studio apartment.	It's often easier in studio because they only have 2 doors and no corridors.
These bigger bathrooms really add to the cost.	No big bathroom required because it can be achieved in less than 4sqm. See Livable Housing Handbook.
You can't do it on narrow lots.	Narrow properties use space smartly with minimal corridors relying on shared circulation and open plan spaces.
Grab rails make the place look ugly.	Grab rails are not required. They can be added later if ever they are needed.
People just want a regular-looking home.	The design tweaks are not noticeable other than a level entry.
People don't want a disability bathroom.	They won't get one. The Standard asks for a small extra space in front of the toilet pan.
Some people want a traditional closet WC.	They can have one. Only one toilet pan on the ground or entry level needs to have some extra space in front of it.
People don't want a front yard full of ramps.	They won't have one. Access is from the street, parking space or garage.
The extra accessible parking places will add enormous cost to apartments.	There are no changes to parking requirements. Only the internal fit-out applies to apartments.
Door manufacturers will have to re-tool to make new products.	The door sizes are standard already.
Only a few people need these changes.	These provisions are for improving amenity and liveability for everyone. It's about future-proofing a consumer's biggest asset.
It's going to be expensive.	The main cost will be some timber noggins for wall reinforcement in the bathroom.
There's a cost of living crisis.	That's why it's even more important to build homes that protect families from future-shock - the cost of adaptation if life circumstances change. It makes them more sustainable.
I've built this kind of home before, and I know it costs a lot more.	This is not Specialist Disability Accommodation or housing to the Adaptable Housing Standard. These do cost more. The Livable Housing Standard normalises these common design features. That's why they are called universal design features. And there is little, if any, extra cost.

<p>It's bound to cost more because this is all new and we have to learn how to do it.</p>	<p>These features have been applied in seniors living since 2004 and specialist disability homes. Community housing associations apply these features. There is nothing new or onerous.</p>
<p>It's not a good time for the industry to do this.</p>	<p>It is never a good time for industry. Meanwhile it is a very good time for people wanting to move into a home with no steps.</p>