



Building Newsflash

AMENDMENT NO 11 TO THE BUILDING CODE OF AUSTRALIA

Purpose

The purpose of this Newsflash is to advise of recent changes to the Building Code of Australia (BCA).

Background

Changes to the BCA resulting from Amendment No 11 took effect in Queensland on 1 July 2002. A summary of the more significant changes follows and the complete list of changes is available on the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) website <http://www.abcb.gov.au/content/publications/> under Building Code of Australia 96, List of Amendments - Amendment No 11.

BCA Vol 1

Aged Care Buildings

Amendment No 11 includes a new Class 9c aged care building classification.

By definition, aged care buildings provide occupants with personal care services and 24-hour staff assistance to evacuate. A building for the aged which does not provide all these services and assistance is by definition not an aged care building and must be either a Class 1b building, a Class 3 building for accommodation for the aged, or a Class 9a nursing home.

A Class 9c aged care building must have a sprinkler system in accordance with AS 2118.4 installed. Note that the standard only applies to buildings containing not more than 4 storeys.

A fire engineering analysis confirmed that the benefits of controlling and restricting fire spread in sprinkler-protected aged care buildings combined with other safety measures and the operational practices of service providers meant that a number of concessions could be included in the BCA such as-

- Two storey buildings can be Type C construction (C1.5).
- Larger compartment sizes (Table C2.2 and C2.5).
- Relaxation of fire resistance levels of separating construction (C2.5).
- No FRLs for walls around bedrooms and no door closers required (C2.5).
- Fire hose reels are not required but fire extinguishers are required to cover Class A and E risks. Class E extinguishers need only be located at nurses and supervisors stations (E1.4, E1.6).
- Requirements for access for people with disabilities are similar to Class 3 buildings (Table D3.2).

- The general requirements for fire hazard properties apply (Spec C1.10).
- The general Class 9 exit travel distance requirements apply (D1.4).
- An emergency warning and intercommunication system is not generally required (E4.9).

There are some additional requirements which also apply to Class 9c buildings including-

- Corridors must be 1.5m wide, except at the doorway to a bedroom where the width must be 1.8m (D1.6) to facilitate the movement of beds, mobile baths wheelchairs etc.
- Handrails are required along both sides of passageways and corridors (D2.7).
- Lifts or ramps are required for levels which don't have direct access to a road or open space (E3.8).
- The sprinkler system must be provided with a monitored main stop valve and connected to a fire station or dispatch centre (Spec E1.5).
- Emergency lighting is required throughout except within sole-occupancy units (SOUs) (E4.2).
- The smoke detection system must provide remote indication of each zone in each smoke compartment (Spec E2.2a).
- Increased sanitary and other facilities compared to Class 3 buildings (Table F2.1).
- Windows in bedrooms must be at least 3m from another building, wall or boundary and the window sill must be not more than 1m from the floor (F4.2) to provide for the amenity of persons in beds or sitting in chairs.
- Walls between SOUs, and between SOUs and a kitchen, bathroom, laundry etc must have a sound insulation level of at least R_w 45 (F5.4). This provides a level of privacy while still providing residents with an awareness of other people and availability of assistance if required.

New Class 7 Classifications

The Class 7 classification has been divided into two to differentiate between Class 7a car parks, and Class 7b buildings used for the storage, or display of goods or produce for sale by wholesale.

The BCA has required different fire resistance levels for car parks compared to other Class 7 buildings since research demonstrated that the fire hazard in a car park was less. However, previously there was no need to separate these two uses if located together. The creation of the new classes 7a and 7b means these different uses are not treated as different classifications. Separation will be required in accordance with C2.8 and C2.9.

BCA Vol 2

Installation of flashings and damp-proof courses

The details for the installation of damp-proof courses and flashings have been reviewed and clarified in Part 3.3.4.

Timber windows in wind classification N3 or C1

The concession for timber windows in wind classification N3 or C1 has been removed because it was only a temporary measure to allow industry time to expand the generic design provisions in AS 2047 to include designs suitable for these wind classifications. Requirements for generic timber windows are contained in Appendix G to AS 2047.

Changes involving both Volumes 1 and 2

Governments have the responsibility to set public policy and societal goals in relation to building control and, as appropriate, incorporate such matters into building law. However, over the years, these matters have also been incorporated into Australian Standards.

The ABCB is currently reviewing these Standards to transfer appropriate public policy and societal goals into the BCA.

As a first step, the performance requirements and deemed-to-satisfy provisions contained in BCA Volume 1 Part B1 (structural), and Volume 2 P2.1 and Part 3.11, have been amended to include public policy matters previously contained in the AS 1170 suite of Standards (the loading Standards).

Contact Officer

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