



Consumer Factsheet

Landscape Modifications

PEER
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If modifications are needed to provide access for a home then landscape modifications are an alternative to ramps or lifts.

What is a landscape modification?

A landscape modification is an alternative to a ramp or lift achieved by redesigning the garden and changing the slope of the land and pathways between street and home entrance or entrances.

Landscape modifications have a number of benefits, such as maintaining the original look of the home; however, use can be limited because it can only be done where land level, gradient and housing type allow.

What are the access options for my home?

There are three main ways of providing easy access to the home where existing stairs limit accessibility; they being ramps, lifts and landscape modifications (Figure 1.):

- A **ramp** is an inclined built surface (usually of concrete, timber or aluminium) on a continuous path with handrails and a maximum gradient of 1:14.
- A **lift** is a mechanical device designed to raise/lower people to access a veranda or between floors of a multi-level storey home.
- A **landscape modification** is the regrading of the pathway between street and front, rear or side home entrance. This enables a continuous walkway that must also have a maximum incline of 1:20.

What are some of the benefits of a landscape modification?

There are a number of benefits which include:

- level entry access for all who live and visit the home;
- Improved accessibility to the garden;
- Improved functionality of the garden by reducing maintenance; and
- maintain or improve the aesthetics of the home

A well designed landscape modification can complement the façade of a home and not detract from its original architecture.



Source: (A) Courtesy of www.constructionphotography.com
(B) NSW HMMS State Council, www.nswhmms.org.au
(C) 3D modelling by Phillippa Carnemolla

What are some of the limitations of a landscape modification?

Of each of the three access options, landscape modification requires the most land area. The Australian Standard for Access and Mobility states that a sloped walkway must not have a gradient steeper than 1:20.

Example: A single step with a height of 190mm can be replaced with an accessible pathway that is 3.8m long. For each additional step an additional 3.8m length of pathway is required to maintain a slope of 1:20.

The main reason that many housing types are unsuitable for a landscape modification is not having enough land area to provide a long enough pathway of 1:20 slope.

My house has both a front and rear entrance, which should I make accessible?

Consider which entrance is most functional, giving you access to the areas and facilities you require. This may be the entrance with the best linkage to the outdoor and entertainment space or connection with car parking and storage areas. It is these factors, in combination with the slope and number of stairs to an entrance that can help people to decide where to locate the access that will allow flatter and easier circulation between house and outside space.

Are landscape modifications an expensive access option?

There is limited research that investigates the cost comparison between landscape modifications, ramps and lifts. In general, the steeper the land around the home the more complex and therefore expensive a landscape modification would be.

For an accurate comparison, the home will require assessment and quotation for each access option.

How do I find out if a landscape modification is suitable?

The Home Modification Information Clearinghouse has published a report outlining issues when considering if a landscape modification is appropriate for a particular home. This publication is available at www.homemods.info.

It is recommended that a landscape specialist is consulted to assess the accessibility of the home and garden. Any landscape solution should consider the particular requirements of the Australian Standards relating to site access and mobility AS 1428.

***This information was correct at time of printing.*