

Proposed Australian Standard: Menstrual
Design in Sanitary Facilities

Pre Face

This Standard was prepared by Penelope Cowell for the purpose of ARBE 6234

This Standard is part of a proposed series addressing menstrual design in sanitary facilities. The series comprises the following parts:

Part 1: Circulation Space

Part 2: Fixtures and Fittings

Part 3: Hygiene and Maintenance

The objective of this Standard is to provide building designers and users (architects, property owners and regulators) with the minimum design requirements for new building work to enable adequate menstrual spaces within sanitary facilities for women and those who menstruate.

Because of the variety of situations which may need to be addressed when designing buildings and facilities, it is seen as necessary for the Standard to provide a range of data so that the requirements for menstruating can be met and allow for flexibility in design where limitations are imposed by other building conditions. The intention is to make the Standard a practical reference document for designers, particularly with regard to problem areas such as circulation clearances and disposal systems.

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Application

This Standard is intended for application to the design and construction of sanitary facilities in public and commercial buildings. It is particularly relevant to unisex sanitary facilities, accessible sanitary facilities, and to women's sanitary facilities and changing rooms.

This Standard provides the technical detail required to achieve a deemed-to-satisfy solution for the provision of menstruation spaces within sanitary facilities.

The requirements specified in this Standard are intended to ensure that menstruation spaces are available in locations where they will be most frequently required, including—

- (a) all unisex sanitary facilities;
- (b) all accessible sanitary facilities required by the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and the Premises Standards; and
- (c) at least one menstruation space in every women's sanitary facility or changing facility.

NOTE: Compliance with this Standard may also be required by other regulatory authorities, or adopted by organisations as part of best-practice design.

The intent of these requirements is to permit safe, hygienic, and dignified use of sanitary facilities by people who menstruate, acting independently, or where a person's usual method of operation is with the assistance of another.

NOTE: The Standard is based on contemporary data on menstruation management and accessibility needs, and may require adaptation in contexts outside of public and commercial buildings.

Dimensions

The dimensions given throughout this Standard are in millimetres unless shown otherwise. All dimensions are net and shall not be reduced by projecting skirtings, kerbs, handrails or other fixtures.

Dimensions refer to finished surfaces (e.g., face of wall tiles and floor finishes). Unless otherwise indicated, limiting dimensions for an inclined surface on a continuous accessible path of travel shall be taken as horizontal and vertical only.

Term and Definitions

For the purposes of this Standard, the following definitions apply:

Amenity

The features or equipment within a menstruation space that provide comfort, dignity, and usability, including seating, shelving, hooks, and disposal systems.

Accessible Height Range

The vertical zone, as defined in AS 1428.1, within which fixtures, shelves, and controls must be located to allow use by people with mobility limitations.

Accessible sanitary compartment – A sanitary compartment designed in accordance with AS 1428.1 to accommodate people with disability, including required circulation spaces and fittings.

Bathroom/Sanitary facilities – The collective provision of sanitary compartments, handwashing facilities, and associated shared amenities within a single room or designated sanitary area.

Circulation Space

The unobstructed floor area required to allow safe and convenient movement of users, including those with mobility aids.

Encroachment

The intrusion of building elements, fixtures, or fittings into required circulation spaces.

Fixture

An item permanently installed within the menstruation space, including toilets, basins, shelves, vending units, or sanitary disposal bins.

Grabrail

A bar, rail, or similar element, installed to provide support and stability for users, in accordance with AS 1428.1.

Menstrual Fluid

The bodily fluid expelled during menstruation, including blood and endometrial tissue.

Menstruate

The act of experiencing the cyclical discharge of menstrual fluid.

Menstruation Space

A designated area within a sanitary facility or compartment designed to support the management of menstruation, providing privacy, hygiene, and accessibility.

Product Dispenser

A fixture providing free or paid access to sanitary products, installed at an accessible height and location.

Sanitary Bin

A disposal unit for the hygienic containment of used sanitary products, provided within each cubicle and designed for safe, discreet, and touch-free operation.

Sanitary Compartment

An individual enclosed cubicle containing a sanitary pan, door, and associated fixtures.

Sanitary Product

Any item used for the management of menstrual fluid, including pads, tampons, menstrual cups, menstrual discs, and period underwear.

Soiled Garment

An item of clothing contaminated with menstrual fluid.

