NT Guidelines for Livable Housing Design

Application to dwelling extensions/alterations and exemptions for step-free path requirements

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

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Contents

1. Purpose

This guideline provides information to building certifiers, other building practitioners, building designers and owners to facilitate the application of National Construction Code (NCC) Livable Housing Design requirements to extensions and alterations and determining exemptions to step-free path requirements in the NT.

2. Legislative authority

The Director of Building Control may make guidelines for the administration of the *Building Act 1993*, under section 167B.

3. Application

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) Livable Housing Design Standard applies to the carrying out of new buildings works for Class 1a dwellings and Class 2 sole-occupancy units as follows:

Part	Class 1a	Class 2
Dwelling access	✓	×
Dwelling entrance	✓	✓
Internal doors and corridors	✓	✓
Sanitary compartment	✓	✓
Shower	✓	✓
Reinforcement of walls	✓	✓

4. Requirements for Livable Housing Design

Livable housing design requirements are included in the NCC 2022 Volume One (Part G7) and Volume Two (Part H8) and through the ABCB Standard for Livable Housing Design.

Requirements include:

- One step-free entrance door to a home, which can be from one of the following:
    - an attached garage/carport; or
    - a car parking space (such as driveway or detached garage); or
    - the pedestrian entry at the allotment boundary (via a footpath / ramp or similar).
- One toilet with a minimum of 1200 mm by 900 mm clear space around which is to be located on the ground or entry level of a home.
- One shower that is hob-less and step-free.
- The toilet and shower described above (and a bath if provided) are to have reinforced walls to support future installation of grab rails if ever required. Walls constructed of masonry, blockwork or concrete do not require additional reinforcement.
- On the ground or entry level where connecting to habitable rooms, laundry and rooms containing the toilet and shower described above:

- Entrance door and internal doors to have 820 mm clear opening (870mm or wider door).
- Corridors and hallways to be 1000 mm wide between wall surfaces.

An exemption to step-free access requirements can be applied where:

- the height of the lowest floor containing habitable rooms is too high to be reached by a ramp within the required lengths, such as for elevated homes; or
- the physical size of the site is limiting; or
- the land is too steep.

The ABCB Handbook livable housing design provides guidance on the NCC requirements for livable housing design.

Other ABCB support materials include NCC 2022 Webinar Series.

Further information about the implementation of Livable Housing Design in the Northern Territory is available at Building and renovating: permits and processes | NT.GOV.AU.

5. Dwelling repairs and maintenance

Repair means returning an item to an acceptable condition by the renewal, replacement or mending of work, damaged or degraded parts (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Term).

Maintenance means regular routine technical and administrative actions, taken during an item's service life, aimed at retaining it in a state in which it can perform its required functions. It may include inspection, repair, preventive service and cleaning. It is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves restoration or reconstruction. The distinctions referred to, for example in relation to roof gutters, are maintenance 'regular inspection and cleaning of gutters'; repair involving restoration 'returning of dislodged gutters'; repair involving reconstruction ' replacing decayed gutters' (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Terms).

Repairs and maintenance are not required to comply with the Livable Housing Design Standard where the part of the Class 1a building or sole-occupancy unit in a Class 2 building being repaired or maintained did not comply with the Livable Housing Design Standard prior to the repair or maintenance being carried out.

6. Renovations

Renovation means restoration or refurbishment, depending on the context (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Terms).

Renovations to a bathroom or sanitary compartment are not required to comply with the following requirements of the Livable Housing Design Standard:

a) Part 3.1 (clear opening width)
b) Part 3.2 (threshold)
c) Part 4.2 (circulation space)
d) Part 6 (reinforcement of bathroom and sanitary compartment walls)

Unless the renovation:

a) involves demolition of the existing doorway to the bathroom or sanitary compartment.

b) Increases the size of the sanitary compartment

c) Exposes the wall frame of the sanitary compartment or bathroom.

6.1. Key considerations

- If there is already a complying sanitary compartment or bathroom, a renovation to the non-complying sanitary compartment or bathroom will not trigger application of the Livable Housing Design Standard.

