



**MEDIA STATEMENT: 11 JULY 2023**

## Implementation of new building codes should not be delayed

Queensland Human Rights Commissioner Scott McDougall says the introduction of new building codes should not be delayed from the planned start date of 1 October.

“The changes to the National Construction Code are vital accessibility reforms and should be introduced as planned in October this year,” says Mr McDougall.

The changes include mandatory housing accessibility standards as part of the National Construction Code, aimed at ensuring new builds meet minimum accessibility requirements such as step-free entryways, wider doorways and passages, and accessible bathrooms.

Most states and territories have opted in to the new standards, which resulted from a long campaign by accessibility advocates.

“What some people may not realise about these standards is that universally accessible housing doesn’t only benefit people with disability, although that is a critically important consideration,” says Mr McDougall.

“Having a house or apartment that is accessible – means that a much wider range of people have their needs met, including older people, people with temporary impairments or accessibility needs following an illness or operation, people with children and prams, and so on.”

“Accessible housing means people’s options when looking for somewhere to live aren’t as hindered by the physical limitations of a property.”

There has been some pressure on the State Government to delay the full implementation of the changes due to concerns about the housing crisis and the impact the cost of the changes could have on affordability.

However, Housing Minister Mick de Brenni has told media today that the cost will add 1-2% to the overall cost of a build, and that an extension of 18 months would be granted for some builds.

The Human Rights Commissioner says this is a reasonable price to pay for long term benefits to people and communities.

“We know the regulatory environment is complex, and I commend the stakeholders involved for reaching practical compromises where appropriate,” says Mr McDougall.

“Any disability advocate will tell you that there are still a multitude of issues with buildings and spaces that are supposed to be accessible – buildings with ramps at the front door but a step

into the bathroom, or a bathroom you can fit a wheelchair into if only you could get it through the front door.

“People who have broken a leg will know how difficult showering is when you don’t have a step-free shower – also a hazard for older people – or how tricky crutches can make navigating up or down your front steps. Prams are unwieldy and don’t always fit through doorways. The list goes on,” says Mr McDougall.

“Universal minimum standards as part of the building code is the way to fix this, and while there may be some slight increases to cost where new builds are concerned, this will be more than offset by the benefits of more housing which actually meets the needs of a wide range of people and means people can live safely and well at home for longer.”

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