Touch-free Operation

The activation of fixtures or fittings (e.g., bins, taps, dryers) without direct hand contact, achieved via sensor or foot operation.

Universal Access

Provision of facilities designed to be inclusive of all users, regardless of gender identity, age, or ability.

2 General Requirements

A menstruation space shall be provided as follows:

(a) Female-only sanitary facilities: At least one menstruation space shall be provided within the bathroom facility.

(b) If single sex facilities are provided, menstruation space must be provided in the female toilets AND additional menstrual menstruation space within the accessible stall.

Each menstruation space shall include the following:

(a) Sanitary disposal unit – A fixed, hands-free sanitary bin, positioned within reach of the pan without obstructing circulation space.

(b) Warming wall – A safe, low-level heating surface with an automatic shut-off timer (refer Section 4.2).

(c) Temporary resting space – Seating or a surface allowing users to rest briefly during menstruation.

(d) Multi-height foot rests – To support repositioning and comfort.

(e) Below-waist level mirror – For checking garments and personal care.

(f) Garment hooks – Positioned at accessible heights for clothing and bags.

(g) Grabrails – Where provided in accessible compartments, installed in accordance with AS 1428.1.

(h) Product dispenser unit(s), accessible to all users, located within the bathroom facility (not necessarily inside compartments).

(i) Circulation space – Shall comply with clearances set out in Section X (cross-reference circulation diagrams).

Optional features:

Touch-free operation of fixtures wherever practicable (disposal units, dispensers, taps).

Clear, non-stigmatising signage indicating availability of menstrual products and facilities.

3 Circulation Space

3.1 General

(a) Circulation space shall permit the safe, hygienic and independent performance of menstruation-related activities.

(b) Required circulation spaces shall be provided in accordance with the relevant activity diagrams (see Figures 01 - 06).

(c) Encroachment by fixtures into required circulation spaces is not permitted unless indicated in the relevant figure.

(d) Where the menstruation space is an accessible sanitary compartment, all circulation spaces shall also comply with AS 1428.1 (including door approach, transfer and turning requirements).

(e) See Section 2 for mandatory fixtures and fittings.

3.2 Activity-based circulation requirements

Circulation spaces for the following activities shall be provided as set out in the corresponding figure(s). Each figure shows the minimum plan footprint, required vertical clearances (where applicable), permitted encroachments, and the location of any required support elements.

3.2.1 Tampon change

(a) Circulation space shall be provided in accordance with Figure 01.

(b) The grabrail and footstep/support platform locations and extents shall be as shown in 09.

(c) Encroachments are limited to those depicted in Figure 01. No other fixture shall reduce the required clearances.

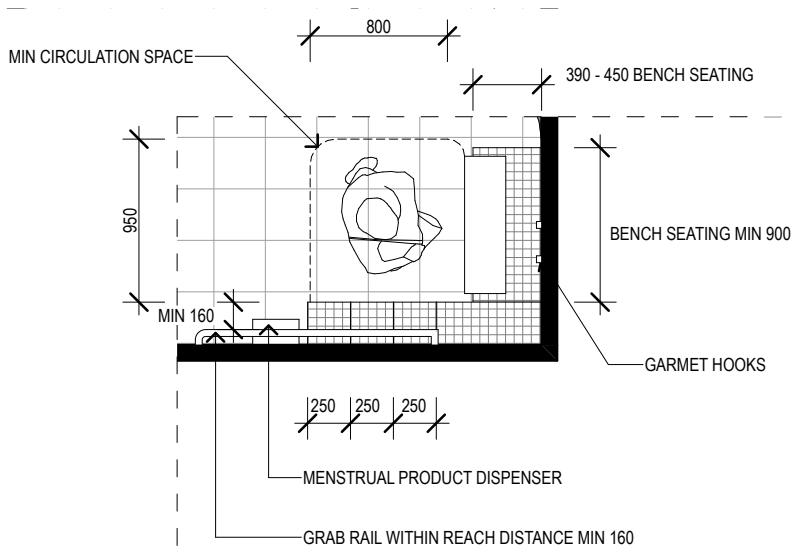


FIGURE 01: TAMPON CHANGE, PLAN

3.2.2 Leak check

(a) Circulation space shall be provided in accordance with Figure 02.

(b) User must be able to check garments without compromising stability or privacy.

(b) A mirror or reflective surface shall be positioned as shown in Figure 10 to allow garment inspection without compromising stability or required clearances.

