Dave Sayers,
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Dear Dave,

Thank you for your enquiry regarding interpretation of AS 1421.1 Design for access and mobility Part 1: General requirements for access – New building work
(Grab Rails, Clause 17(e)) Continuous passage of the hand

Definitions of Grabrails and Handrails are as follows (As quoted from the standard)

- Clause 4.14.1 Grabrail – A rail used to give a **steadying or stabilising assistance** to a person engaged in a particular function
- Clause 4.14.2 Handrail – A rail used in circulation areas such as corridors, passageways, ramps and stairways to assist in **continuous movement**

From these definitions and looking at the requirements for handrails, a handrail should allow the hand to have an uninterrupted movement along the length of the rail. There should to be no obstruction or risk of hand entrapment when a person slides their hand along the handrail (e.g. walking up or down a stairway, where hand entrapment may result in a fall or loss of balance, caused by an obstruction to the hand).

A grabrail is used as a gripping device for stability or as an aid to standing, sitting etc; The requirement for continuous movement does not present in use.
Clause 17(e) states: Grabrails shall be fixed so that there is no obstruction to the passage of the hand along the top 270° arc of horizontal and angled grabrails.
It could be argued that:

- there is no obstruction to the passage of the hand along the top 270° arc of the horizontal section of the angled grab rail
- there is no obstruction to the passage of the hand along the top 270° arc of the angled section of the angled grab rail

However there is no **uninterrupted** passage of the hand along the top 270° arc of the **horizontal and angled** section of the angled grab rail.

In summary, the intended use of a grabrail (as opposed to a handrail) should allow for a mounting junction at the change in angle of an angled grabrail, particularly the fact that a grabrail needs to provide maximum support to a user. The use of a mounting point at this junction would improve the strength and safety of the product.