
Home Modifications-Standards Simplified

Housing should cater to everyone—regardless of age and ability

A person's home needs to be safe, easily accessed and easy to live in. Sometimes this requires the home to be modified.

Legislative Requirements

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) regulates how we build buildings and housing and stipulates the use of Standards.

Buildings are given a classification under the Code. The applicable classifications are:

- Class 1a- private residential dwelling
- Class 2- A building containing multi residential units

Please note within residential facilities common areas **only** are required to comply to AS1428-2009.

Compliance with AS1428.1-2009 is devised for application to **public premises** so that the persons with a disability “could achieve independent access to buildings available for public use” (as in AS1428.1 Supp1-1993). This Standard attempts to accommodate ‘average’ requirements for people with a disability, specifically those within the age group of 18 to 60 years, the group tested for the dimensions set out in the standard.

Common Misconception

The Australian Standard 1428.1-2009 is often misappropriated for use when prescribing home modifications.

The accessibility requirement for the design and construction of private residential dwellings (Class 1a and Class 2 developments) lays outside the regulatory controls of the DDA (Access to Premises – Building) Standards, the Building Code of Australia and therefore AS1428.1-2009 *General requirements for access – new building work*.

The intent of AS1428.1-2009 is to provide design requirements for people with disabilities within buildings of a public nature. It is not intended for use within private homes, and is not a legislative requirement.

AS1428.1-2009 is also not appropriate for residential design within private dwellings as each individual's requirements will differ from this average, however it does provide a useful benchmark from which to commence planning and designing spatial requirements for access and the positioning of fixtures.

Providing an individual solution exceeds the requirements of AS 1428.1-2009, as the standard is based on averages. Providing an individual solution well, requires a person centred approach with the client and the prescriber/designer having a clear understanding of the abilities and needs of the individual and their family.

Standards for home modifications

The Adaptable Housing Code, AS 4299 provides a good reference for adaptable housing concepts. The document relates to residential, rather than public buildings and provides a guide on the planning and design of flexible and adaptable residential accommodation to suit the needs of the individual. The document draws on the material contained in AS 1428.1 and AS 1428.2 which relates to enhanced and additional requirements outlining the positioning of fixtures.

More recently, the Livable Housing Design Guidelines developed by Livable Housing Australia provides a guideline to designing features that are more versatile and better equipped to meet the changing needs of occupants over their lifetimes. The Livable Housing Design Guidelines aims to ensure dwellings are –

1. Easier to enter;
2. Safer to move in and around;
3. More capable of easy and cost-effective adaptation; and
4. Designed to better anticipate and respond to the changing needs and abilities of the people who live in the home.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technologies should be incorporated into any home modification to enhance the useability of the home, specific to the needs of the individual. Assistive technology can provide a simple solution in assisting people to perform daily tasks, achieve independence and improve their quality of life.

Including everyone

When prescribing modifications that are specifically planned for an individual, it is important to liaise with the users of the house to accommodate their needs and those that live with them. It is not always possible to find a design that will suit the needs of everyone in the household and designing a home that is accessible to most people will require some compromises. However, some general principles can be applied to a range of situations and abilities.

Remember that each person will have different needs and that those needs can change over time. Focus on fixtures designed for a range of people and abilities that can be easily removed if required. Providing flexible and adaptive fixtures will ensure the widest range of users will be able to use all parts of the house.

For more information, please contact

Independent Living Centre NSW

Shop 4019, Level 4, Westpoint Shopping Centre, 17 Patrick Street, Blacktown NSW 2148

Infoline: 1300 452 679

Email: help@ilcnsw.asn.au

Web: www.ilcnsw.asn.au



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