

WHAT'S REQUIRED FOR A DISABLED/ACCESSIBLE BATHROOM IN YOUR ACCOMMODATION PROJECT?

Learn what's required for accessible bathrooms in modular housing projects. Understand NCC standards, building classes, and smart design for compliance.

Published: November 10, 2025

What's Required for a Disabled/Accessible Bathroom in Your Accommodation Project? A Guide for Asset Owners and Project Managers

When you're responsible for delivering accommodation that works—for workers, tenants, or guests—getting accessibility right isn't just about ticking a box. It's about reducing risk, increasing asset performance, and ensuring the facility is future-proofed from the outset.

In this article, we break down what's actually required to include compliant disabled/accessible bathrooms in your accommodation projects—particularly for those managing commercial or government-related modular housing in New South Wales and Queensland. Whether you're overseeing workforce housing, faith-based community builds, or regional deployments for essential services, you'll walk away understanding what's needed, what's smart, and what's durable.

Because in this game, smart project leaders know: if you do it once and do it right, it pays you back long-term.

1. What is an accessible or disabled bathroom?

Let's start with the basics.

An accessible bathroom, in Australian standards, refers to a facility that complies with AS 1428.1:2021 – Design for access and mobility, and relevant sections of the [National Construction Code \(NCC\)](#). These define the features and clearances needed for use by individuals with mobility impairments, including full-time wheelchair users.

These bathrooms typically include:

- Minimum clear circulation space (usually 2,300 mm x 1,900 mm)
- Grab rails positioned for assisted movement
- Toilet placement for lateral transfer from a wheelchair
- Accessible basins and lever-operated taps
- Wide doorway clearances (at least 850 mm)

There are also different design requirements for **ambulant** facilities, intended for people with reduced mobility who do not use wheelchairs, which involve narrower cubicles but include grab rails and accessible fittings.

2. When is an accessible bathroom required?

This is where many projects get tripped up: accessible bathrooms are **not always mandatory**, but when they are—it's non-negotiable.

Under the **NCC**, accessibility is mandated based on the **building classification** and intended use. Here's the key point for Aruva clients:

Most Aruva modular houses are Class 1—typical standalone or grouped dwellings where accessibility isn't a legal requirement unless specifically called for.



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However, we also support clients with **Class 3 and Class 9 options**, where the NCC does require accessible facilities. These classes typically apply to:

- **Class 3:** Accommodation for unrelated persons (e.g., hotels, worker accommodation, hostels)
- **Class 9:** Public buildings like health care and assembly spaces

Whether you need an accessible bathroom depends not just on the building itself, but on **how it's used** and **what council, certifiers, or planners specify**. If your project falls under these classifications—or might in future—it's critical to plan for accessibility from day one.

3. Best-practice vs minimum compliance

Even where accessible bathrooms aren't technically required, many asset owners choose to include them. Why? Because accessibility delivers practical advantages:

- **Mitigates future compliance risk**
- **Expands tenant usability** (including ageing or mobility-impaired users)
- **Prevents costly retrofits**
- **Demonstrates inclusivity and foresight**

Best-practice accessible bathrooms go beyond compliance to deliver long-term value:

- **Step-free, hobless showers:** Safer and easier to clean
- **Reinforced wall backing:** Prepares for future grab rail installation
- **Anti-slip vinyl flooring:** Reduces fall risk and maintenance
- **Lever or sensor taps:** Accessible and durable
- **Wipe-clean wall cladding:** Mould-resistant and hygienic

Strong, simple, and built to last—so your investment keeps delivering.

4. Modular houses & accessibility: Getting it right upfront

Designing for accessibility is simpler and more cost-effective when it's built into the structure from the start. That's especially true for modular houses, where planning and fabrication happen concurrently.

At Aruva, our focus is on the **rapid fulfilment of superior modular buildings, driven by efficient processes & approved partnerships**. Whether you're working on a Class 1 project or require accessible Class 3 or 9 modules, our team ensures:

- All units are designed to meet the required classification
- Accessible bathroom layouts are pre-certified and replicable
- Transportable modules are built to protect compliant features in transit
- Plumbing, drainage, and reinforcement are all factored in

Our approach helps clients deliver consistent, compliant results at scale—especially valuable for asset owners with multiple units or remote locations.

Our process keeps it simple, so you're sorted from start to finish.

5. Risks of skipping compliance

When accessibility is required and not delivered, the cost is more than financial. Risks include:

- **Building certification delays or failures**
- **Legal liability** under anti-discrimination legislation
- **Public scrutiny or reputational harm** (especially for publicly funded projects)
- **High-cost modifications post-completion**

That's why experienced developers, government buyers, and organisational leaders are investing in future-ready infrastructure now. They're not just ticking the box—they're protecting their bottom line.

However, not all products on the market meet the standard they claim. There's a growing influx of offshore-manufactured modular units—particularly from parts of Asia—that appear compliant at first glance but fail when inspected against the detail of Australian standards.

There are cases where critical measurements are out by millimetres, grab rails aren't structurally supported, or fixtures don't meet the required performance specs. For buyers, that means costly rework, certification failure, and liability exposure.

It's why working with a trusted Australian supplier who builds specifically for our codes and conditions is more important than ever. It's what smart organisations do when they're serious about performance from their people and assets.

6. What you should ask your supplier or builder

Before you approve any modular housing package, ask:

- What class is this dwelling designed for?
- Do your accessible bathrooms meet AS 1428.1:2021?

- Can these units be upgraded to Class 3 or Class 9 if needed?
- Are the walls reinforced for grab rails?
- Are the fixtures commercial-grade and compliant?
- How do you ensure transport doesn't compromise compliance?

We're a down-to-earth team you can rely on.

Final word: Accessibility is a strategic decision

Accessible bathrooms aren't just a requirement—they're a strategic decision. When planned properly, they reduce liability, increase your asset's longevity, and help ensure you're covered—whether you're operating under current codes or adapting to future changes.

Most importantly, the choice to plan ahead means you won't be caught out by classification shifts, tenant needs, or council conditions later.

It's why we say Real Living. Delivered.

REAL LIVING. DELIVERED.



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