

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 643**  
**Asked on Tuesday, 25 May 2021**

**MS F SIMPSON** ASKED MINISTER FOR ENERGY, RENEWABLES AND HYDROGEN AND MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS AND PROCUREMENT (HON M DE BRENNI)

With reference to the Minister's statement on 30 April 2021 that the new construction code under consultation will 'add as little as one per cent of the building cost' to require all new built houses meet a silver standard of access—

Will the Minister advise (a) whether the Minister has undertaken an assessment of all cost impacts including impact on yield of lots, housing size, design of access on housing estates and potentially the cost of consultants when applying for exemptions, (b) will the Minister table this assessment and (c) has the Minister considered any other way of achieving an affordable, accessible housing market with more mobility accessible product?

**ANSWER**

- a) In 2017, the then Building Ministers' Forum, supported by the then Council of Australian Governments (COAG), directed the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) to undertake a Regulatory Impact Analysis on the possible inclusion of a minimum accessibility standard for residential housing in the National Construction Code (NCC).

The ABCB engaged the Centre for International Economics to undertake a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) in accordance with the COAG Best Practice Regulation. The Consultation RIS was released for an eight-week consultation period from 6 July 2020 to 31 August 2020. On 3 May 2021, the Decision RIS was publicly released.

The cost-benefit analysis undertaken as part of the RIS process considered the additional construction and space-related costs of including accessibility features in a home. Impacts on lots and building footprints were factored into these space-related costs. The cost-benefit analysis also considered the additional costs of verifying compliance with the minimum accessibility standard, which would include consideration of exemptions by building certifiers and surveyors. Transition costs associated with redesigning building plans and educating industry professionals were also considered.

The decision taken by a majority of Building Ministers acknowledges the costs identified in the Decision RIS but reflects their assessment that a regulatory solution will result in significant and lasting benefit to Australians who need access to homes with accessible features.

The Queensland Government is currently consulting with industry stakeholders to identify necessary exemptions and transition timeframes to support implementation.

- b) Both the Consultation RIS and Decision RIS are publicly available on the ABCB's website ([www.abcb.gov.au](http://www.abcb.gov.au)).

- c) Other options were considered. Past voluntary measures to increase accessible housing stock have failed. The most significant voluntary initiative was the 2010 Livable Housing Australia initiative, where design guidelines were released and an aspirational target that all new homes be built to an agreed design standard by 2020. This aspirational target was not met, with approximately only 5-10% of new houses being built to comply with accessibility standards.

Due to the past failures of voluntary measures and the limitations inherent in a subsidy program, the majority of Building Ministers agreed a mandatory minimum accessibility standard in the NCC was needed to commence long-term structural reform to meet the growing demand for accessible housing.