(c) Hooks/shelf, if present, shall not encroach beyond limits indicated in Figure 02.

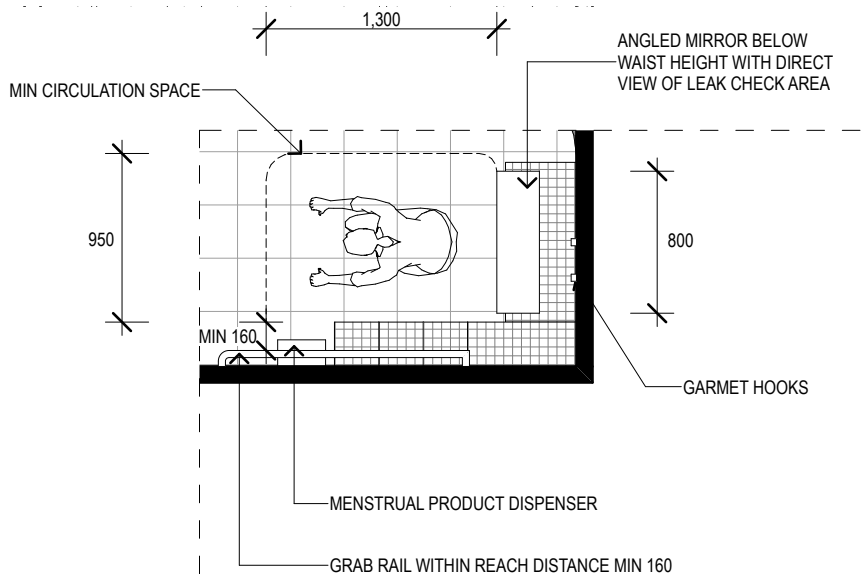


FIGURE 02: LEAK CHANGE PLAN

3.2.3 Menstrual cramps (crouching/leaning)

(a) Requires space to crouch, lean forward or to the side, or adopt alternative postures to relieve discomfort. Circulation space shall be provided in accordance with Figure 03.

(b) Where a temporary resting space is provided within the compartment, it shall be located as shown in Figure 04 and shall not reduce required clearances.

(c) Where a warming wall is provided within the compartment, its contoured forms and projected thickness shall remain outside the minimum clearances indicated in Figure 03.

(d) Lean-on supports or grabrails, where shown, shall comply with the locations in Figure 03.

3.2.4 Back pain (stretching/leaning)

(a) Requires space for gentle stretching or leaning against a fixture without interfering with other users or encroaching circulation.

(b) Circulation space shall be provided in accordance with Figure 03.

(c) Where a warming wall is provided within the compartment, its contoured forms and projected thickness shall remain outside the minimum clearances indicated in Figure 03.

(d) Any support rail(s) associated with the warming wall shall be positioned as shown in Figure 03.

