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Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Legal and Constitutional Affairs  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission No 63

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1<sup>U</sup> MAR 2009  
BY: LACA

Dear Committee Secretary

### Access to Premises Standards

The Disability Services Commission supports the current draft Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards (Premises Standards), in order to successfully progress the adoption of the Premises Standards.

There has been considerable work undertaken to develop the Premises Standards. In 1996, the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was introduced. Work commenced on the draft Premises Standards in 1997, as a response to the inconsistencies between the Disability Discrimination Act the Building Code of Australia. The Australian Building Codes Board, the Attorney General's Department and the Australian Human Rights Commission jointly lead a national process with other key bodies to develop the draft Premises Standards.

While supporting the Premises Standards, the Commission would like to highlight the following concerns with the draft that still need to be addressed in relation to access for people with disabilities:

- The draft requires buildings to meet several Australian Standards, but the latest versions have not yet been adopted and the content has not been available to the public for an appropriate length of time. Therefore, it is difficult to know whether these are going to meet the access needs of people with disabilities.
- Home unit blocks (Class 2 buildings) are not included in the current draft standard.
- The draft requires disability access in small accommodation facilities only when there are four or more bedrooms (or cabins). The draft includes newly-built buildings with converted, existing facilities. A threshold of four means almost all bed and breakfast premises will be excluded and may exempt new bed and breakfasts, new cabins in caravan parks and new eco-lodges.

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- The number of designated accessible parking spaces required is one or two per cent. This is inadequate as the number of accessible parking permits issued represents 10 to 13 per cent of registered vehicles.
- Currently, there is no access required to levels of a multi-storey car park which do not have accessible parking bays. There are many people with disabilities who do not require an accessible parking bay, but do require access.
- Motels, hotels and aged care facilities must have some accessible bedrooms with en-suite accessible bathrooms. However, there is no guidance as to what is required to provide adequate access.
- The Australian Standards covering lifts need to be reviewed to ensure lifts are accessible and safe.
- Egress for people with disabilities is still of major concern. While recognising that not all concerns can be addressed in this current draft, it is important for the following two points to be included. Firstly, fire isolated stairs should have access requirements to assist people with vision impairment and people with ambulant disabilities. Secondly, flashing lights in accommodation facilities needs to be included to assist people who are Deaf.
- The draft only requires an accessible shower in a health care building, aged care building, child care centre and accessible motel/hotel rooms, but not at aquatic centres, gymnasiums, fitness clubs, bed and breakfasts, caravan parks, etc. However, many of these places provide showers for the remainder of the population.
- There is little regard to way-finding for people with vision impairment or people who are blind.
- In aged care facilities there are no requirements for meeting rooms to have hearing augmentation.
- There needs to be an increase to a minimum of 10 per cent in the numbers of hearing augmentation receivers in an audience.

The Commission strongly recommends that once the Premises Standards have been adopted a targeted national education program to all key stakeholders be undertaken.

The Commission believes that the final adoption of the Premises Standards, while not addressing all of the above, can still be a significant move forward for the access and inclusion of people with disabilities in our community, while providing consistency for the building and construction industry.

The Commission would like to see a swift adoption of the Premises Standards.

If you would like further information regarding the Commission's comments please contact Sarah Jarman, Principal Officer - Community Access and Information Branch, on 9426 9353.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ron Chalmers  
DIRECTOR GENERAL  
DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSION

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