7. Extensions and alterations

Alteration in relation to a building, means an addition or extension to a building (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Terms).

Extension means additional construction to and abutting an existing building (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Terms).

Addition means any construction or change to a building or facility which increases its external dimensions and cubic content (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Terms).

Building work to extend or alter existing Class 1a and Class 2 buildings must comply with current National Construction Code requirements, including Livable Housing Design Standard requirements, apart from the following exceptions:

- approved Class 1a buildings as defined under Part 9A of the *Building Regulations 1993*; and
- alterations to existing buildings where inclusion of the Livable Housing Design Standard cannot reasonably be achieved.

It is expected that Livable Housing Design Standard requirements will be applied where they can reasonably be included as part of the planned building work. Additional building work to other parts of the existing building outside the planned building work is not required.

7.1. Key considerations

- As the Livable Housing Design Standard only requires that one toilet, one shower and one entrance door meet requirements, building work to extend or alter a home must consider whether requirements are already met in the existing home.
- The existing home may restrict ability to meet Livable Housing Design Standard requirements. Alterations to bathrooms that do not include changes to walls may not result in the minimum clear space in front of the toilet being achieved.

8. Independent living units

New Class 1a independent dwellings are required to meet the Livable Housing Design Standard. Extensions and alterations to existing independent living units are required to meet NCC requirements as outlined in Section 7.

9. Step-free entry provisions

9.1. Exemptions for step-free path to entrance door

Drawings, of a building, include a site plan and floor plan of, and elevations for, the building (source: *Building Act 1993*).

Under regulation 6 of the *Building Regulations 1993*, application for a building permit must be accompanied by:

- drawings showing the plan and proposed usage at each floor level, elevations, sections and dimensions of the building, the sizes and locations of structural members; and
- the levels of the site and of the floors of the building in relation to an adjoining street channel.

This information will assist building certifiers to determine whether an exemption to the step-free path requirements can be applied.

An exemption from the requirement of step-free access path does not exempt the compliance with other elements outlined in the NCC 2022 Volume 2 Part H8 Livable Housing Design H8P1.

A form that can be used to seek an exemption from step-free path requirements is available online at building-certification-industry-forms-and-resources NT.GOV.AU

9.2. Ramping requirements

Ramp mean length of inclined surface that provides access between two levels (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Terms).

Path mean an uninterrupted path of travel to or within a building, providing access to all required facilities. For non-ambulatory people, this accessible path does not incorporate any step, stairway, turnstile, revolving door, escalator or other impediment which would prevent it from being safely negotiated by people with disabilities (source: National Dictionary of Building and Plumbing Terms).

An exemption may be applied for a step-free path from the front boundary or associated car parking space to the dwelling entry where:

a) the undeveloped slope of the ground on which the pathway is to be constructed is steeper than 1:14, or

b) if the required step-free access path cannot be provided in one continuous direction within the maximum gradient limits.

The maximum length of a ramp without triggering the above exemptions is:

- 9 metres for ramps at 1:14
- 15 metres for ramps at 1:20
- A sliding scale for gradients in between the two values.

The maximum finished floor level (FFL) of a dwelling that is considered too high to meet ramping requirements can be determined using the following table as a guide.

Ramp gradient	Maximum length (run in metres)	Finished height (rise in mm)	Maximum FFL at entry (mm)
1:14	9	640	700
1:15	10	670	730
1:16	11	690	750
1:17	12	710	770
1:18	13	720	780
1:19	14	740	800
1:20	15	750	810

Note: the above maximum FFL includes two landings at either end of the ramp. Landing gradient is 1:40 with maximum length of 1200mm and providing a rise of 30mm.

The total length of step free pathway will be determined by the setback to the entry door from the front boundary, and how much length of ramp can fit within the yard.

Where the ramp length does not correlate to the table above, the following equation can be used to determine the rise of a ramp:

Rise = Run ÷ Gradient

For example: a ramp length of 6 metres or 6000mm measured along the horizontal at a gradient of 1:14 will deliver 430mm in height.

Calculated as: 6000 ÷ 14 = 430mm