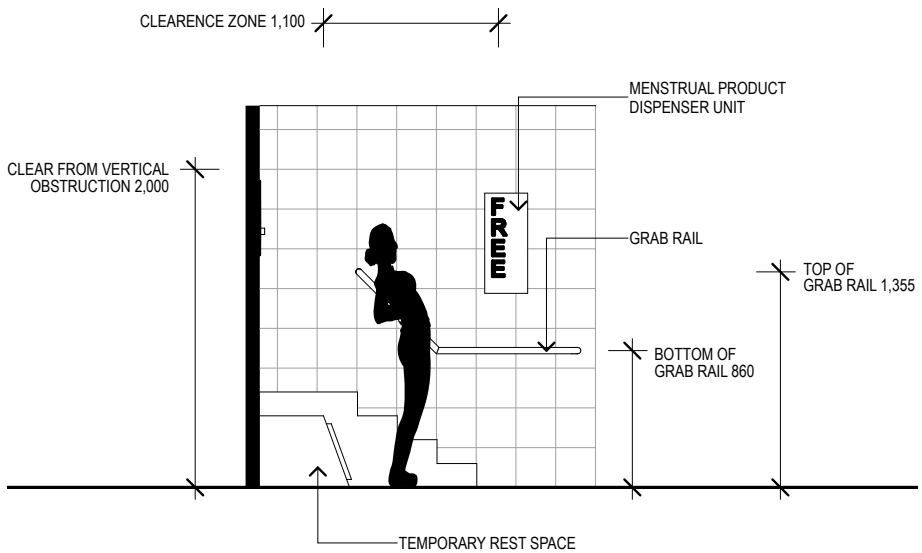


FIGURE 03: MENSTRUAL CRAMPS,
ELEVATION

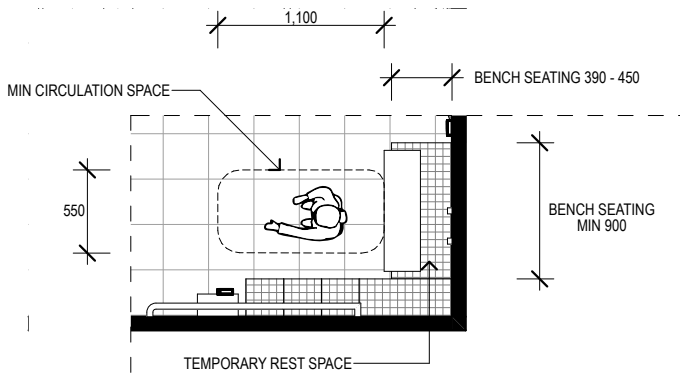


FIGURE 04: MENSTRUAL CRAMPS, PLAN

3.2.5 Clothes Changing Circulation Space

(a) Clothes changing circulation space shall be provided to allow individuals to remove and replace garments in privacy and with stability.

(b) Circulation space shall comply with the minimum dimensions shown in Figure 05.

(c) Grabrails shall be provided within this space to assist with balance and stability during garment removal and replacement.

(d) At least one clothes hook shall be located within the circulation space at a height accessible to a seated and standing user.

(e) A bag or personal belongings shelf shall be provided within easy reach, without encroaching upon the required circulation space shown in Figure 05.

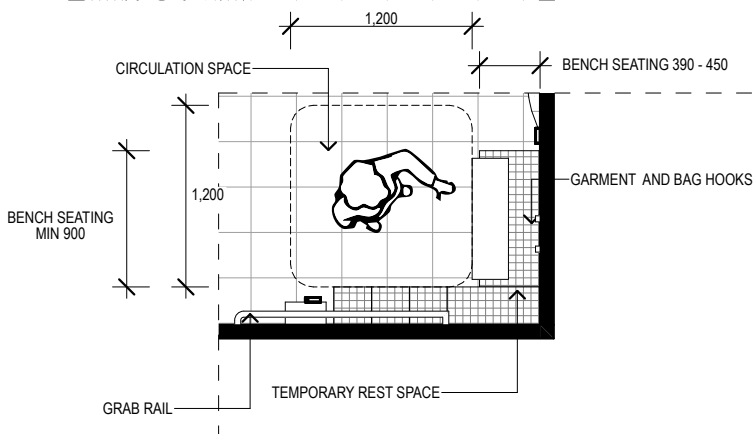


FIGURE 05: CLOTHES CHANGING CIRCULATION SPACE

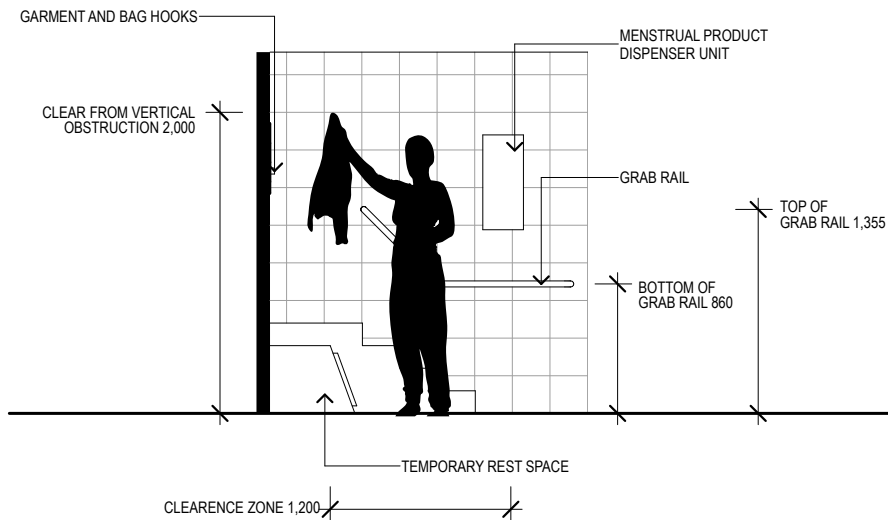


FIGURE 06: CLOTHES CHANGING CIRCULATION,
ELEVATION

3.2.6 Additional Functional Circulation

Disposal of sanitary products must be achievable without encroachment on other functional spaces.

