

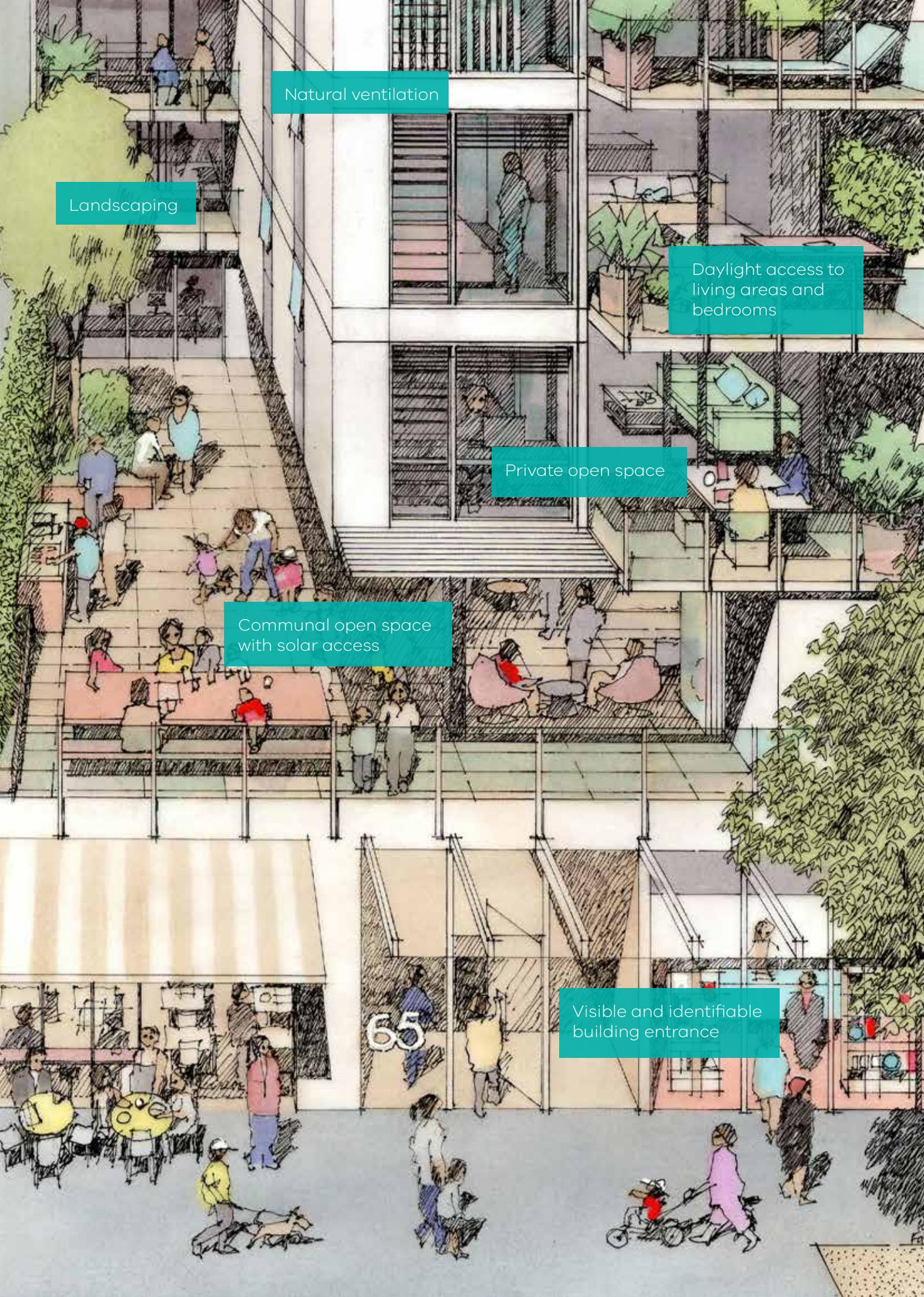
Better Apartments for Victorians

Improving the liveability and sustainability
of apartments in Victoria



DECEMBER 2016





Natural ventilation

Landscaping

Daylight access to living areas and bedrooms

Private open space

Communal open space with solar access

Visible and identifiable building entrance

Message from the Minister for Planning

The Better Apartments Design Standards will greatly improve the amenity and liveability of new apartments, for the future wellbeing of Victorian communities.

We have listened to the feedback we received on the *Better Apartments – A Discussion Paper* published in May 2015 and the draft design standards published in August 2016. The draft standards have been improved by the contributions of planning and design practitioners, the development industry, councils and the public.

Drawing on the diversity of high-quality, solutions-oriented feedback we received and by working through the detail with technical experts, we have developed standards that will ensure new apartments are the high-quality, liveable spaces Victorians deserve.

The new standards provide clear rules for apartment liveability while allowing for innovation and design excellence. They will enhance Victoria's reputation as a great place to live and leave a legacy for all those who contributed to the new standards by ensuring apartment developments built today meet the long-term needs of Victorians.

In March 2017, we will implement the standards in the Victorian planning system. To support them, we are producing best-practice design guidelines, a design review process, public information materials, and an education and training program for planning and building design practitioners.

I am confident the new apartment design standards will greatly improve the amenity and sustainability of apartments and enhance their liveability, for the benefit of future generations.



