



Lost opportunity to boost accessible housing in SA?

Most houses and apartments in South Australia do not have basic accessibility features and there are currently no requirements in place for new builds. **This severely reduces the availability of housing options for people living with disability** in our state.

The updated **National Construction Code (NCC) 2022** proposes to begin to address this problem through the introduction of some low-level mandatory standards for accessibility in new residential construction projects based on the Livable Housing Design Guidelines (LHDG) silver standards. Adhering to higher standards would remain voluntary.

The NCC is updated every three years in a process led by the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB), which involves extensive research and wide consultation. The updated NCC will apply from next year, but, so far, **the South Australian government has declined to implement the changes**. Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, the ACT, and Northern Territory have all indicated they will do so. The South Australian government should urgently reconsider its position, or meet with disability community leaders to talk through their reasoning; it's the least the disability community deserves, because this decision does them no favours whatsoever, and by its nature undermines the intent of the state's disability inclusion legislation.

The low-level mandatory standards aim to make residential properties easier to enter, navigate in and around, and adapt to individual needs. Although they are likely to result in some cost impacts on new construction, these will be relatively minor in the context of overall construction budgets, and can be expected to reduce over the longer term. Yet, implementing low-level accessibility standards now will benefit the whole community well into the future by **increasing the housing options available to those with less mobility including our aging population** while ensuring the state adheres to the intent of its legislation on access and inclusion, as well as Australia's national and international commitments.

In the lead up to the 2022 South Australian election, JFA Purple Orange is calling on all parties and candidates **to commit to implementing the new mandatory standards for new builds within a broader long-term funded plan to address the current housing crisis in our state**. JFA Purple Orange will then release an update summarising the party responses to this call.

The existing pressures within the housing market are particularly impacting the rental market and **exacerbating the difficulties for South Australians living with disability in finding suitable housing**. The government's recent commitment to new beds for the Transition to Home program for people

JFA Purple Orange is an independent social-profit organisation that undertakes systemic policy analysis and advocacy across a range of issues affecting people living with disability and their families.

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living with disability who cannot otherwise be discharged from hospital because they don't have suitable housing, demonstrates how **the lack of accessible housing in South Australia impacts on other vital services.**

A long-term housing plan should have the twin objectives of **increasing the availability of accessible dwellings in the private market through the implementation of the new mandatory standards**, and **investing significantly in new accessible affordable social housing** to address the current shortfall. Meeting these objectives would ensure that South Australians living with disability have far greater opportunities to find a suitable home, while also strengthening the housing sector more broadly as South Australians age.

A proper home is a key foundation to improving life chances for people living with disability, central to claiming their rightful place as valued and active members of community life.

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