

A message from the Construction Occupations Registrar

Construction Note: 2025/02

Livable Housing Design Standard

The Access Canberra Planning Audit Team has identified a substantial number of instances in the past 24 months where the Performance Requirement H8P1 Livable Housing Design has not been met by either a Deemed-to-Satisfy Solution or a Performance Solution.

The Access Canberra Construction Audit Team is seeing the flow on from the these non compliant and poorly documented Building Approvals which are resulting in on site non-compliances that require rectification and/or performance solutions.

Section 17 of the [Building \(General\) Regulation 2008](#) states:

- (1) This section applies to plans that relate to the erection or alteration of a building.
- (2) The plans must contain sufficient information about the proposed finished dimensions, arrangement, locations and inherent characteristic of materials making up every element of the proposed building work to allow—
 - (a) a certifier to work out if a building erected or altered in accordance with the plan would contravene the Act; and
 - (b) a competent builder to carry out the building work in accordance with the plans and the Act

To reinforce the above, since October 2025 it has also been a requirement in the [Minimum Documentation Requirements for Building Approval Lodgement](#) that compliance with the Livable Housing Design Standard is to be clearly shown on the plans with the locations and a clear identification on how it complies on the specific development.

The intent of requiring compliance to be clearly shown on the plans **is not** to have a generic page of figures and technical provisions copied from the standard.

The intent is that what **is** proposed to be constructed on site is on the plans. Compliance with the Livable Housing Design Standard is building work and any changes to the proposed will require an amendment to the building approval.

To be explicitly clear – a page of figures and technical provisions copied from the standard does not satisfy the minimum documentation requirements.

Fees for failed building approval lodgement completeness checks are going to be issued to the building certifier in accordance with the with the [Planning Lease Administration Building Services - Fees and Charges booklet](#). This is to commence with the soon to be released eDevelopment.

Clearly showing how compliance is going to be achieved must demonstrate and take into account:

- bathroom finishes like plasterboard, tiles and vanities
- the thickness of sheeting and corner trims in hallways
- the different thickness' of floor coverings to ensure that compliant thresholds can be achieved.

The plans must also provide the type of reinforcement and its locations and minimum dimensions. This will aid the installation of grabrails, if they are to be installed in the future.

The following are examples of information that is frequently missing from the submitted plans:

- Step free access path from the allotment boundary: Pathways are not shown, or plans fail to include notes when the block may be exempt due to steep gradients. These pathways are also to be considered when calculation planting area.
- Step free entry requirements: Where step-free access is required and identification of a weatherproofing method leading to non-compliant door thresholds and poor weatherproofing.
- Minimum door clearances: Doors specified of 820mm flush sliders very often do not meet the required 820mm clear opening, resulting in non-compliant access to habitable rooms.
- Sanitary compartments: Minimum required circulation space with consideration of internal linings and needing to be centred to the toilet pan.
- Reinforcement of bathroom and sanitary compartment walls: The minimum/maximum distances and widths required for wall reinforcement including consideration for internal linings. Often, the plans are dimensioned, though are still not capable of compliance with the standard.

There is a further information available in the [Resource library](#) on the Australian Building Code Board's website in the form of a pre-recorded webinar and a design handbook. It contains examples and explanation as to what is compliant and the intent of the standard. We highly recommend taking the time to explore these resources.

Construction notes have been developed to raise awareness and educate the building and construction industry about common issues identified on building sites and best practice approaches to address them. The issues outlined in these notes have been identified through compliance assessment by Access Canberra or following a complaint from owners. Importantly, we welcome your input, if you have come across an issue that needs clarification or to provide feedback **email us: BBS@act.gov.au or call 02 6205 2244.**