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Adaptable housing - Can we meet the challenge for older Australians?

Adaptable Housing

Can we meet the challenges of providing accessible apartments for older or less mobile Australians?

Many types of design controls for residential flat buildings require the provision of adaptable dwellings to enable “people to continue living in the same home by ensuring that apartments are able to change with the needs of the occupants” . Adaptable dwellings are defined by a number of documents including Australian Standard 4299-1995 - Adaptable Housing, Livable Housing Design Guidelines and a number of Development Control Plans such as that of the City of Sydney . Whilst adaptable dwellings are required/recommended to be up to 20% of all dwellings in residential flat buildings, how effective is the provision of those apartments to those who might need them? Are we in danger of making provisions that can never meet the needs of the mobility impaired? How can we remake strata title rules to improve the chances of adaptable housing reaching its target market?

This paper sets out a case for a radical rethinking of the provisions, in order to make adaptable dwellings more likely to be accessed by those who need them. We also explore the range of requirements which are numerically inconsistent. The “standards” need to be co-ordinated and updated in order to remove the confusing dimensional differences applying to adaptable dwellings. This presentation is relevant to all states as the applicable standards are nationwide.