NOTE: Circulation spaces identified for individual activities may overlap or coincide, provided that all required fixtures, fittings, and grabrails associated with each activity remain fully accessible and do not obstruct the circulation space of another activity. Where overlaps occur, simultaneous access to critical fixtures (such as a grabrail, mirror, or hook) must be maintained. This approach allows for efficiency of space while ensuring each activity retains its minimum functional clearance as defined in the respective Figures 01 - 06.

3.3 Vertical clearances

(a) Minimum vertical clearances for leaning, crouching, and stretching postures shall be as indicated on the relevant sections (see Figures 01, 02, 03, 04).

(b) Overhead elements (e.g. dryers, cabinets) shall not project into the vertical planes defined as “no encroachment” in those figures.

3.4 Surface and edge conditions within circulation zones

(a) Floor finishes within required circulation spaces shall be slip-resistant when wet.

(b) Edges of warming walls or support elements within reach ranges shall be radiused or chamfered to reduce injury risk; refer to the dimensional notes in Figures 03 and 04.

3.5 Coordination with AS 1428.1

(a) In accessible sanitary compartments, where a conflict arises between a figure in this Standard and AS 1428.1, the more stringent requirement shall apply for safety and access.

(b) Turning circles, door approaches and transfer spaces required by AS 1428.1 shall remain free of encroachment by menstruation-specific fixtures unless explicitly permitted by both standards.

4 Fixtures and Fittings

4.1 Wash Basins

(a) Handwashing facilities must be provided within each sanitary facility.

(b) The wash basin shall incorporate an integrated shelf capable of supporting wet items (e.g. rinsed menstrual cups or similar products).

(c) Taps shall be non-touch operated, and soap dispensers shall be non-touch operated, positioned within reach of both the basin and the integrated shelf.

(d) The shelf shall be designed with a water-resistant, easily cleanable surface and include adequate fall to prevent pooling.

(e) Minimum reach ranges and spatial clearances shall be provided in accordance with Figure 07.

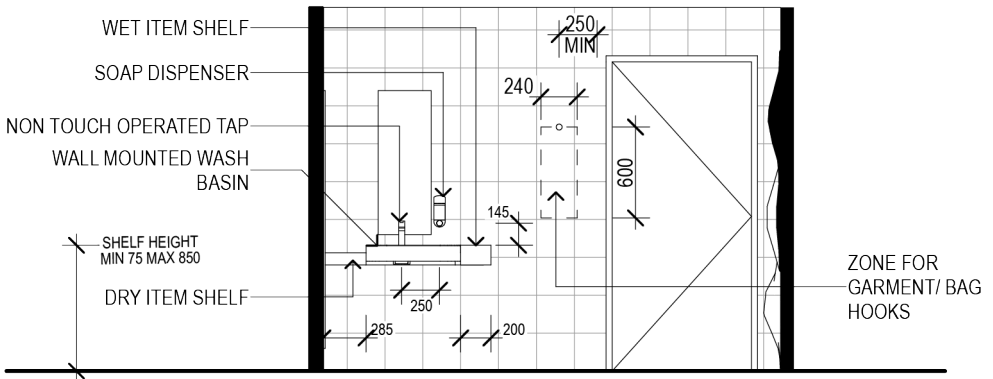


FIGURE 07: WASH BASINS, ELEVATION

4.2 Warming Wall

(a) A warming wall shall be provided within the sanitary facility if single sex facilities are provided or if unisex facilities are provided, also within the unisex sanitary compartment.

(b) A warming wall shall be provided in accordance with FIGURE 08

(c) The wall shall incorporate heating elements built into a tiled surface with organic curves designed to allow leaning for comfort during menstrual cramps. See Appendix A for technical details

(d) The warming wall must be finished in a distinctly different coloured tile to differentiate it as a heated element

(e) Circulation space in accordance with Figure 03 and 04 shall be maintained in front of the warming wall to allow users to assume varied leaning positions without obstruction.

(f) Heating shall be activated via a clearly identified switch positioned within reach but designed to avoid accidental operation as shown in Figure 08.

