



Nova White Papers – Accessibility Series

AUSTRALIA

International Accessibility Standards:

AUSTRALIA

Summary

Australia has a well established code structure at the national level that include disability standards. The country enacted an Access to Premise Standards for their Disability Discrimination Act in 1992. These standards, developed into formal language by Standards Australia, a non-profit standards development organization (Documented as AS14281.1) is integrated into the national Building Code for Australia and located in section D3.6 (Last updated in 2009). Braille standards are developed by the Australian Braille Authority. The national building code is enforced by local code officials.

The National Building Code Accessibility Guideline Summary

Scope

- The requirements of the national building code are limited to the identification of accessible facilities, services, and features.

Braille

- Grade 1 Braille is used in Australia, a form of Braille that complies with the Unified Braille Code, a form of Braille where all letters and numbers are given a Braille equivalent. This form of Braille is used throughout the world but is different from the Grade 2 standard found in the United States.
- Braille must be domed, left justified to raised text, and be 8mm below the tactile characters (5/16 inches), not including descenders.
- When multiple lines of Braille are used a semicircular text locator must be used aligned with the first line of text. Where an arrow is used on a tactile sign, a small arrow the height of the Braille must be included alongside the Braille.

Tactile Characters.

- Upper/lower case tactile letters are required as opposed to the upper case only requirement in the United States. Lower case tactile letters are mandated to have a height of no less than 50% of the upper case letters.
- Upper case tactile characters must have a height of between 15-55mm (app. 9/16-2 1/16 inch). These characters must have a stroke with a stroke width of between 2-7mm (app. 1/16-1/4 inch). Only fonts with consistent stroke thickness (San Serif) must be used)
- Characters must be a minimum of 17.5mm (11/16 inch in height) per meter of viewing distance. Most viewing distances are 1-2 meters for signs.
- Text must have a minimum character spacing of 2mm (1/16 inch) and a minimum word spacing of 10 mm (3/8 inch)
- All tactile characters as well as the sign itself must have rounded edges.

Sign Height and Location

- Sign heights and character heights off the ground surface are mandates. For sign heights the sign should be between 1200-1600 mm (app. 47-63 inches) while signs with a single line of characters should be between 1250-1350 mm (app. 49-53 inches). In some cases sign including high traffic areas signs can be placed slightly above the heights outlined.
- If at all possible the sign should be placed on the latch side of the door between 50-300 mm (2-6 inches) from the door moulding. If this is not possible the sign can be placed on the latch side of the door or the door itself.

Luminance (Contrast)

- Australia has a formal contrast requirement for both signs and characters of 30% minimum luminance ratio (Similar to light reflectance value). A sign must contrast with the wall behind it, as well as the sign and the characters on the sign. If the sign does not sufficiently contrast with its background a minimum 5mm(3/16 inch) contrasting border must be put on the sign.
- The codes also mandate minimum lighting levels to ensure adequate contrast. This includes monitoring lighting levels in all public areas during open hours.
- All sign characters must have a matte or a low gloss finish.

Symbols

- The international symbol of accessibility must be used in a strictly mandated approach. It must be a white character on a blue background (B21 Ultramarine or similar) and the character must be facing the direction of traffic. For identification signs the symbol must be facing to the right.

Restroom Signs

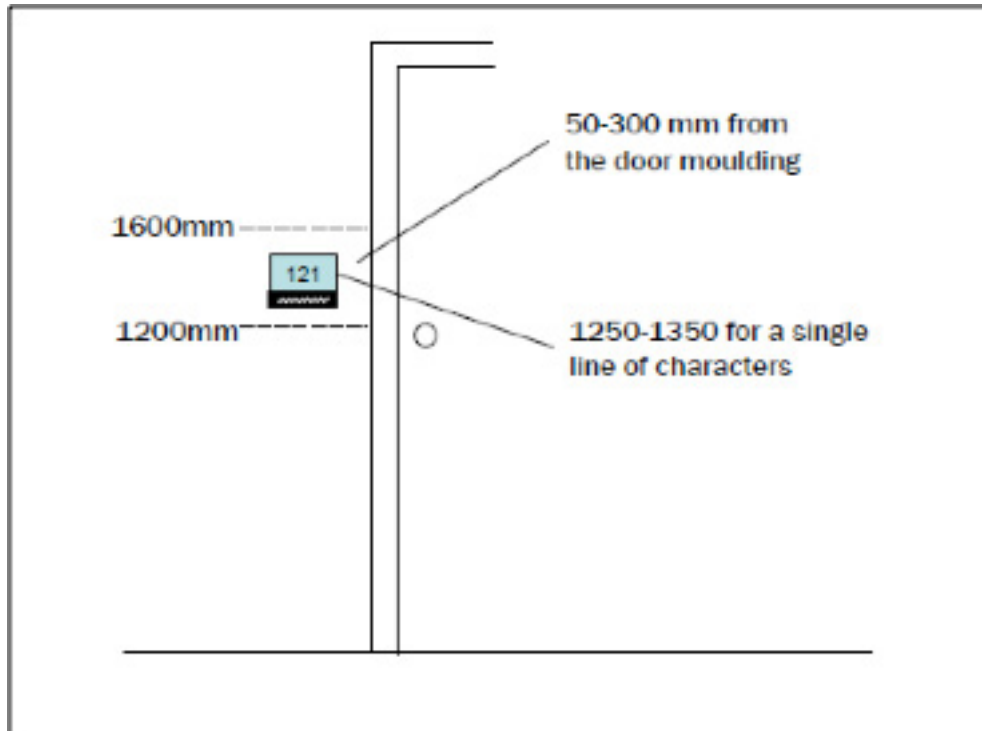
- Restroom signs must include both raised and visual symbols of accessibility, male and female symbols, text characters and Braille.
- Signs for unisex accessible restrooms must include the letters RH or LH to indicate a left-hand or right-hand side transfer onto the WC pan. The minimum font size is required to be 20mm(15/16 inch)

