

Major changes are coming to Victorian home designs

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Daniel Senia is the managing director of First-Place Building Co., and has more than 18 years' experience in the new home buying industry working with some of Australia's largest home builders and developers.

WITH DANIEL SENIA

The latest iteration of the National Construction Code (NCC) has been released this month and includes the most significant set of code changes since its inception in 1994.

Developed and maintained by the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB), a joint venture between government and industry, the NCC is a set of rules and guidelines that enforce a minimum standard of safety, amenity, accessibility and sustainability in new home construction.

The update includes new rules which have been developed to primarily improve the sustainability and liveability in home design and construction. This will include 7-star home design for energy efficiency as well as “future proofing” home designs so that aging homeowners can “live in place”.

The newly introduced “Livable Housing Standard” is one of the more significant changes to the code and will materially change the way homes will be designed. The standard has a focus on accessibility and being able to move around this home with disabilities, wheelchairs or aging impairments.

These changes will include:

Wider entries and hallways throughout the home

Wider doors and door frames throughout the home

At least one toilet with access and circulation space of 1200mm

A level entry access to at least one external access point – meaning possible removal of steps to the porch, a change to door frame design and/or raising the garage slab to be level with the home

At least one bathroom with a step-less flush shower, and

Structural provisions in at least one bathroom for handrails and grab rails.

While these changes are widely welcomed by the construction industry, there will be an impact for new homeowners.

There will be two unavoidable changes:

Some of the more compact designs will need to be reconfigured and possibly mean a reduction in the amount of bedrooms or size of living spaces in homes as we focus on access and bathrooms, and

There will be a cost associated to implement these changes, that will be reflected in the builder’s sale price. The most expensive of these changes being a shower that is flush with the floor, and level access entry points to the home.

The NCC 2022 will have a staged implementation across 2023, culminating in a mandatory compliance across Victoria from October 1, 2023.

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