(e) The warming wall shall operate via an automatic timer, switching off after a maximum of 15 minutes unless reactivated by the user, to ensure both safety and energy efficiency.

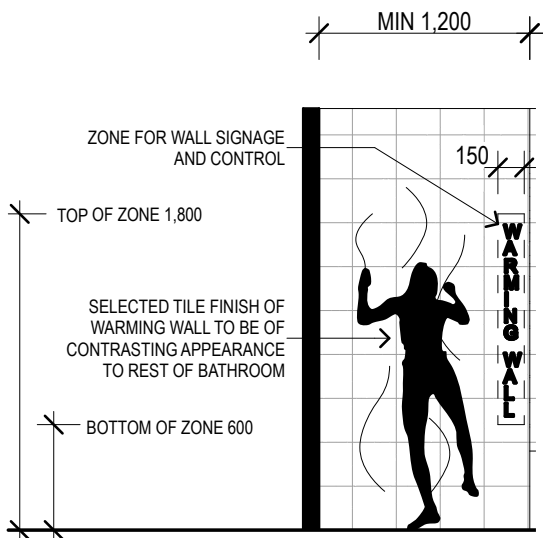


FIGURE 08: WARMING WALL,
ELEVATION

4.3 Temporary Resting Space

(a) In addition to the shelf provided in Clause 4.1, a bench shall be installed to act as temporary resting space..

(b) The bench shall allow for seated rest and must comply with minimum dimensions for height and surface area in accordance with Figure 09.

(c) Surfaces shall be non-porous and easily cleanable.

(d) Consideration may be given to incorporating optional bench heating, provided that surface temperatures remain safe for contact and can be independently controlled.

4.4 Stepped Foot Rests

(a) Stepped foot rests shall be provided at a minimum of four different heights to support varied body positions and mobility needs for menstrual product insertion.

(b) Each foot rest shall comply with minimum height, width, and depth requirements as detailed in Figure 09.

(c) Placement shall ensure clear circulation space for tampon or menstrual cup insertion and comply with circulation spaces outlined in Figure 01.

(d) Foot rests shall be slip-resistant, durable, and securely fixed to withstand repeated use.

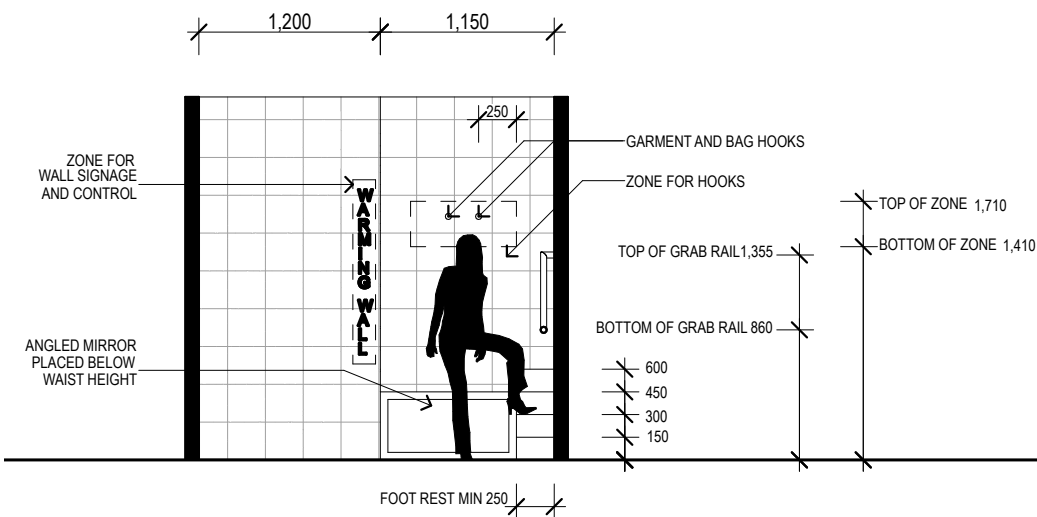


FIGURE 09: STEPPED FOOT REST, ELEVATION

4.5 Mirrors

(a) A mirror desiccated to leaks checking shall be provided within the menstrual space.

(b) The mirror must be positioned to provide compliance with circulation requirements in Clause 3.2.2.

(c) The mirror shall be installed below waist height, positioned and angled upward to enable improved inspection for menstrual leakage checks, as shown in Figure 10

(d) Additional mirrors may be provided above standard basin height for general grooming.

