

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 designed to allow key living spaces to be readily and cost effectively adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants, including for disability, temporary injury and parenthood. Livable housing can refer to one of three levels of performance, (Silver, Gold and Platinum), as set out in the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* (LHDG).
- **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, with exceptions for some building classes under certain circumstances.

The NCC sets out livable housing design requirements for Class 1a buildings, under BCA H8, and Class 2 sole-occupancy units, under BCA G7. Both parts refer to the ABCB Livable Housing Design Standard, which has been adapted from the Silver level performance requirements of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines. Note the ABCB Livable Housing Design Standard has not yet been adopted by all states and territories. Refer to the relevant state and local government authority requirements for the project site.

Key accessibility performance requirements in the NCC include:

D1P1	Access for people with a disability
D1P2	Safe movement to and within a building
D1P4	Exits
D1P6	Paths of travel to exits
D1P7	Evacuation lifts
D1P8	Carparking for people with a disability
D1P9	Communication systems for people with hearing impairment
E3P4	Lift access for people with a disability
F4P1	Personal hygiene facilities
G7P1 & H8P1	Livable housing design

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.



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/NZS 2890 Parking facilities

Part 1: Off-street car parking

Part 6: Off-street parking for people with disabilities

AS/NZS 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

Livable Housing Design Standard

ncc.abcb.gov.au/resource/standard/livable-housing-design

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

VOLUNTARY STANDARDS

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

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 that 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 to 7 cover the core elements of the Silver Level certification. Elements 8 to 12 cover the additional requirements for Gold, while Elements 13 to 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.

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/NZS 1428.4.1 – 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/NZS 3661.2 – pedestrian surfaces.
- AS 4586 – new pedestrian surfaces and finishes.
- AS 4663 – existing pedestrian surfaces.
- HB 197 – pedestrian surfaces.
- HB 198 – pedestrian surfaces.

Access requirements in the DDA and NCC

DDA

Section 23 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires 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.

NCC

The access requirements of the NCC are aligned with the requirements of the *Premises Standards*. The requirements in the ABCB Livable Housing Design Standard are also generally aligned with the Silver level performance requirements from the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines*.

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 Design Guidelines

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.