



Design Criteria for Accessible Living

Lifestyle changes are influencing changing needs for housing and it pays to examine accessible living as a high priority. The facts are people live longer and tend to be domiciled in their own or rented accommodation as it is difficult for placements in nursing homes or aged hostels.

Also in other periods of a lifetime, temporary conditions may be created where there are limitations with mobility such as pregnancy or people may suffer an accident and have restricted mobility.

These guidelines identify design criteria that should be considered to make any dwelling or unit more marketable for sale recognising that increased accessibility is afforded within the design. Some of the features considered desirable include:

Security

- Good visual security is important to the aged. Other security measures include screen doors, security entrances with intercoms, locks on windows, good lighting on pathways and in common areas.
- No bushes near pathways or windows/doorways which can provide a convenient hiding place for break ins.
- Motion activated illumination to external pathways and doorways. Preferably low glare (50 lux) and low level lighting.

Access

- Driveway grades to carports and property crossings which are reasonably flat and does not obscure vision when reversing.
- Driveways that have no "blind spots" with fencing and shrubs.
- Easy access to ramps instead of stairs/steps, level and wide paths, provision of hand rails at key change of height or direction points.

- Landings outside any external doors, particularly if a fly screen door is also attached. It is easy for the elderly to fall if carrying shopping or laundry if areas are stepped down.
- A shelf adjacent to the external door assists with entry for disabled persons to any house or unit.
- Ramp grades to footpaths to be 1:14, and where the grade of an internal garage involves wheelchair loading the floor should not exceed 1:40 slope.
- Where a hallway is narrow, increased door width should be provided.

Car Parking

- Car parking that is wide enough to fully open a car door, convenient to the residents and at the same level.
- Car parking that is on site in a secured area without leaving cars on the street.
- Roller doors activated by switches in the car or boom gates to common parking areas.
- Wide doorways, landings and ramps for easy manoeuvrability of wheelchairs, walkers and electric carts.
- A communal car park catering for a disabled person is required to be 3.2m x 6m in size and marked as a disabled car space.
- The width of a garage should be increased by a further metre if wheelchair access to the car is necessary for roof loading of the chair. A higher ceiling is also required in the carport/garage for clearance to the lifting device.

Orientation

- The retired community have time on their hands and orientation of the building to allow for privacy and use of sunny spots is much sought after.
- Minimal noise - this includes locations away from busy streets and roads. It also includes minimising the effect of noise between units. Different people have different living patterns and so they can affect neighbours simply by being active at different times. Separation of units using brick dividing courtyard walls can help here.
- The location of the development should consider outlooks and potential impact to a resident. A person who has retired or has a disability will be more domiciled within a house or unit. Any window orientation should consider the impact of adjoining development appearance to that resident. In such a situation it is likely that complaints may arise which could jeopardise the conduct of any industry nearby.

Design

- The space requirements for retired people often have interests in hobbies involving gardening for vegetables, keeping of poultry, or a garage work activity with electrical power points and high intensity lighting.

- Convenience and proximity to facilities such as shops, transport, community and recreational facilities.
- Adequately sized rooms for accessibility.
- Smaller units with one or two bedrooms for those who need less space to look after.
- Storage space including adequate linen and cupboard space.
- Telephone points in the bedroom is a need, particularly for the elderly.
- Door bell installations that are highly audible to the bedrooms or back yard.
- Larger telephone keyboard installations for the elderly or disabled.
- The ratio of development units for accessible living under the Australian Standard is for one accessible living design units per five units (1:5) and then subsequently for each additional ten units a further accessible designed unit (1:10). Car parking needs should reflect those ratios in any communal car parking arrangements.
- Kitchen width of 2.7m and space between benches of 1.45m. Benches 800mm wide and taps within 300mm of the front of the sink.
- Where a wheelchair work space is required, the bench top should be at least above the 750mm to 850mm wheelchair knee clearance height.
- Cooktop with front or side controls.
- Refrigerator power point that can be operated after the fridge is installed.
- Thermostatic mixing valves in the bathroom.
- Clothes dryer down low.
- Lower and large power switches and bench tops that can be raised or lowered.
- Wall frames reinforced at handrail level to allow for easy installation of handrails.

Bathrooms & Toilets

- Easily accessible toilet door locks or doors with easily removable hinges to provide access to a collapsed person in the event of a trauma, or
- A distance of 1.2m from the toilet bowl to any toilet door to enable access to a collapsed person within the toilet.
- Large shower recesses and no steps, safety glazing in shower recess enclosures (laminated glass).
- Non slip surfaces.
- Lever type door handles and capstan tap hardware.
- Tempering of hot water service unit temperatures to not exceed 50° Celsius or thermostatic mixing valves.
- Threshold steps should not exceed 5mm.
- Shower enclosure should be 1100mm x 1100mm.
- Toilet grab rails are between 800mm to 810mm above the floor.
- A minimum of 900m width should be provided beside the toilet to allow transfer from a wheelchair.

- The height of the top of the toilet seat should be between 460mm and 480mm.
- The offset of the toilet bowl from the wall shall allow for the toilet seat being capable of remaining in an upright position.
- Hand basins should have a knee clearance space underneath of at least 900mm from the floor.
- The portable shower head should be accessible between 900mm and 1100mm above the floor with taps preferably located accessible from a person that is sitting down.
- Power points and light switches should be at a height for persons in wheelchairs (900-1100mm).
- An 1100mm circulation space is required for a person in a wheelchair to any other fixtures such as the door, hand basin or shower.

Council has diagrams indicating driveway grades which would achieve visual surveillance for a disabled person reversing or entering a driveway/garage.

Consumer Marketing

If the development is being marketed as a retirement centre for persons over 55 years, or for disabled people, there are development standards in State Environment Planning Policy - "Seniors Living 2004", and with the Department of Fair Trading. Your designer or solicitor needs to check these out.

Contact us

Belmore Street, Junee 2663
PO Box 93, Junee 2663
Phone: (02) 6924 1277
Fax: (02) 6924 2497