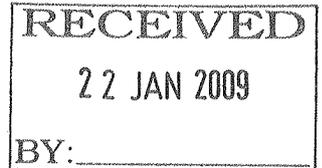


## South Australian Access Consultants Network



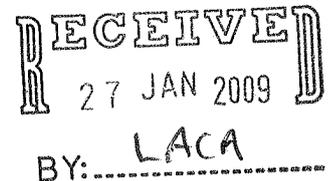
47 Grey Avenue  
Welland SA 5007

Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP  
House of Representatives Legal & Constitutional Affairs Committee  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600



### SUBMISSION

January 15<sup>th</sup> 2009



Dear Mr Dreyfus

Thank you for receiving comment on the newly released Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards. We commend the Government for taking this long-awaited step forward with many provisions that will assist the DDA to integrate fully into the built fabric of our country.

This Disability Standard has been on the horizon for many years now. As professional access consultants we urge the Federal government to enable this Disability Standard for Access to Premises into legislation to assist us in our vital role to recommend and provide good, consistent and accurate advice to all levels of government, the building and construction industry, architects, urban planners, interior designers, traffic engineers and individuals who make up our client base.

Our Australian Standards are considered to be the best and most generous in the world. Formalizing their use, as best practice, puts Australians with disabilities in an enviable position when it comes to their safe and dignified use of the build environment. There are however some gaps that need consideration and research.

We write as an active group of access consultants in South Australia who are concerned that one particular area has been omitted from this Standard because of interest group resistance in the past. It is of concern to us that nothing in the Standard assists with safety of people with mobility and sensory impairments in multi-storey buildings at times of emergency evacuation.

As our cities are consolidating with increasing density, more people are living and working in high-rise buildings. With the ageing demographic of Australia, it is urgent that comprehensive guidance be prepared that helps designers, architects and builders to make equitable egress from buildings as well as access into buildings.

Although it is probably too late to influence this first Access to Premises Standard Disability Consultancy Services Pty Ltd and ACAA SA Coalition urges your review to put the idea of fire safety and egress from multi-storey buildings as a research and development target to be included in the first five year review.

In the past, the building and property sector have balked at ideas to examine and refine development pertaining to safety of people with disabilities in multi-storey buildings whether residential, educational, health or commercial. The following are areas we would like to see considered as starting points:

- Standardisation of visual warning devices with a safe visual light consistent with international hospital emergency evacuation code (orange colour flashing light), not a strobe flash as this can trigger seizures in people with epilepsy
- PC integration – alerts from alarm system integrated into building software
- Braille plans (Building Directories) and signage
- Hearing loops – integrated with alarm system
- Luminescent evacuation plans and skirting board level arrows indicating fire refuge/exits
- Fire-rated lifts with separate electricity supply
- Powered doors on exits
- Seals on smoke-isolating exit doors
- Advise on evacuation equipment, such as stairway evacuation devices and pods
- Creation of a package of measures for fire refuges – specification of size, internal and external signage, grabrails, intercoms, lights or GPS prompts to show they are occupied and from which level, how to mark on emergency plans, standardisation of language about the facility.

There is also a need for all multi-storey building managers to develop more awareness and innovation in thinking about assisted evacuation by making personal emergency evacuation plans in consultation with individuals with disabilities and keeping them up-to-date. This type of planning is excellent where people are residents or permanent workers although does not cater for people visiting a site for the first time or occasionally.

It is vital that our field construct guidelines, as we have with the other access codes, which provide a built environment with consistent cues and facilities so that everybody can move about independently in our community, feeling safe wherever and whenever they are in multi-storey facilities.

Yours sincerely

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