

## What is 'Adaptable Housing'?

The term "adaptable housing" refers to housing that has been designed and constructed to enable easy and relatively cheap modifications to be made, that will meet the changing needs of occupants and visitors.

## Why is Adaptable Housing Important?

The functions of a house do not change – a house is used by its occupants to eat, sleep, relax and spend their private lives within. What does change over time is a person's lifestyle and needs.

Some people may wish to run a business from home. Some people may have children or look after their grandchildren. Other people may need the assistance of a walking frame or wheelchair, some as a result of an accident or as they age. Therefore, we should design and build housing to be 'adaptable' so that it can be used by everybody, occupants and frequent visitors, irrespective of age, level of mobility, health or lifestyle. An adaptable house will also make life easier for any occupant when moving into the house, purchasing new furniture, or moving existing furniture around.

Living in an adaptable house may therefore mean that an occupier does not need to move to a more suitable house or modify the existing house, often at great cost, as they age, following an accident or after some other lifestyle change. It can extend the occupant's life in the home, and increase the value and longevity of the house. All of this can decrease the demand for government services and reduce the pressure on caring families.

Most Australian homes are designed so modifications (for example) to widen doorways, modify bathrooms and install ramps, are both expensive and difficult. In contrast, new homes can be built with features that lessen the modifications that may be necessary, and therefore reduce the cost of conversions at a later stage.

## Key Features of an Adaptable House

Australian Standard AS 4299 - Adaptable Housing outlines in detail both essential and desirable features that an adaptable house should incorporate.

Marion Council encourages all persons building a new home, but particularly those persons building developments of more than one dwelling, to consider and incorporate adaptable features to meet AS4299.

Further, the Building Code of Australia requires that in new developments of 20 or more dwellings, one dwelling or 5% of the development (whichever is the greater) must meet Australian Standard 1428.1 - Design for Access and Mobility.

Key features of an adaptable house are outlined below:

### Outdoors

- Smooth paths from the street and letterbox to the front door, and the laundry to the clothes line.
- Non-slip patios and paving.
- A step free entrance at the front door.
- A covered/sheltered front door entrance.

### Internally

- Non-slip floors.
- Lever or x-shaped handles on taps and doors.
- Large light and power switches, located at a suitable height.
- Night lights in key areas.
- Wider hallways (1200mm-1350mm) and internal doors (850mm) than standard.
- Full length picture windows in living areas (to enable views outside by persons sitting in wheelchairs, or sitting due to limited mobility etc).
- Appropriately located wall framing so (if they are ever needed) handrails can be added.

- Electrical conduits with draw wires into selected walls for the installation of an additional phone, security services, an intercom system, computerized systems, visual alarms, or similar appliances.

## **Bathroom and toilet**

- A bathroom and toilet on the ground level of all homes.
- Easily removable stud walls between the bathroom and toilet areas installed after the floor, walls and ceiling have been finished (including cornices and skirtings) to simplify possible future modifications.
- No step downs or raised 'hobs' to step over to gain access into the shower.
- A bathroom floor that is entirely waterproofed irrespective of whether a shower screen is fitted, with floor tiling graded to the shower floor waste to prevent pooling of water.  
A toilet with a 'P' trap, in lieu of an 'S' trap, to the toilet pan allowing for easy relocation of the pan further out from the wall, where there is adequate space, if required for a wheelchair user. (A 'P' trap is where the waste is flushed through the wall as opposed to the 'S' trap where the waste is flushed down through the floor).
- A semi-recessed wall hung basin with 'P' trap water seal to bench tops with removable vanity units underneath to provide greater leg room for wheelchair users than 'S' traps.
- Toilet doors that swing out (assists access if for example, an elderly person has fallen inside the toilet).

## **Kitchens**

- Floor surfacing finished right through to the perimeter walls of the room with kitchen cupboards installed afterward.
- Cupboards constructed so sections below the bench top can be removed easily to provide leg space for a person in a wheelchair and provide for height-adjustment in at least one bench top for food preparation.

## **Further Information**

Further information on adaptable housing can be found from the following sources:

Adaptable Housing Australia –  
[www.adaptablehousing.org](http://www.adaptablehousing.org)

Standards Australia –  
[www.standards.com.au](http://www.standards.com.au)

## **Want to Know More?**

The above information is advisory only. It is intended to provide a guide and a general understanding of the key points associated with the particular topic. It is not a substitute for reading the relevant legislation or the Development Plan.

It is recommended that if you are intending to undertake development, you seek professional advice or contact the Council for any specific enquiries or for further assistance concerning the use and development of land.

## **Contact Details - City of Marion Development and Regulatory Services Division**

245 Sturt Road  
Sturt SA 5047

PO Box 21  
Oaklands Park SA 5046

Telephone (08) 8375 6685  
Facsimile (08) 8375 6899

Website <http://www.marion.sa.gov.au>