

A quick look at: Making your home accessible

This information applies to

- modifying an existing house
- building a new house

Some helpful words to understand

'Livable/adaptable housing' –

A house that is

- Easy to enter
- Easy to move in and around
- Able to be easily adapted
- Suits the changing needs of those living there

'Accessible housing' –

A house that has been changed, giving consideration to the specific needs of a person with a disability, often with reference to one or more Australian Standard

What you need will be influenced by

- How you get about (walking or wheelchair)
- Whether you stand or sit to do a task
- Any movements that are particularly difficult, for example reaching, or when balance is impaired
- Any vision, thinking or planning limitations
- Possible risks to your safety
- Space needed to use any assistive equipment
- Space for a carer providing assistance
- Others who may be sharing the same space
- Your future needs

This 'quick look at' describes broad principles to consider. For specific details and dimensions, particularly in relation to ramps, rails, bathrooms and kitchens, please refer to ILC Tas publications:

Making your home accessible

Bathrooms – design guidelines

Kitchens – design guidelines

Grab rails – a guide to selection and installation

Think about

Site and building access

- Construct a safe, continuous step-free path to a level entrance to the house.
- There should be at least one stepless entrance, of sufficient width, to the house.
- If the house is situated on a sloping block there should be a driveway leading to a flat undercover parking area.

Car parking

- The distance from the house to the car parking area should be minimal, preferably covered and safe in all weather.
- Car door opening and movement around the vehicle should not be impeded by the structure of the car space.
- Lighting should be adequate, and preferably sensor-type.

Ramps, Stairs and Walkways

- Ramps may be an alternative to stairs. Some people with mobility restrictions find it easier to use steps than ramps. This may change with time.
- Stairs that are straight and against a load-bearing wall are safer to use and more easily modified.
- The surface material of walkways should be slip-resistant, non-reflective and the area well-lit. Avoid overhead projections, e.g. tree branches.
- Consider the depth of each step and ensure that enclosed risers are present.
- An Australian Standard exists to describe minimum standards for gradient (slope) and width of ramps, and requirements for steps, stairs, landings, kerbs and handrails.

Handrails and Grabrails

- Handrails provide guidance and stability along large changes in levels such as along stairways or ramps. Grabrails provide support and aid 'transfer' movements where a slip or fall is considered a risk.
- Rails must be anchored securely and in a way suited to the surface to which they are being attached.
- Stairs that are straight and against a load bearing wall are safer to use and more easily modified. Handrails on both sides are recommended, and a handrail on one side at least should be present.
- An Australian Standard describes suitable rail location (length, height and configuration), diameter, and clearance.

Doorways

- Consider the minimum clear opening width of the door and ensure that there is adequate circulation space at doorways to accommodate the angle of approach by a person using a wheelchair.
- Wider door and passageways make movement between spaces easier, especially for people using mobility devices.
- Consider door handles and locks that allow the users to be independent.

Space requirements for moving freely

- An Australian Standard describes the minimum space requirements for wheelchair users.
- In general, open-plan uncluttered room spaces, and wider doors and passageways, make it safer and easier for people with mobility issues to move around.

Floor surfaces

- Flooring should be continuous, slip-resistant and not restrict the use of mobility aids.

Windows

- Lower level windows allow greater contact with the outside environment.
- Choose windows that can be opened and closed from a seated position.
- Windows that open outwards and project into a walkway may obstruct a person moving along it.

Lighting, Switches and Powerpoints

- Switches and powerpoints should be located at a height able to be reached by all members of the household, whether they are standing or sitting.
- Two way switches improve the flow of movement through spaces.
- Consider the size and shape of switches and the benefits of sensor lighting.

Bathroom and Toilet

- These areas benefit from additional space to make movement easier and to allow use of assistive technology such as a hoist, shower chair, or commode.
- Space for a carer may also be required.
- A stepless shower recess with slip-resistant flooring should comply with the Australian Standard, and be large enough to accommodate the person, their carer and any assistive technology.
- If a bath is to be used, there should be sufficient space alongside for equipment such as a mobility aid, or for a carer.
- If the bathroom and toilet require renovation, all walls should be reinforced to allow grab rails to be attached safely and to suit the user. The shower cubicle and the toilet may be best located in corners of the room where they will be adjacent to reinforced walls.
- Bench-height, and access to the hand basin and mirror when a person is sitting should be considered.
- Choose taps that will allow the user to be independent.

Kitchen and Laundry

- Adequate clear space makes it easier and safer to move around and use appliances.
- Consider also bench-height, positioning of appliances, the reach of the user (especially if sitting), access to under-bench cupboards or the sink, and lighting (especially in darker areas).

The kitchen, bathroom and toilet have very specific design requirements. This information and other resources can be discussed with an Occupational Therapist at ILC Tas, telephone 1800 885 886.

Contact ILC Tas for more information



Ring **1300 885 886** to speak to a health professional

Visit our website www.ilctas.asn.au or email us at ilc@ilctas.asn.au



Make an appointment to visit our centre at **275 Wellington Street, South Launceston**



Ring us to find out when we will be visiting your area

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