

**Open Letter to Minister Cook, Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade;
Tourism; Commerce; Science**
24 August 2022

Dear Minister,

RE: LIFTING ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR NEW HOMES IN THE NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION CODE (NCC) UPDATE 2022

In Western Australia, one in five people live with a disability and our ageing population is continuing to grow. Despite this, we continue to accept that a significant proportion of our population must either reside in homes that they cannot easily enter, move around in, or be forced to move into alternative accommodation.

This is increasingly complicated by the shortage of affordable housing options available and by the high cost of retrofitted modifications.

Making homes more accessible will benefit all Western Australian households. The changes will be of significant benefit to the aged and people, and carers of those, with a disability. The changes will enable people to stay in their homes throughout their life course, allowing people to age in place, host visitors with a disability and provide easier access for parents.

We know that the cost and inconvenience of retrofitting homes is more costly than incorporating the standards at the time of initial build and often does not produce the best outcomes for residents. Delaying the standards merely translates to expensive modifications later.

We acknowledge the concerns around the challenges facing the current housing construction market, including labour and supply shortages and inflationary impacts. However, these changes have been anticipated for several years and the majority of the states are proceeding with the changes despite market conditions. We believe that Western Australians should have the same right to accessible housing as those living in other jurisdictions. National consistency of standards is also critical for industry certainty and attracting investment.

This week, you have a chance to make a difference to the lives of people with disability and we urge you as Minister to support the adoption of the Liveable Housing Design Guideline (silver standard) for new homes at the Building Ministers Meeting on the 26 August 2022.

We call on you to adopt the updated accessibility requirements for residential buildings in the NCC 2022 update and to commit to a 12-month transition period to ensure time for industry training and education.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you in more detail and look forward to your response.

Signed,

Michelle Mackenzie
CEO,
Shelter WA



Brendan Cullinan
CEO, People with Disabilities WA



Louise Giolitto
CEO, WA Council of Social Service



Sandy Anghie RAlA
State President,
WA Australian Institute of
Architects



Michelle Blakeley
Chair, My Home



Christine Allen
CEO, Council on the Ageing WA



Coralie Flatters
WA State Manager,
National Disability Services



Tim Naughtin
Campaign Director



Paul Coates
CEO, Carers WA



Gaëlle Guilloù
CEO – Midlas



Leanne Pearman and Su-Hsien Lee
Co-CEOs, WA Individualised Services



Joanne Ende
CEO, Explorability Inc.



Jane Chilcott
CEO, Linkwest



Jocelyn Young
Interim CEO, Connect Groups



Tina Williams
CEO, Volunteering WA



Eloise May
Team Leader/ Senior
Coordinator



John Bouffler
Executive Director, Community
Employers WA



Mary Butterworth
CEO, Developmental Disability WA



CC: Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Disability Services