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Title:

Press statement by the Minister for Social Security, on easy access for handicapped people in Government Buildings

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PRESS STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY, MR BILL HAYDEN,
ON EASY ACCESS FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

12 SEPTEMBER 1974

WGH/89

Australian Government Buildings in future will be designed to provide easier access for handicapped people.

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, has asked State Premiers to give similar consideration to the needs of the handicapped when State Government buildings are being planned.

The Minister for Social Security, Mr Hayden, said today the new Australian Government policy would ensure that Government building projects would provide suitable access and toilet facilities for the elderly and the disabled.

Mr Hayden said he hoped the policy eventually would influence local government and private enterprise developers to include similar details in their building plans.

He said the Government's decision was in line with the recommendations of the Senate Standing Committee on Health and Welfare.

It would be implemented by the Departments of Housing and Construction, Services and Property, Transport, Urban and Regional Development, the Postmaster-General's and others involved in the planning and use of public buildings.

Mr Hayden said the proposed design improvements could blend with the rest of the buildings without standing out in sharp contrast to normal surroundings.

The Government believed that access ramps, handrails and special toilets for the handicapped could be provided at little extra cost.

Smaller details such as recessed door-mats, wider corridors to cater for wheelchairs, the installation of more easily opening doors and the removal of single steps could be included in the planning stages.

Mr Hayden said the Department of Social Security had begun work on plans to improve public access to its own Canberra headquarters, Juliana House, which did not have ramps or handrails at the entrance steps.

He said the Australian Council for Rehabilitation of the Disabled (ACROD) had received a Government grant to enable it to revise building codes on the issue.

The current building code had been drawn up with the assistance of the Australian Standards Association.

However, the Government agreed it could be improved so that public facilities could be even more accessible to the handicapped.