

Executive Summary

Introduction

Corrective action on code compliance of access requirements can be costly and expensive in wasted time.

This 'User Guide', provides a pathway to sound decision making on matters of accessibility in design, construction, consent and in educating these sectors. The guide will benefit those who in their professional capacity influence accessibility provision of public buildings and spaces.

This User Guide is written on the premise that;

- Buildings are for people and should work well for the users/customers and clients and deliver a positive user experience
- Ensuring independent and adequate access for people to public buildings is not complex and the avoidance of barriers to accessibility can be achieved through thoughtful design
- It is more effective to focus on what is required to achieve universal accessibility of a public building rather than what cannot be provided
- if a public space is usable by all people, it will be accessible for both people with disabilities and the increasing ageing population

New Zealand's regulations and guidance about Public Building access

The current legislation for achieving minimum compliance to accessibility is the Building Act 2004 and the Building Code. These are supported by the Acceptable Solutions and the New Zealand Standard NZS4121.

This 'User Guide' provides reference to the Building Code and the objectives of the NZ Disability Strategy.

Approach

The general approach in the development of this User Guide is a focus on performance of the built environment in relation to all users; a universal design approach. This is achieved through;

- thoughtful consideration of key elements of design, construction and consent
- a process approach to how a building user navigates a space by gathering, processing and acting on information
- Advice on how to meet the building user requirements and why those needs are important to the user.

The User Guide has been written as reference for all professionals involved in the design, construction and consent of a public building, whether starting with a problem to find a solution or to avoid potential issues. It contains the following;

1. Element - a part of the public building
2. Activity – what a building user wants to do in and around the building element
3. Commentary – how the user requirements/impairments might affect that activity
4. Design Response – the design approach needed for the building user to carry out the activity
5. Design Notes – design features that could be considered to achieve optimum building design performance
6. Reference – Building Code reference

Objectives of the User Guide

The principal objective of this guidance document is to shift focus from compliance to performance and the achievement of a positive building user experience.

This document:

- Provides guidance on the accessibility performance requirements of the Building Code

- Aims to enhance understanding, recognition and incorporation of Universal Design principles
- Clarifies areas where opportunity exists to design and construct to a high level of understanding, usability and accessibility
- Guides the design approach so that accessibility is considered early on and throughout a project
- Provides an understanding of how a building user navigates the accessible journey to, through and from a public building so that the correct design outcome is achieved
- Provides background information to help integrate the diverse 'building user' requirements
- Will assist regulatory authorities across the country to attain consistency in matters of consent relating to accessibility aspects of the Building Code in the interpretation of 'as near as is reasonably practicable'
- Will bridge the gap and clarify inconsistencies between the Building Code and NZS 4121
- Will clarify, guide and influence developers towards a smart approach to design and build, which delivers positive 'building user' experience
- Provides analysis of diverse user needs to simplify the process of achieving a high level of accessibility

What the User Guide can do for:

1. Designers and Architects
 - Provide information for accessible design analysis
 - Inform accessibility aspects for Building Consent pre-application meetings and consent applications
 - Provide a basis for the development of 'alternative solutions'
 - Provide information for training purposes to upskill and educate new and existing designers

2. Territorial Authorities

- Provide a common reference when communicating with designers during the compliance stage
- Inform the consideration of approval of 'alternative solutions'
- Clarify and explain reasons for Building Code clauses and Acceptable Solution designs
- Provide analysis for enforcement of accessibility regulations
- Form the basis for a nationwide consistent approach towards accessibility
- Provide information for the training of building and planning officials

3. Construction industry

- Inform onsite decisions when changes are needed to accessibility provision
- Provide information for the training of construction industry personnel

4. Developers, Project Managers, Owners, Occupiers

- Provide a framework for the assessment of proposed alterations
- Facilitate planning of post-occupancy alterations
- Inform the planning of post-occupancy maintenance work
- Provide information to achieve compliance when undertaking alterations where designers are not involved
- Provide a common reference point to guide discussions with the design and construction sectors
- Raise awareness of how people use the built environment to inform discussions with the public

5. User groups

- Provide a reference document for advisory groups to assist their understanding of the Building Code clauses and the Acceptable Solution designs, applicable to accessibility
- Provides information to help them assess and propose work to new designs, existing buildings and public spaces.
- Provide an understanding of entitlements under the Building Code.
- Provide a common reference for discussion with Territorial Authorities, Designers and local and national government

6. Tertiary Providers

- Provide a teaching format for presentations, lectures and tutorials
- Produce a framework for student analysis of design and project work
- Raise awareness of how people use public buildings and spaces

7. Local and Central Government

- Inform the development of policy
 - Identify design standards for new and existing Government and Ministry occupied buildings
 - Guide the assessment and selection of proposed leased premises
 - Educate and inform staff to meet accessibility needs within their work environment
 - Inform research into user requirements of the built environment
 - Provide information for analysis of a proposal through the determinations process
 - Inform the drafting of future revisions to the building and planning legislation
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