



Building Newsflash

Building Certifiers

Building Designers

Architects

Signage in buildings for people with a disability

The purpose of this Newsflash is to draw to the attention of building certifiers and designers the requirements of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) with regard to the provision of signage in buildings that are required to be accessible to people with a disability.

BCA requirements

All buildings required to be accessible under the BCA must satisfy the acceptable solution of Part D3 or show that an alternate solution will satisfy the performance criteria of the BCA. Compliance with AS 1428.1 is absolute proof that a method of construction satisfies the relevant performance requirements of the BCA.

Assessing applications lodged after 1 July 2001

Amendment 9 to the BCA was introduced in Queensland on 1 July 2001. The deemed-to satisfy provisions of that amendment refer to AS 1428.1 - 2001 - General requirements for access—New building work. Development applications lodged after 1 July 2001 (subject to the transitional provisions of section 10 of the Building Act) must comply with the 2001 edition of AS 1428.1.

What signs are required by the BCA?

For a building required by the BCA to be accessible, D3.6 of the BCA requires clear and legible signs to be provided which must-

- (a) identify each accessible-
 - (i) sanitary facility; and
 - (ii) space with a hearing augmentation system; and
- (b) where an entrance or lift is not accessible, identify each accessible—
 - (i) entrance; and
 - (ii) lift or bank of lifts; and
 - (iii) path of travel to an accessible entrance and lift or bank of lifts.

The signs must incorporate the international symbol of access or deafness or other symbol as appropriate, in accordance with AS 1428.1. Some of the signs must also be provided with tactile information (refer below for details).

The BCA does not require other signs in the building (for example, exit signs) to meet AS 1428.1 even if the sign is located in a part of the building that is required to be accessible.

Information to be shown on signs required by D3.6 of the BCA

Section 14.4 of AS1428.1 - 2001 provides details of the types of signs that must be included in a building to cater for the needs of people who are blind or vision impaired. The Standard requires the following information on signs:

- (a) Signs shall be set out in a modular form indicating the continuous accessible path of travel as shown in Figure 35 of the Standard.
- (b) Where a standard symbol exists in accordance with AS 2899.1- Public information symbol signs – General information signs, facilities shall be identified by the use of that symbol (see Figure 35(a)).
- (c) Where a standard symbol does not exist, facilities shall be identified by the use of words (see Figure 35(b)).
- (d) The size, type and layout of lettering on signs shall be clear and legible.
- (e) Raised tactile information shall be provided on signs located below 1600 mm from the finished ground or floor surface.

The informative notes (i.e. they are not mandatory) accompanying section 14.4 of AS 1428.1 recommend that all signs be in tactile and braille format so that they are accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired. Building certifiers may wish to draw this to the attention of their clients when assessing a development application.

Location of signs required by D3.6 of the BCA

The mandatory requirements of section 14.5 of AS 1428.1 requires signs, including symbols, numbering and lettering to be located-

- (a) so that they are clearly visible to people in both a seated and standing position;
- (b) at sites where directional decisions are made, to enable the appropriate decisions to be made before a change of direction occurs; and
- (c) where the surface of the wall surrounding the sign provides sufficient contrast to the sign. At locations with insufficient contrast (e.g. patterned wallpapers), the background to the sign shall be increased in size.

The informative notes accompanying section 14.5 recommend-

- signs be placed within a zone at a height not less than 1200 mm and not more than 1600 mm above the plane of the finished floor;
- where space in this zone is not available, the zone for placement of signs may be extended downward to not less than 1000 mm from the plane of the finished floor. This height assists people to read from either a seated or a standing position, and assists people with low vision to read the information on the sign; and
- where a sign can be temporarily obscured, e.g. in a crowd, the sign be placed at a height of not less than 2000 mm above the plane of the finished floor.

Again, building certifiers may wish to draw this to the attention of their clients when assessing a development application.

Assessing applications lodged before 1 July 2001

Development applications lodged before 1 July 2001 (subject to the transitional provisions of section 10 of the Building Act) may be assessed against the 1998 edition of AS 1428.1.

Section 10.9 of AS 1428.1 - 1998 required, among other things, all symbols and lettering identifying unisex accessible sanitary facilities and showers and combined facilities to be tactile. Signs in other accessible parts of a building are not required to be tactile.