

VDD STUDIO submission to:  
**City of Melbourne's Homes for people: Draft Housing Strategy 2014-2018**  
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VDD Studio's response to *City of Melbourne's Homes for people: Draft Housing Strategy 2014-2018* aims to highlight the need for accessibility in a housing strategy, ensuring people of diverse physical, sensory and intellectual abilities are accommodated. Need is evidently demonstrated by 1 out of every 5 Australians currently living with a disability (Australian Human Rights Commission) along with the country's ageing population being forecast to expand from 6.4% to 14.4% of people aged over 75 from 2012 to 2060 ("An Ageing Australia"). Accessible housing is therefore crucial; the City of Melbourne Housing Strategy an opportunity to embed accessibility as a crosscutting consideration within local government policy. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to position the City of Melbourne as a leading exemplar of understanding the housing needs of people of all abilities.

VDD Studio's submission focuses on the current lack of planning towards achieving an accessible built environment in which all people can live full lives, independent of their abilities. The Draft Strategy does not feature the word "disability" and only mentions "accessibility" twice over the 72 pages. A dedicated section specific to accessibility along with appropriate additions throughout would serve to assure the public and project stakeholders that thought has been given to an inclusive strategy. Drawing on specialist skills, international accessible housing guidelines knowledge and Universal Design capabilities, additional input should be sought from expert access consultants, such as Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd and others, including the City of Melbourne's very significant in-house competencies in the disability arena, to ensure that the accessibility needs of stakeholders are met.

Decisions on what level of accessibility, for example, visitability, adaptability or 'full' accessibility, and to what standards, for example, Australian Standards 1428, Livable Housing Australia Guidelines, National Construction Code (BCA) Class 2 buildings requirements, or other more locally appropriate solutions, will require careful consideration. Similarly, what percentage of dwellings should have what level of accessibility? Given 1 in 5 of the Australian population are people with a disability a target of 20% of dwellings being accessible may, on first premise, appear reasonable. However given that everyone experiences a lack of independent mobility and/or a period of disability in a normal lifespan, this may be inadequate. Therefore, the advice of specialist consultants on accessibility considerations and specific input from people with disabilities and their representative organisations should be sought and incorporated into the Strategy Goals. Similarly, the 12 point Action Plan requires the incorporation of accessibility considerations as a primary and crosscutting parameter.

VDD studio would like to commend the City of Melbourne on their record of addressing the needs of people of all abilities. However, to align with its other progressive policies on accessibility, this draft strategy needs to address accessibility both more specifically and more broadly.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours faithfully,

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\* Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd is an award-winning transdisciplinary consultancy working in accessibility in the built environment. Research unit VDD Studio, staffed by volunteers with a variety of qualifications in and outside the built environment, provides pro-bono services to Not-for-Profit organisations.