

Adaptable Housing - local government working with the private housing sector

Stephanie Smith, Local Government & Shires Association, NSW

The provision of adaptable housing is simply good sense. In 1993, 18% of the total Australian population had a disability. This percentage is growing with our ageing society. The majority of people seek to have their housing needs met by the private housing market, including a growing number of people eligible for social housing. Unfortunately, most current housing designs do not aim to meet the changing physical needs of our community, and in particular, do not complement national government policy on ageing in place.

Adaptable housing is specifically designed to be easily modified at a later stage to cater for an occupant who may become disabled or frail. The principles behind this type of housing need to be a cornerstone of housing policy across Australia.

Local Government in NSW has:

- been a leader in ensuring that adaptable housing is on the policy agenda of a range of state government agencies;
- actively engaged a cooperative working relationship with the non government sector; and
- is currently working with the private housing sector to deliver better accommodation for the industry's customers and local governments residents.

The introduction of the Australian Standard AS 4299 (Adaptable Housing) saw several NSW councils attempt to introduce its principles within their local development control plans. A study undertaken by the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning sought to cost the inclusion of adaptable housing criteria within new private sector housing. From here both Willoughby and Newcastle City Councils have joined together to develop a model code that draws together these social principles and financial realities into a workable planning policy that can be applied broadly by a range of councils across Australia.

This presentation will outline:

- the basic philosophy behind the concept of adaptable housing;
- the key characteristics of adaptable housing;
- the planning instruments that are now available to local government to pursue adaptable housing provision; and

some of the key issues that have required resolution to progress its implementation through the planning system into the development of new housing.

Contact details:

Stephanie Smith
Housing Policy Officer
Local Government & Shires Association NSW
Sydney NSW 2001
Ph: (02) 9242 4093
Email: ssmith@lgsa.org.au