



**Building Better Homes**  
A National Building Code for **All Australians**

# Review of Australia's Disability Strategy

Submission from Building Better Homes

6 September 2024



Building Better Homes campaign includes 70+ disability, seniors, housing, health & allied health organisations.

## Submission supporters

*This submission is supported by the following organisations*





The Building Better Homes Campaign welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS). Our submission focuses on improving housing and living support for people with disability.

We support the outcome area 'Inclusive homes and communities' as housing needs specific, enforceable strategies in order to change outcomes.

The most effective vehicle for achieving accessible housing is through all jurisdictions signing up to the mandatory standards in the 2022 National Construction Code (NCC). This was recommended by both the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) and the NDIS Review. To date, NSW and WA have not signed up to implement the Livable Housing Design Standards in the NCC.

## **Accessible housing**

Housing with livable and accessible design is crucial for meeting the needs of all Australians with mobility impairments, including people with disability and older people. Most people with disability in Australia will not be eligible for NDIS Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) and will need to find suitable housing in the community.

As outlined in new research conducted by the Summer Foundation, the shortage of accessible housing has long been documented<sup>[1]</sup>. The Building Better Homes Campaign focuses on the nation-wide implementation of the NCC because of the evidence that voluntary building standards do not achieve meaningful outcomes.<sup>[2]</sup>

From experience, we know the housing industry will not adopt accessibility standards unless they are regulated and mandated. Urgent and effective action - not aspirational guidelines - is vital, particularly in light of the Commonwealth and states and territories' agreement to build 1.2 million new well located homes over 5 years from mid 2024. These new houses must be future-proofed to meet the needs of an ageing population, as well as people with disability. Therefore, they must meet minimum accessible standards.

This could be achieved through the use of a Targeted Action Plan (TAP) that has measurable and enforceable targets and is monitored and evaluated throughout the life of the ADS.

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[1] Winkler, D., Liddicoat, S., D'Cruz, K., Wellecke, C., Mulherin, P., & Douglas, J. (2024). Supporting the design and construction sector to transition to minimum accessible standards in new homes: A qualitative study. Summer Foundation. <https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/resources/supporting-the-design-and-construction-sector-to-transition-to-minimum-accessible-standards-in-new-homes-a-qualitative-study/>

[2] Australian Network for Universal Housing Design (2015). Report on the progress of the national dialogue on universal housing design 2010-2014. <https://aduhdblog.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/anuhd-report-on-progress-of-lhd-jan15.accessible.pdf>

## Recommendations

1. ***Outcome Area: Inclusive homes and communities:*** The ADS should include an action in the new housing Targeted Action Plan for all states and territories to implement the NCC Livable Housing Design Standards immediately.
2. ***Draft Finding 4: ADS reporting does not support government accountability, implementation compliance, or recognise intersectional experiences of people with disability:*** The ADS should support clear accountability on the 'Inclusive homes and communities outcome area' by requiring all states and territories to report regularly on the implementation of the accessibility standards in the NCC, including the enforcement and application of the standards and any exceptions or exclusions. States and territories should also report regularly on increases in accessible housing stock in their jurisdictions.