

Report

Report Type: Basis for Performance Solution – No of Accessible SOUs
Development: Student Housing - 13-23 Gibbons St Redfern
Date of Report: 14th January 2020

It is proposed that the provision of accessible rooms for this project will be under a performance based solution, the basis of which is outlined below.

General

The principal issue is the provision of safe, equitable and dignified access for a person with a disability within the accessible student accommodation that is provided at the subject building.

Performance Requirements DP1(a)(iii) require the provision of access 'to the degree necessary'. In this context, access 'to the degree necessary' would entail that in certain circumstances access is provided relating to the appropriate outcome.

Discussion

A reduced number of accessible SOU is sought for the proposed student accommodation building when compared with the BCA deemed-to-satisfy requirements at Table D3.1.

Our assessment utilizes similar buildings and use, managed by Urbanest; in that the student profile and expected occupants hold a much lower level of need for accessible SOU in their building.

It is reasonable to consider the ratio of students with a disability would be considerably lower than the community level covered by the BCA.

The table below is an extract from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS - 2009) from Disability Ageing and Carers Australia: Summary of Findings (Table 1)

<i>Age Group (Years)</i>	<i>Numbers of Persons</i>	<i>%</i>
15-24	204,200	6.6
25-34	265,600	8.6
35-44	399,700	12.8
45-54	538,500	18.0
60-64	359,900	27.7

All Persons with disability – estimates and rates by age (ABS 2009)

The following table indicates the student currently residing in Urbanest in the same age categories.

<i>Age Group (Years)</i>	<i>Numbers of Persons</i>	<i>%</i>
15-24	1274	85.9
24-34	188	12.7
35-44	15	1.0
45-54	4	0.3
55-59	0	0.0
60+	2	0.1

From the information in these two tables it can be seen that , because of the age of the resident being in the range of 15-30yeras, the incidence of people with a disability is significantly reduced. Thus, the need for accessible rooms is also reduced.

The BCA Class 3 derives the number of accessible SOUs from general population statistics relating to people with a disability; whereas, the subject student accommodation building has a specific profile of occupants.

The difference between a general class 3 building and a student accommodation building is that it is specifically designed to offer accommodation for students. A student accommodation building is different because of the occupant age profile. A class 3 building such as a hotel offers nightly or multiple night stays for the broad spectrum of the population.

The age profile is especially important to identify a reasonable level of need for accessible SOU. This is shown in the tables above. The ABS extract has been tailored to the age groups of students within Urbanest facilities. The information presented in these tables has been analysed, that is the number of students by age group ranges within the Urbanest facilities and the numbers of persons within disability in Australia by the same age group range. It is concluded that the number of accessible SOUs required within the student building is 12, in lieu of the required 17 accessible SOUs required under BCA Part D3.

This makes logical sense. The age of the majority of occupants (85.9%) in the Urbanest student accommodation buildings is within the 15-24 year old range. In the corresponding age group of 15-24, the percentage of persons with disability is 8.6% of the population, which is significantly less than the 18.5% of the total population that have a disability. This will be the same as in this proposal by Wee Hur.

Furthermore, Wee Hur will manage all their students with a formal booking process/lease agreement that will apply to all students wishing to use the building for accommodation. Urbanest will become quickly aware of any student whom needs appropriate accessibility requirements and will match these needs appropriate accommodation. Thus, the provision of half of the rooms as fully accessible and half designed to be modified to suit the particular needs of the resident is an appropriate solution.

This is a much more controlled process than say a hotel that is much less controlled and has occupants of a more transient nature and a much shorter stay.

Conclusion

The intent of the Building Code of Australia 2019 is to ensure the provision of safe, equitable and dignified access to and within buildings for people with a disability.

The BCA Class 3 derives the number of accessible SOUs from general population statistics relating to people with a disability; whereas, the subject student accommodation building has a specific profile of occupants. The solution of 12 accessible SOUs, in lieu of the required 17 makes logical sense. The age of the majority of occupants (85.9%) in this project, will be the same as for the Urbanest student accommodation buildings, is within the 15-24 year old range. In the corresponding age group of 15-24, the percentage of persons with disability is 8.6% of the population, which is significantly less than the 18.5% of the total population that have a disability.

Objective D01 of the BCA recognises that in exceptional situations full application of the BCA might be unreasonable, insofar as the BCA provisions are not absolute. This is consistent with the intent of the DDA.



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