

BUILDING CODE WIN FOR SENIORS

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The Australian community has had a big win after a national meeting of Commonwealth, state and territory Building Ministers agreed to mandatory accessibility standards for new homes in the National Construction Code (NCC).

National Seniors Australia was part of the ‘Building Better Homes Campaign’ which lobbied hard for the change.

It means all new homes and apartments will have to be built to a silver minimum accessibility standard to accommodate people with limited mobility or a disability.

National Seniors Chief Advocate, Ian Henschke says the significance of the change should not be underestimated.

“For years we’ve been lobbying to change the code from voluntary to mandatory.

“The fact that just five per cent of new homes built in the past ten years had minimum accessibility standards showed the voluntary code did not work,” said Mr Henschke.

The housing ministers also agreed to allow states and territories to voluntarily upgrade to a mandatory gold standard as part of the NCC.

“We have spoken on behalf of older Australians and those vast numbers of Australians living with a disability and finally the ministers have listened,” Mr Henschke said.

The new minimum accessibility standards would mean all new homes will have to include:

- A step free entrance door
- Wider internal doorways to allow wheelchairs
- And a toilet at the entry level

“This will ensure more Australians with limited mobility who want to stay in their homes can do so, without being forced into residential aged care,” Mr Henschke said.

States and territories will now work with the building industry on a timetable for change.

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