Restroom Signs

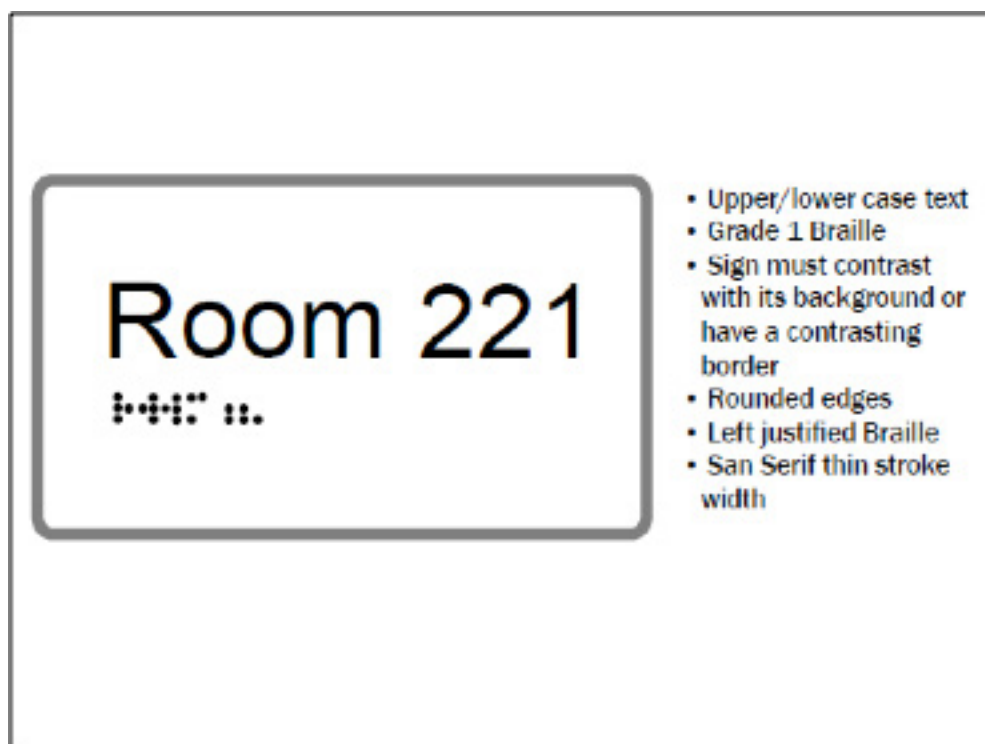
- Men's restroom signs must be represented by a triangle ¼" thick with 12" long edges and must contrast with the background door. The triangle edges must be rounded or chamfered with a minimum 1/8" radius.
- Women's restroom signs must be represented by a ¼" thick 12" diameter circle and must contrast with the background door.
- Unisex restrooms must be represented by a ¼" thick triangle transimposed on a ¼" circle. The triangle must contrast with the circle which in turn must contrast with the background door.
- The national ADA requires that all restroom signs must have additional raised letters and Braille. If the doors swing out and additional tactile sign must be included adjacent to the door.

Design Recommendations

- The code of Australia is similar to many international codes, but deviates in significant ways from the American's with Disabilities Act. Be sure to identify these changes and similarities if developing a multi-national sign system.
- Use only metric units when working with Australian codes. English equivalents are only approximate and will not be approved by code officials.
- Be sure to measure the lighting level when developing the sign program.
- Grade 1 Braille takes up a significant amount of space on a sign can potentially limit the amount of information that can be used.
- Make sure to note the difference between character distances and sign distances. Both metrics are used in the code.



Sign height and location



Sign details