



Home improvement

Why future house designs will cater to aged, disabled



CANBERRA

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ALL new homes will need to include wider doorways, ground-level bathrooms and entry level access to comply with new voluntary building guidelines to improve living standards for young families, the aged and the disabled.

They will also be designed to accommodate prams and wheelchairs, have reinforced bathroom walls for railings and make for easier movement inside, in a “cradle to the grave” policy to make all homes liveable for people of all generations. Under a voluntary agreement with the industry, the Federal Government will today announce the Universal Housing Design standards in a push for all

new homes – about 140,000 a year – to meet specific targets by 2020. It is expected that up to 30,000 homes, or 20 per cent, will meet the new standards within three years.

The homes, both private and public housing, would be classified under a three-tier rating system, depending on how well they complied for liveability.

The housing industry estimates the design rules would add between \$1000 and \$2000 to a new home’s cost.

It would save about \$30,000 to later retrofit homes to cope with changing needs.

The new standards were developed in an agreement

between the Housing Industry of Australia, the Real Estate Institute, Master Builders, the Property Council and the Federal Government.

The main beneficiaries of the policy will be the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Families with young children, juggling prams and strollers, and people recovering from injury or surgery would also benefit.

Dignity 4 Disability state MLC Kelly Vincent said the new plans “levelled out the playing field” for people with a disability.

“It’s absolutely a great move – but it’s unfortunate it has taken so long for this to

happen,” she said.

“I guess you could say in many ways, building an unsuitable house for a disabled person is like building a house on top of Mt Everest for someone who is able bodied.”

Council for the Ageing chief executive Ian Yates said he was very pleased that so many industry organisations and regulators had been able to agree on the new targets.

“It will mean seniors can look for that liveable housing standard and know that the house will be either equipped or adaptable so it can be equipped to cater for their needs,” he said.

- with Kate Kyriacou