

UNIVERSAL HOUSING DESIGN

Speaking of psychological accessibility, one needs to be surrounded by people who encourage and believe in you. Don't worry about what they can't do – think of what they **can** do! You don't necessarily need a disability to have psychological access – you just need to be frail or elderly or a parent with small children.

Well, is aging a disability? When I turn 65 does my disability go away? There is a lot issues to do with aging is the same as disability – access, discrimination to name a few! Getting older is not for the faint-hearted but I'm looking forward to the challenge!! I am accepting this challenge - I am using all these lessons listed above and have designed my own accessible, liveable, ingenious, visitable and enjoyable home for all.

Queensland Action for Universal Housing Design represents industry and community working together towards fair, inclusive, and sustainable communities through the adoption of universal housing design.

Current housing designs do not work for many people. Families with children, older people, people with a temporary or permanent injury or illness, and people with a disability deserve more.

Building houses with simple universal design features makes them liveable for everyone, regardless of age, family needs or changes a person may experience during their lifetime. It also means that they are visitable by everyone, regardless of age or ability. Older people are particularly affected. Over 1.2 million Queenslanders will be aged 65 or older by 2031. Most will want to live independently in their own homes, in their communities, for as long as possible. Well designed housing reduces the risk of injury, hospital visits and institutionalisation. Badly designed housing costs the community in avoidable accidents and hospital stays, expensive modifications and specialised accommodation.

The minimum low-cost features necessary for a dwelling to be visitable are:

- A step-free entrance and pathway from the street or car parking;
- A toilet with turning space for mobility aids at entry level;
- Reinforced shower and toilet walls for optional grab rail installation;

- Doors and corridors wide enough to allow ease of movement between rooms;
- Additional features we are now including will make a dwelling liveable for everyone:
 - A bathroom with step-free shower;
 - A bathroom, living and bed space on the entrance level;
 - Kitchen access to allow for easy movement between benches;
 - Installation of switches, power points and window controls at an accessible height; and
 - Slip resistant floors in kitchens, bathrooms and laundries.

Comparative Victorian studies indicate that first four items of the above building features would cost less than \$900 per dwelling in the initial building stage, however to carry out these same four features as a retrofit, costs an average of \$19,400, over 20 times more.

Queensland Action for Universal Housing Design acknowledges the strategic plan of the National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design; however, to obtain certainty for the industry and a reliable supply for the community now, Queensland Action for Universal Housing Design calls for:

- Regulation for minimum access requirements in the Building Code of Australia for all new and extensively modified housing.
- Housing is one of life's essentials!
- I do think people, architects, builders should be more forward thinking – for example I would NEVER build a stairway without a hand rail and then expect my 90 year old Mum to try and climb it. Maybe this man doesn't have a 90 year old mother or a friend in a wheelchair or maybe he thinks that people with disability have no right to access his home or maybe he just doesn't think!! I didn't think until I was in this situation – I thought that I would be better off dead than in a wheelchair!
- Universal design, inclusive design, barrier free, visitable,

I am re-designing my home to Universal Housing Design, I have lived in its current form for over 19 years so I know exactly what is required. One thing I am looking forward to is closing the toilet door and being in private!! My home will be able to be accessed by absolutely anyone

when it is finished. I have attracted a fabulous team of people who I have involved with every single detail of my renovation. They become my family. I want people around who when they see something not right – they say something. Never assume – ‘it makes an ass out of you and me’!! Never a truer word said in jest! I’m designing my home to suit ‘me’ and I’m not worried about re-sale value. If everything goes to plan – I’ll be dead and not have to worry about re-sale value. Modifications to my home are intended for ‘me’ to be able to live out my life in comfort. Besides, there are no homes on the market for persons with disability which doesn’t look like a ‘disabled circus’! I plan to show-case the modifications to my home in an article for CRAFT magazine so I can take more people on my journey. So this is just to whet your appetite!

The renovations have started. The demolition took one third of my home away so I had to get used to living in a confined space – it worked out quite well when the noisy work started. All I had to do was close the back door.

The concrete pad is down, the framing is up, new windows and doors are in and – it is just how I envisaged the area to look. As I am very strict with my finances, I am only affording the back end of my home to be done at this stage. This way I can move furniture out there and clear out the existing house to get it ready for the next stage. I’m not doing my kitchen this time around until I have saved my pennies so I’ll be using the old kitchen.

This renovation is to be done in 3 stages – this way I won’t be making any rushed decisions about my accessible home. My potential new kitchen can be marked out on the floor so I can scoot around making sure that it works for me. The only section which will be used by me ‘only’ will be a table height bench at one end of my island bench. That way the kitchen is very usable by ‘uprights’ and I don’t do all the cooking!

Gosh, all the little unexpected things you can’t plan for. I have budgeted and planned for every little thing that I could physically see but I didn’t allow for problems with the stormwater drainage which didn’t show up till things were dug up! My brother tried to tell me that I needed a contingency amount in my budget but I wouldn’t listen. Anyway I had to

put a few things on the back burner and fix the stormwater drainage. I'm now an expert on plumbing issues!

Right now I'm relishing in my new space, almost keen not to fill it up with furniture but I will, and I'm very excited in the end product.



My bedroom & patio demolished.



Sitting in my potential office (my old bedroom) and my new kitchen area (my old patio area) looking into my new living and dining rooms.



The rear view of my new extension.



The side view of my new extension.

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