

23 March 2021

Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam
Assistant Minister for industry
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email.

Dear Minister,

Support for mandatory accessibility standards to be included in the National Construction Code.

Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Australian Building Codes Board.

I am writing to urge you to support the inclusion of mandatory minimum accessibility standards in the National Construction Code, when Building Ministers meet on 30 April.

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) is a disability representative organisation, advocating on behalf of people with spinal and neurological conditions nationwide. We work to ensure that people with disability do not face barriers in exercising their independence and realising their human rights.

We have over 2500 members living across Australia, including people living with spinal and neurological conditions, their family and carers. The majority of our Board and over 25% of our staff live with a disability. This decision is one that will directly affect the lives of most of our members and many of our staff and Board members.

Beyond our own membership, this decision will affect millions of Australians including people with other disabilities, older Australians, families and people recovering from illness or injury.

Right now, nearly three-quarters of Australians with mobility impairment are unable to find housing that meets their needs.

Opportunities for reform of this nature are rare. We encourage you not to let this opportunity pass us by.

SCIA is proud to be a member of the Building Better Homes Campaign. The Campaign is a coalition of more than 60 seniors, disability, housing, health and allied health organisations who support the inclusion of mandatory accessibility standards. I can assure you that a positive decision in April will be met with a great deal of support and acclaim across the community.

The benefits of mandatory accessibility standards are clear. These include more opportunity for people with disability to live independent, productive lives, more choice for older Australians to age at home, improved support for people with chronic illness or injury and innovative service delivery such as Hospital in the Home.

Moreover, mandatory accessibility standards will have clear financial benefits for Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, with significant savings expected across the aged care sector, the health and hospitals sector and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Perhaps most significantly, the inclusion of mandatory standards in the Code will enable a range of other Commonwealth reforms to successfully roll out. This includes the NDIS, but also the reforms endorsed by the Aged Care Royal Commission, which recommended:

“[A]s a matter of priority, [that] governments should work together to increase accessible housing, including private rental housing and social and affordable housing, for the ageing population”

More than ten years after the voluntary Livable Housing Design Guidelines were adopted in 2008, it is estimated that only around 5% of new home builds meet these voluntary guidelines.

It is clear that only mandatory standards will meet the growing demand for accessible housing - demand that is only going to increase as our population ages.

Independent economic analysis undertaken by the Melbourne Disability Institute at the University of Melbourne found that the benefits clearly outweigh the costs of implementing a mandatory accessibility standard.

We therefore urge you to support mandatory accessibility standards in the National Construction Code, for the benefit of ALL Australians.

We look forward to your support on this issue, and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,



Megan Bingham

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