

## Notes on Disability Access for RI Australia presentation

### ABCB who and how

- IGA Objectives
- COAG De-regulation agenda
- Industry Innovation and Competitiveness agenda
- Governance of policy and regulatory settings

### Premises Standards review

- The Premises Standards contain a provision requiring that they be reviewed every 5 years, with the first review to be commenced by 1 May 2015 and be completed by 1 May 2016.
- The Commonwealth Industry Minister, in consultation with the Commonwealth Attorney-General, has responsibility for the review. The Commonwealth Department of Industry will be the lead agency in undertaking the review.
- The form and methodology for the review has not been announced at this stage but it is likely that there will be a call for submissions to identify issues to be considered in the review.

- It is likely that the ABCB will be requested by the Commonwealth to provide assistance in the review of matters related to the National Construction Code.

### **Wheelchair spatial dimension research**

- The Access All Areas report produced by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, produced following its inquiry into the proposed Premises Standards, recommended that research be undertaken on wheelchair sizes and dimensions of building features necessary to accommodate them.
- This recommendation originated from submissions to the inquiry that questioned the appropriateness of continuing to rely on data that was collected in the 1980s.
- The recommendation was accepted by the Australian Government and the ABCB was tasked with commissioning the research.
- The research includes a literature review to identify relevant work in this field both in Australia and overseas, measurement of occupied manual and powered wheelchairs for a range of parameters, and conducting of manoeuvring trials with subjects.
- The report is expected to be completed in February 2015 and feed into the Premises Standards Review.

## Accessible/adaptable housing

- Private housing is not covered by the Premises Standards because it is beyond the scope of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- As you are aware, Livable Housing Australia, a not-for-profit partnership between community and consumer groups, government and the residential building industry, was launched in September 2012 as an outcome of the National Dialogue on Universal Design. LHA developed guidelines for seven core liveable housing design elements with a focus on the key structural and spatial elements to ensure future flexibility and adaptability of the home.
- Although the LHA guidelines are voluntary, industry groups including the Property Council, Master Builders Australia and the Housing Industry Association have supported them and committed to the 2020 target.
- The Board's position on accessible/adaptable housing is to acknowledge the existence of the LHA guidelines and industry's support of the 2020 target as an appropriate mechanism for increasing the availability of private housing to meet the needs of people with disability. This is in the context of its IGA and policy position of governments.
- We all aspire to an inclusive society, but this does not always mean regulating for outcomes is the most appropriate mechanism.

- The issue of 'universal' housing is a matter of policy for governments to consider in the first instance. The ABCB has not been directed by COAG or the Building Ministers' Forum to undertake work in this area, which would need to involve a significant commitment of resources.
- The ABCB does not have a role in monitoring or commentating on the National Dialogue targets, however, the views that have been expressed about the likelihood of meeting the targets has been raised with the Board.
- If regulating for the provision of universal, accessible or adaptable housing was to be a consideration by governments, it would need to be subject to the necessary regulatory impact assessment processes to demonstrate that any regulation is proportional to the 'problem' and will generate benefits to society greater than the costs.
- As a result of the above, the Building Codes Committee and the ABCB Office do not support a Proposal for Change (ie widths of some doorways) that seeks to make change to have the NCC introduce model regulation for one aspect of accessible/adaptable housing.
- None of what is described here prevents someone wanting to build a new house, or indeed alter an existing house, from voluntarily designing in accessible/adaptable features.

## Emergency egress for all occupants

- The Egress for All Occupants project has been on the ABCB's work program since 2011.
- During the development of the Premises Standards, it was identified that although there were practical solutions available to assist in providing independent and equitable access to buildings for occupants with disability, there were no readily available solutions for egress in the event of an emergency.
- As is the case in most countries, current BCA provisions for emergency egress are reliant on the occupants responding to an emergency by recognising warning cues and using appropriate pathways, such as fire-isolated ramps or fire-isolated stairways, to evacuate. However, in the absence of accessible evacuation pathways and warning systems, evacuation of occupants with disability is generally left to administrative evacuation management procedures which are enacted separately from the BCA.
- To seek opinions on a range of proposals and gauge support for their implementation, the ABCB convened an Emergency Egress Forum in April 2011 with representatives from government, industry and the disability sector. Attendees agreed to a range of proposals and an incremental approach being the most appropriate.
- In considering research into egress solutions including the use of lifts, the ABCB recognised while there had been some developments internationally, it appeared there was a reluctance to mandate the use of lifts for egress. As awaiting developments

was not considered a sustainable approach, in 2011 the ABCB endorsed a strategy which included:

- the development of a non-regulatory Handbook for lifts used during evacuation.
  - D-t-S Provisions being considered incrementally, with minor amendments being included and more substantive proposals subject of additional impact assessment.
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- This strategy was progressed in 2013 through the release of the ABCB Directions Report on “Egress for All Occupants” and publication of the ABCB non-mandatory handbook “Lifts Used During Evacuation”. Four minor amendments to improve the accessibility of egress paths were also considered and were included in the 2013 BCA. These amendments covered:
    - AS 1428.1 compliant handrails in exits
    - AS 1428.1 compliant door furniture on egress doors
    - Braille and tactile signs on doors provided with exit signs
    - Changes to Performance Requirements to facilitate the use of lifts for evacuation in addition to required exits.
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- A Consultation Regulation Impact Statement for the more substantive proposals was released for comment in September 2014. The comment period closed on 31 October and we are currently analysing the submissions made.
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- The proposals covered by the RIS are:
    - Visual and tactile emergency alarms
    - Co-location of fire-isolated exits with lifts
    - Accessible egress paths to and from an exit, and
    - Accessibility of fire-isolated exits