

COTA (NSW)Council on the Ageing (NSW) Inc
Estab. 1956

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Legal and Constitutional Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

RECEIVEDSM
25 FEB 2009
BY: ...LACA...

RE: Disability (Access to Premises-Building) Standard 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

The Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA NSW) is a non government organisation and the peak body representing persons over 50 years of age in NSW. This submission addresses the draft Disability (Access to Premises-Building) Standard 2009, most significantly the following term of reference:

- the appropriateness and effectiveness of the proposed Premises Standards in achieving their objects

COTA NSW congratulates the committee on seeking to align the Premises Standards with the Building Codes of Australia (BCA). As stated in the documentation, this will bring a level of clarity to builders, developers and building managers while providing greater access (and equity) for people with disabilities. COTA NSW's role is to advocate for the needs of older people. It is our belief that providing greater access will benefit the whole of community including older people who experience a range of abilities as they age.

Like many developing nations, Australia's population is ageing. In the next twenty years the proportions of people aged over 65 will almost double¹. With increases in life expectancy the numbers of people aged over 85 are projected to rise from 1.6% of the population in 2007 to between 5% and 7% of the population by 2056². Increasing numbers of older people mean our physical environments will need to be accessible to people with varying degrees of mobility. Accordingly, there will be an increased need for a diverse range of living spaces.

Our main area of concern is that the Access to Premises Standard does not include Class 2 buildings. For older people, apartments can represent a welcome alternative to a single

¹ ABS 2008, 'Population Projections Australia 3222.0', Australian Bureau of Statistics.

² Ibid

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PATRON:
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Governor of New South Wales

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dwelling, especially as they undergo the process of downsizing. Older people may also find apartment buildings a more affordable and secure mode of living in retirement. Integrating greater accessibility in Class 2 buildings would better facilitate an environment where there was parity of access between public buildings and multi dwelling living spaces. Removing any barriers to access would have the added bonus of promoting social inclusion as people are empowered to move more seamlessly from living spaces into the public domain.

The current trend is for people to age in place, allowing people to stay in their home rather than moving to an age care facility. As this trend continues, living spaces that are able to accommodate the needs of older people will be in greater demand and more likely to be expected by the baby boomer generation. To avoid the need for expensive retrofitting, to ensure people wishing to downsize will have sufficient choices in the future, and to ensure the provision of accessible dwellings at various price points it is important that Class 2 buildings (Apartments and Flats) are not excluded from the Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards 2009.

COTA NSW supports a whole of community approach to the design of our physical spaces. Such sentiments are echoed by the World Health Organisation's³ Age Friendly Cities framework as a way to enable participation, social inclusion and security for older people. Similarly, the *Disability (Access to Premises-Building) Standard Guidelines 2009* acknowledge that the guiding principles of the Premises Standard are founded in a desire to bring access for people with disabilities in line with the wider community. To build communities that are accessible and inclusive it is important that accessibility is available across a broad scope of premises. Therefore COTA NSW recommends that the Disability (Access to Premises-Building) Standard 2009 is broadened to include Class 2 buildings.

COTA NSW Recommends:

The Disability (Access to Premises-Building) Standard 2009 is broadened to include Class 2 buildings.

Kind regards

Jon Bisset
Executive Director
COTA NSW Inc.

³ WHO 2007, 'Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide', World Health Organisation.

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