(e) Mounting heights shall comply with the dimensional requirements shown in Figure 10.

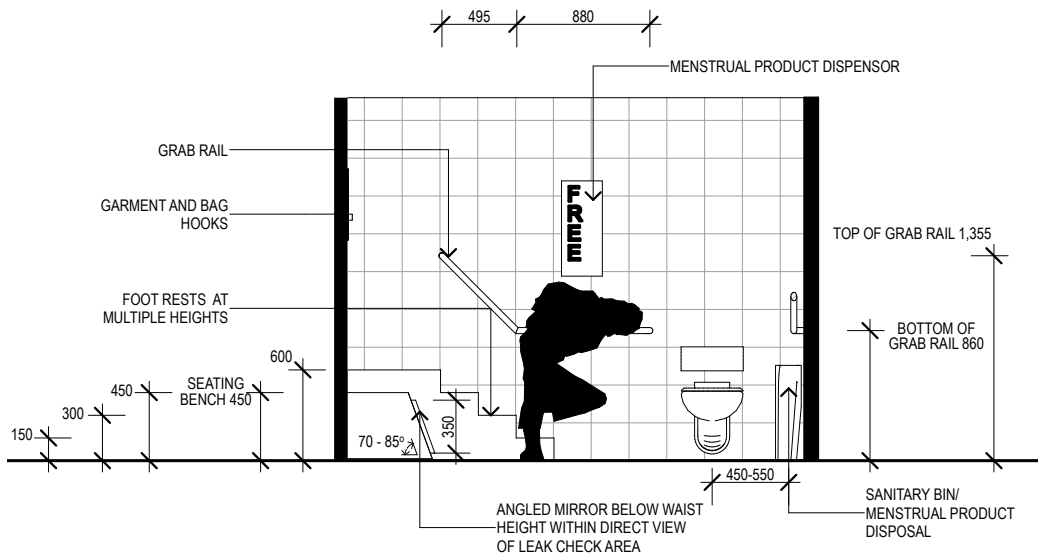


FIGURE 10: MIRRORS,
ELEVATION

4.6 Menstrual Product Dispensers

- (a) At least one menstrual product dispenser shall be provided within each facility.
- (c) The design shall ensure products remain hygienic and protected until retrieved by the user.

4.7 Garment Hooks and Clothes Hanging Devices

- (a) Garment hooks or clothes hanging devices must be provided in each facility.
- (b) A minimum of three (3) hooks shall be installed, positioned at functional heights accessible to users of varying stature.
- (c) Hooks shall not interfere with the minimum circulation space required for clothes changing (refer to Clause 3.5).
- (d) At least one hook shall be positioned to accommodate bags or personal items.

5 Hygiene and Maintenance

5.1 Washable Surfaces

All surfaces within the menstrual facility must be washable, durable, and resistant to staining. Finishes should be non-porous and capable of withstanding frequent cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants. Joints, corners, and floor-to-wall junctions should be sealed to prevent accumulation of debris and moisture. Materials must be selected to ensure long-term hygiene, safety, and ease of maintenance.

5.2 Restocking Guidelines

Menstrual facilities must be maintained with a consistent restocking protocol. This includes sanitary product dispensers, soap, paper towels, hand-drying devices, and cleaning supplies. Restocking intervals should be established according to frequency of use but must ensure no essential items are absent at any time. Facilities should incorporate discreet staff access for replenishment to maintain user dignity and comfort.

5.3 Bins and Disposal Methods

Each cubicle must provide a disposal bin within arm's reach of the toilet, designed to be hands-free (foot pedal or sensor operated). Bins must be lined, sealed, and emptied frequently to avoid overflow and odour. Disposal systems should accommodate a range of menstrual products, including pads, tampons, and biodegradable items. Where possible, consideration should be given to sustainability through provision for compostable or recyclable product disposal streams, without compromising hygiene or discretion.

6 Signage

6.1 Warming Wall

Signage must be installed adjacent to the warming wall to indicate that the surface may be hot when in use. The sign shall be tactile, include Braille, and use contrasting colours in accordance with AS1428.1 requirements for signage visibility.

6.2 Seating Bench

Signage shall be installed above the seating bench, reading “Menstruation Station”, to invite users to pause, rest, and care for themselves. Typography must be clear and legible, with high contrast against the background surface.

