

This updates the previous Practice Note-2014-30 issued April 2014.

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

Purpose

BCA classifications for residential care buildings reflect the changing nature of this type of accommodation. It is now common to use buildings of typical domestic type construction for the purpose of residential care.

These buildings may house children, disabled or aged persons, who require physical assistance in conducting their daily activities, and help to evacuate the building during an emergency. The BCA classification will depend on the building size, population and resident characteristics. Two contrasting examples are described below — a converted domestic dwelling and a nursing home.

Converted domestic dwelling

An existing three-bedroom brick veneer house is proposed to be used as a residence for six disabled persons and a full time live-in carer.

If the occupants undergo medical treatment, have full-time nursing care and would generally need physical assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency, then the building meets the criteria for a health care building and is a Class 9a building.

If the occupants do not undergo medical treatment or do not have full-time nursing care, then the building meets the criteria for a Class 3 building, under paragraph (d) of the Class 3 classification in BCA Part A3 Classification of Buildings and Structures.

Note that the building cannot be classified as a Class 1b building, as this class only relates to a boarding house, guest house, hostel or similar with a total floor area not exceeding 300 m² and in which no more than 12 persons would ordinarily reside (i.e. a small Class 3 paragraph (a) building) or 4 or more single dwellings on one allotment used for short term holiday accommodation. Also, the building would not be classified as a Class 9c building as it does not accommodate aged persons.

Nursing Home Care

A nursing home that is proposed to house 50 aged residents, of whom:

- (a) 15 are undergoing medical treatment and generally need physical assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency; and
- (b) the remaining 35 need physical assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency.

This building may have multiple classifications. The part accommodating the residents in (a) is Class 9a and the part accommodating the residents in (b) is Class 3 or 9c.

With this type of building, a building practitioner should consider any likely changes of occupant mix and advise the owner of the regulatory implications. The BCA allows buildings to have multiple classifications. This nursing home could be an example of a building designed to provide environments ranging from a low level of care to a high level, and in that case, could be classified as partly a Class 3, 9c and 9a building.

Further information

Want to know more?

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

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