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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MR-881

NATIONAL BUILDING STANDARDS: ACCESS TO PREMISES

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB)* welcomes the Commonwealth Government's initiative to introduce new national standards for publicly accessible buildings that will make those buildings more accessible for people with a disability.

The board chairman, Mr Graham Huxley AM, confirmed that the ABCB would play its part in delivering these new standards and work with industry and governments to achieve good outcomes for the community.

The Building Code of Australia (BCA)* would mirror the national standards and thereby significantly lift national consistency in this important area of access to buildings for all people. The new standards will harmonise Commonwealth, State and Territory approaches and generate greater certainty in the design and construction of buildings.

The board recognised that the implementation of this national policy initiative requires collaboration between Commonwealth, State, Territory and local government as well as with industry and the community. Mr Huxley foreshadowed that he would be writing to national building industry stakeholder bodies to alert them to the changes and working with them for the successful implementation of the national standards.

The board had agreed that as a first step, it would work closely with the Australian Human Rights Commission and State and Territory administrations to deliver industry awareness seminars prior to the adoption of the new national standards into the BCA.

Major changes include requirements for:

- accessible entrances;
- accessible sanitary facilities;
- lift access to upper storeys;
- passing and turning spaces in corridors;
- better wheelchair seating spaces and hearing augmentation in auditoria; and
- better access to certain swimming pools.

*** About the ABCB and the Building Code of Australia**

The ABCB is a joint initiative of all levels of government in Australia, with the building industry. It oversees issues relating to health, safety, amenity and sustainability in building. The ABCB promotes efficiency in the design, construction and performance of buildings through the national Building Code of Australia (BCA).

* The BCA contains provisions for access to certain buildings for people with a disability. These provisions have been reviewed in line with the development of the DDA Standards. They will be aligned to the DDA Standards as soon as possible.