

Universal features improve accessibility

Making your home accessible helps to meet changing needs across a lifetime and ensures that everyone can live in or visit your home in comfort.

This article forms the first in a series which will be published over the next 12 months in an effort to teach homeowners and the building industry about the benefits of using Liveable Homes features.

Liveable Homes is a concept that will benefit new homeowners and occupiers and future generations. It is an approach that makes houses easier to live in and move around in.

Accessible homes support the whole community, including our ageing population, parents with small children and people with temporary or permanent disability and it starts in the planning and design stage.

Incorporating accessible design features into your new home doesn't mean compromising on style or blowing your budget.

In fact, modern interior design already lends itself to accessibility.

Open-plan living, spacious kitchens, wide entry doors and underslung bathroom basins all contribute to a home's accessibility and are the epitome of modern home design.

A flat entry, wide doorways and hallways and an accessible toilet and shower can make a huge difference to the accessibility of the home without compromising design or cost.

Simple considerations at the planning and design stage can make a dramatic difference to the livability of the home. Retrofitting as an afterthought can be a more costly exercise.

The Liveable Homes initiative has seen the State Government partner with the WA building industry to give homebuilders the tools and resources required to build accessible homes.

There are a number of great resources available to assist builders including the Liveable Homes website which was created to provide resources to help builders, designers, architects and homeowners incorporate universal design in their homes.



The HIA is continuing to work hard to encourage the industry to expand the number of private and public-sector homes that are livable for everyone.

By working with industry and providing them with workable tools, we have seen major builders, home designers and architects throughout WA actively incorporating accessible features in their housing designs, and that is fantastic.

This year's first-time inclusion of a Liveable Home category in the HIA's annual awards program will further inspire the industry to build accessible homes. Entries for the new category will



Liveable Homes is a concept aimed at making houses easier to live in through open-plan living and spacious kitchens.

be assessed against criteria such as workmanship, quality, design effectiveness, visual appeal, innovation, environmental sustainability and market relevance and also on how well the essential and desirable design features outlined in the Liveable Homes resources have been used.

For more information on Liveable Homes and to access resources including technical manuals, checklists, fact sheets, a list of essential and desirable design features and variety of house plans, visit the website liveablehomes.net.au.

■ John Dastlik is the executive director of the WA Housing Industry Association.

Site theft campaign reaping dividends

INDUSTRY NEWS

Building site theft was up slightly last month but is still significantly lower than in the first quarter of last year, according to organisers of the Name & Shame campaign.

Aimed at reducing theft and vandalism on building sites, the campaign is a partnership between the Housing Industry Association, WA Police and private security firm Meridian Services.

Brabham was the top hot spot for building site crime in March, with 21 incidents reported in the north-eastern suburb, closely followed by neighbouring Aveley, with 18 reported incidents.

Campaign organisers suggested this was a result of increased building activity in the area.

In contrast, Ellenbrook dropped down the rankings, with one-third fewer reported incidents following concerted efforts by the police and investigators from Meridian Services.

The items most commonly stolen from building sites during March were water meters, which were the subject of 63 reports.

Given the large number of thefts of water meters, copper pipe and electrical cable, campaign organisers suspect there is an organised ring operating within the illegal scrap metal trade and have stepped up investigations accordingly.

To report an incident on a building site, visit hianameandshame.com.au or phone 1300 273 9273.

Gemma Nisbet



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