

Australian Standard[®]

**SYMBOLS—HEALTH CARE IN
HOSPITALS**

This Australian standard was prepared by Committee MD/8 Symbols — Health Care. It was approved on behalf of the Council of the Standards Association of Australia on 17 January 1985 and published on 7 June 1985.

The following interests are represented on Committee MD/8:

Australian College of Health Service Administrators
Australian Hospital Association
Australian Private Hospitals Association
Commissioner for Community Relations
Commonwealth Department of Health
Department of Health, N.S.W.
Ethnic Affairs Commission of N.S.W.
Health Commission of Victoria
Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Vic
Industrial Design Institute of Australia
Royal Australian Nursing Federation
Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Representatives of the following interests also participated in the drafting of this standard:

Community Services Centre, Premier's Department, Vic.
Department of Crown Lands and Survey, Vic.
University of Melbourne (Department of Mechanical Engineering)
Committee MS/3, Public Information Symbols

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PREFACE

This standard for symbols for use in hospitals was prepared by the Association's Committee on Symbols — Health Care under the direction of the Medical Materials and Equipment Standards Board. The need to achieve uniformity of hospital signs and symbols throughout Australia was confirmed by the very favourable response to a questionnaire which was circulated throughout Australia in April 1974 to major hospitals, architects, relevant authorities such as health commissions, departments of works, and organizations in contact with migrant groups.

In the course of its work, the committee has taken into account the testing of symbols by the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Melbourne, in accordance with AS 2342 Design and Use of Graphic Symbols and Public Information Symbol Signs, Part 3 — Test Procedures for Evaluating Graphic Symbols and Symbol Signs, and the following publications:

ISO 3461 Graphic Symbols — General Principles for Presentation
Hospitals Symbols, published by the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, Melbourne
Henry Dreyfuss Symbol Sourcebook
Symbols for the Municipal Hospitals of New York

Considerable assistance was received from the Department of Crown Lands and Survey, Victoria, the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (Translations Section), the Community Services Centre, Premier's Department, Victoria, and the Swinburne Graphic Design Centre which produced the final graphics.

It is recognized that there is a special need for symbols in some hospitals which serve large non-English-speaking populations. Some of the symbols included in this standard appear familiar and may already be in use in hospitals; others are likely to need a period of use and some education if they are to become familiar and meet the test of clear and unambiguous interpretation.

In spite of extensive research and testing, the committee was unable to resolve a suitable symbol for Psychiatry.

Although a symbol for 'Casualty' is specified, it is recognized that the symbol may be appropriate for 'Accident', 'Emergency' or 'Accident and Emergency' in some hospitals.

Symbols and signposting, together with their terminology, should be part of a total information system which would include signs, directory boards, appointment cards, information brochures and posters. The symbols illustrated in this standard have been designed for use in such a system.

For manufacturing purposes, artwork is available in AS 2342, Part 7—Index and Presentation of Standard Graphic Symbols and Symbol Signs in Single Sheet Form, either on a grid for drawing purposes or as a bromide. The latter is intended for manufacturers using photographic techniques for making screens. The number allotted to each symbol in AS 2342, Part 7 is given in brackets above each symbol.

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STANDARDS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Australian Standard

for

SYMBOLS—HEALTH CARE IN HOSPITALS

FOREWORD

The problems encountered by people trying to find their way around a hospital can be likened to trying to find one's way around a strange city except that patients and visitors to hospitals are confronted by a range of strange names in unfamiliar surroundings at a time when they are under more than normal stress. For some, there may be the added disadvantage of having to cope with a foreign language.

Various attempts have been made to overcome this problem by the use of signs and symbols as an aid, but with less success in hospitals than elsewhere.

The success of road signs and airport signs, for example, is well known. This must be largely attributable to the amount of standardization introduced leading to familiar and easily recognized signs and symbols.

This standard seeks to introduce such benefits into hospitals and other health care buildings.

SPECIFICATION

1 SCOPE. This standard prescribes graphic symbols for use in hospitals and allied institutions as part of an information system which will help to inform, direct and control the movement of people efficiently throughout the hospital complex and its surrounding site.

2 APPLICATION. For the benefit of visitors, patients and staff, graphic symbols may be applied, presented or used as follows:

- (a) Applied on a suitable background such as a plank of standard dimensions.
- (b) Placed on sites and ways where persons may assemble or move, giving them instructions such as prohibitions, warnings, location of departments.
- (c) Used on directory boards, display boards, appointment cards and similar documents.

3 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS. The following standards are referred to in this standard.

AS 2342	Design and Use of Graphic Symbols and Public Information Symbol Signs Part 4—Principles for the Design of Graphic Symbols Part 5—Design of Signs Incorporating Symbols Part 6—Implementation of Symbol Signs*
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4 DEFINITION. For the purpose of this standard, the following definition applies:

Graphic symbol—a visual form used to transmit a message by designating a function or concept in an understandable manner without words.

5 FUNCTIONS. Graphic symbols may be used to—

- (a) identify;
- (b) qualify;
- (c) instruct;
- (d) command;
- (e) warn; and
- (f) indicate.

6 DESIGN AND USE. All of the symbols depicted in this standard are intended for use in information signs indicating the direction to, or location of, the various departments or facilities represented by the symbols. The signs shall be designed in accordance with AS 2342, Parts 4 and 5, and shall be implemented in accordance with AS 2342, Part 6.

* In course of preparation