

Classification of Buildings

This updates the previous Practice Note 2014-64 issued April 2014.

Reference to the Building Code of Australia (BCA) in this Practice Note means Volume One and Volume Two of the National Construction Code Series.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Practice Note is to provide guidance to practitioners in determining the appropriate classification of buildings.

2. BACKGROUND

Construction requirements for all types of buildings are fundamentally associated with their classification in accordance with clauses A3.2 and 1.3.2 of the BCA. Clause A3.1 and Clause 1.3.1 of Volumes One and Two of the BCA state that *“The classification of a building or part of a building is determined by the purpose for which it is designed, constructed or adapted to be used.”*

Regulation 112 of the Building Regulations 2006 (the Regulations) states *“if there is any doubt as to the classification of a building under the BCA, the relevant building surveyor must classify the building as belonging to the class it most closely resembles.”*

3. CLASSIFICATION

3.1 Information required when classifying a building

The application for a building permit must include a statement of the use or intended use of all buildings shown on the allotment plan in accordance with regulation 302. If required the relevant building surveyor (RBS) should request further information to clarify the proposed use of the building prior to determining its classification.

3.2 Multiple classifications

A designer may wish to design a building to suit more than one use. For instance an investor / developer may wish to construct a building that could be used by a future tenant or occupant as a Class 2 or Class 3 building. The RBS must ensure that the design complies with the requirements for each classification prior to issuing a building permit. The Occupancy Permit must then reflect the classifications and approved multiple uses.

3.3 Issues not related to classification

Identification of low fire load, low occupant risk and low risk of fire spread should not be used as justification for choosing a less stringent classification for a building. These issues should be utilised when formulating an Alternative Solution design or as supporting information when applying for:

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- a) a determination of the Building Appeals Board (BAB) under s160 of the Building Act 1993 (the Act) that a modification of the Regulations should apply; or
- b) an accreditation by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC).

If you have a technical enquiry please email: technicalenquiry@vba.vic.gov.au or phone 1300 815 127

Victorian Building Authority
733 Bourke Street Docklands VIC 3008

3.4 Guide to the BCA

The NCC Series Guide to Volume One, BCA Class 2 to 9 buildings provides additional guidance and discussion to help determine the classification of buildings.

4. REPORT AND CONSENT

Where the building permit involves a fire safety matter that does not comply with the Deemed-to-Satisfy (DTS) provisions of the BCA, regulation 309 requires that the report and consent of the chief officer must be obtained. The relevant fire authority should be involved in discussions at the early stage of design where the proposed fire safety equipment will vary from the DTS requirements.

5. REFERENCED PRACTICE NOTES

The following Practice Notes provide additional advice on matters covered in this document:

- PN 2013-29 - Using Volumes One and Two of the National Construction Codes Series;
- PN 2014-37 - Fire Performance Requirements of Volumes One and Two of the National Construction Code Series;
- PN 2014-39 - Building Appeals Board Guide to Applications for Modification and Compliance Assessments;
- PN 2014-63 - Alternative Solutions – Procedures and Documentation; and
- PN 2014-67 Application of the Building Code of Australia to Farm Buildings