

Improving Access in your Home

2012 Access Fact Sheet 1

At some point in our lives, all of us will benefit from our homes being accessible and adaptable. Here are some ideas, resources and where to get further information.

Car parking

Undercover car parking that is both wide and high enough to provide appropriate weather protection to the home entry point is important for car users.

- If a carport is provided, its posts should not obstruct the opening of the car doors. If a garage is provided, consider having a remote controlled door.
- If you have an electric scooter or wheelchair consider a secure storage area, with battery recharging facilities.

Pathways

- Provide wide, slip-resistant pathways to the main entrance from the site entry and any on site parking.
- Ensure turning spaces are available for a person using a mobility aid.
- Ensure all pathways are well lit to support access and safety after dark.

Entrances

- A wide, step free entrance with a level threshold is important to ensure ease of access for all users.

- Appropriate weather protection, circulation space and automatic sensor lighting should also be considered at both front and rear entrances.
- A shelf or seat near the entrance is also useful to place items on if necessary.
- Automatic self opening doors can be considered.
- Clear, large, easy to see street numbers will assist visitors to locate your home.

Doorways, hallways and rooms

- Consider wide doorways and hallways suitable for a person using a wheelchair, pram or any type of mobility aid.
- Adequate turning spaces should be available at either end of a hallway.
- Lightweight doors that are easy to open are also important.
- Ensure there is sufficient room to move around easily and safely within all rooms.
- Provide appropriate accessible height storage where required. Consider removal of internal walls to create open plan layouts.

Improving Access in your Home

Bathrooms and toilets

Bathroom and toilet areas should be designed to cater for people with a range of abilities. This will make it easier to adapt to the changing needs of all users, including home occupants and visitors.

Large circulation spaces are crucial as well as the location, types and colour contrasts of fixtures and fittings. Key elements to consider include:

- Reinforced walls to support the installation of grabrails in toilets, showers and baths
- recessed soap holders in showers
- hand-held height adjustable showerheads on a flexible hose
- step free shower base with wide door opening or weighted curtain to limit water spillage
- shower seat with legs and grabrail on one side
- lever mixer taps with temperature control
- non slip floor surfaces

Lighting/ light switches/ door handles

Good vision often reduces as we age. Natural light is a preferred option so think about moving furniture nearer to windows to assist with day to day tasks like reading and writing. In addition, consider the following:

- Ensure lighting- (such as portable lamps) - do not create a tripping hazard with loose cords across the floor.

- placing all electrical switches and power points approximately 1m above the floor and no closer than 500mm to an internal corner.
- installing large, rocker type toggle switches or push pads to operate lighting
- selecting fittings that have a high contrasting colour when viewed against their surrounding backgrounds.
- replacing any door knobs with lever handles, preferably 'D' shaped that are easy to use
- installing external door controls that permit the door to be unlocked and opened with one hand.

Kitchens

Circulation space and access to fittings and appliances are important considerations in an accessible kitchen. Other things to think about include:

- adapting the height of some worktops, sinks and cook tops and incorporating leg clearance for a person using a wheelchair or other types of mobility aids.
- ovens with side opening doors
- heat resistant bench tops adjacent to the stove to easily slide items

Improving Access in your Home

Kitchen (cont.)

- stove controls at the front to eliminate the need to reach over hotplates
- double power points at an accessible height
- sliding doors to overhead cupboards to prevent injuries that may occur if hinged doors are left open.
- pot drawers instead of cupboards for ease of access
- height adjustable and slide out shelving in the pantry
- large handle, easy to grip utensils

Living rooms

Living rooms can be made more accessible by:

- Avoiding long pile and loose carpets, rugs and runners. Low pile carpet and rugs should be securely fastened to the floor.
- On curtains and blinds, rod type controls at an accessible height are easier to use than cords.
- Remote controls for appliances including TV's, lighting and air conditioning are useful.
- Comfortable chairs with good back supports and armrests that support people to get in and out.

Bedrooms

The interior layout and selection of furniture and furnishings in bedrooms should ensure ease of movement and access to all facilities including beds, wardrobes, mirrors, lamps etc. You could consider:

- an additional phone on a bedside table
- remote controls for switches and equipment
- reading wall lights with switches within easy reach of the bed
- overhead room light with 2 way switches, at door entry to room and beside bed
- a raised bed with room for access underneath for a lifting device or support rails.

Flooring levels

- If the home is built over more than one level, consideration should be given to the ease of access to all levels.
- If ramps are used they should not be too steep and should incorporate kerb rails and handrails on both sides.
- Lifts are available that can often be installed in existing homes to improve access. These include platform lifts and stair climbers.

Improving Access in your Home

Garden areas

Incorporating one or more raised garden beds into the landscaping adjacent to the house for ease of use, means people who may use a wheelchair or have difficulty bending can still enjoy gardening.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Build for Life

Department of Planning and Community Development

www.buildforlife.com.au

Welcome - Design Ideas for Accessible Homes (Publication)

Building Commission Victoria

Ph: 1300 557 559

www.buildingcommission.com.au

Standards Australia - Publish Australian Standards in relation to access to buildings

Ph: 1800 035 822

www.standards.org.au

Some major modifications to your home may require Council approval.

Contact your Local Council as you may be eligible for some in-home support services through the Home and Community Care program (HACC).

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This publication is a MetroAccess Initiative, a partnership between local government and the Department of Human Services, North and West Metropolitan Region, Victoria – Community Building Program.



Department of Human Services