The Honourable Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Planning

Creating better apartments

How we choose to live is changing, and apartments are increasingly the preferred housing choice for many people. Apartment construction in Melbourne and regional cities provides our growing population with an alternative to traditional, detached housing. It also provides affordable and diverse housing options and well-located housing for people at all stages of life.

People want enduring apartment developments in which to live and invest. This calls for fair and effective processes to assess apartment developments, similar to those for detached housing.

Until now, Victoria has provided limited design guidance for apartment developments compared to other Australian and some international jurisdictions. This has resulted in poor apartment designs that provide inadequate long-term living environments.

In 2015, we asked people to rank the key issues affecting apartment amenity by most to least important. The top issues were:

- access to adequate daylight, functional space and natural ventilation
- minimisation of noise between apartments and from external sources
- improving the energy and resource efficiency performance of an apartment and apartment building.

State and local governments, planning and design practitioners, the development industry and the public all share responsibility for improving the liveability of our urban environments.

To improve liveability, new apartments must be well-designed and meet the needs of many different types of households including the young, people with limited mobility, families, middle-aged downsizers, and the aged.

We need to ensure apartments have adequate daylight access, privacy, outlook, functional internal and outdoor space, storage, natural ventilation and acoustic protection to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. We also need to design apartments to meet the needs of people with limited mobility, and to help protect the environment by encouraging recycling and waste minimisation, energy and water efficiency, and by providing adequate landscaping to minimise stormwater run-off and to help cool our urban areas.

In setting the basic standards for internal apartment design, the Victorian Government is taking action to ensure Victorians have high-quality housing choices that offer long-term liveability.

We developed the apartment standards in consultation with planning and design practitioners, the development industry, councils, technical experts and the public. The extensive consultation process started with the release of *Better Apartments – A Discussion Paper* in May 2015 and concluded following the release of *Better Apartment Draft Design Standards* in August 2016.

Well-designed apartments will ensure that as Melbourne and our regional cities grow, good design leaves a positive legacy of better apartments for future generations.

New apartment design standards

The apartment design standards provide a consistent framework for the design and assessment of apartment developments in Victoria to ensure they provide:

- desirable and affordable housing choices
- safe and healthy living environments
- enhanced liveability and sustainability
- a legacy of quality housing stock for future generations.

The standards respond to community concerns about the internal amenity of apartments. They will provide the development industry with greater certainty, and encourage investment in Victoria. In response to feedback received from planning and design practitioners and the development industry on the August 2016 draft design standards, the new apartment design standards allow for greater flexibility and innovation in apartment design.

The standards will apply to all apartments and adopt the same performance-based approach currently used to assess residential developments (ResCode).

In March 2017 the standards will be implemented in the *Victoria Planning Provisions* and all planning schemes and new supporting tools and processes will be introduced:

- **Best-practice design guidelines** for designing and assessing apartment developments, which will include examples of how the standards can be applied in different urban contexts.
- An **education and training program** for council and private-sector planning, building and design practitioners about the design and assessment of apartment developments in line with the new standards, also considering alternative design solutions. The program will start in March 2017 and will comprise a number of free sessions.
- A **design review process** to provide guidance and advice to local governments about how to assess more complex apartment developments.
- An **apartment buyers and renters guide**, to help buyers and renters make informed decisions.

Summary of the standards



Building setback

The standard ensures the setback of apartment buildings responds to the urban context and provides for adequate daylight access, outlook and privacy.



Functional layout

The standard ensures the dimensions of bedrooms and living areas provide adequate space and functional internal areas.



Room depth

The standard ensures the room-depth-to-ceiling-height ratio of habitable rooms (such as living areas and bedrooms) provides adequate daylight to apartments.



Windows

The standard ensures habitable rooms have adequate daylight from a window in an external wall. A well-designed snorkel layout may be used to provide daylight to bedrooms but borrowed light from another room is not allowed.



Storage

The standard ensures apartments have adequate internal and external storage space that is functional and accessible.



Noise impacts

The standard ensures the design of apartments protects the health, amenity and comfort of residents from any adverse internal and external noise impacts.



Energy efficiency

The standard ensures apartment developments are energy-efficient and designed to improve residents' thermal comfort.



Solar access to communal open space

The standard ensures communal open space is provided with sufficient sunlight to ensure usability and amenity.



Natural ventilation

The standard ensures effective cross-ventilation through windows, doors or other openings, to provide natural air flow to apartments.



Private open space

The standard ensures usable, private outdoor space is provided for the recreation and service needs of residents.



Communal open space

The standard ensures the provision of communal open space that is designed to accommodate a range of communal activities for the benefit of residents.



Landscaping

The standard ensures the provision of an attractive and functional environment for residents, with appropriate landscaping that is consistent with the urban context and which helps mitigate the heat effects of urban environments.



Accessibility

The standard ensures the design of bathrooms, door openings and corridors are designed to be accessible to people with limited mobility.



Building entry and circulation

The standard ensures entrances to buildings and apartments provide safe, functional and efficient movement for residents and visitors.



Waste and recycling

The standard ensures apartment developments enable effective recycling and waste facility management that minimise impacts on residential amenity and public health.



Integrated water and stormwater management

The standard ensures apartment developments optimise the use of all water sources, reduce pollution of waterways, minimise stormwater run-off and help mitigate the heat effects of urban environments.

For more information about the Better Apartments initiatives and to download a full copy of the standards, visit www.delwp.vic.gov.au/better-apartments.

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