



Building Newsflash

NEW RESIDENTIAL CARE BUILDINGS – PROPOSAL TO REQUIRE SPRINKLER PROTECTION

Purpose

To advise of a proposed change to the fire safety requirements in buildings intended to be used to provide residential care.

Background

Two building classifications in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) specifically address occupancy hazards associated with residents who need physical assistance with daily activities and 24 hour assistance to evacuate in an emergency, namely class 9c *aged care buildings* and class 3 sprinkler protected *residential aged care buildings*. Other buildings classifications, namely class 1b, 3 and 9a have also been used for residential care.

Consequently the building classifications do not provide building designers with sufficient certainty with respect to appropriate design choices where accommodation buildings may be used to house residents with an evacuation impairment.

Victoria has adopted a variation to the BCA to address this issue by requiring sprinkler protection in accommodation buildings used to provide residential care.

Legislation

Building Codes Queensland is submitting a proposal to the Australian Building Codes Board to adopt in the BCA the Victorian requirement for sprinkler protection in residential care buildings.

In the meantime it is proposed to introduce a new standard in the Queensland Development Code to require sprinkler protection in new buildings intended to be used to provide residential care, in line with the Victorian variation to the BCA.

Interpretation

The Victorian variation amends BCA Table E1.5 to require sprinklers in “residential care buildings” and defines these buildings as -

Residential care building means a building which is a place of residence where 10% or more of persons who reside there need physical assistance in conducting their daily activities and to evacuate the building during an emergency (including aged care buildings) but does not include -

- (a) a hospital; or
- (b) a dwelling in which 2 or more members of the same family and not more than 2 other persons would ordinarily be resident; or
- (c) a place of residence where only one resident needs physical assistance in conducting their daily activities and to evacuate the building during an emergency.

Victorian specification E1.5 requires fire sprinklers to comply with AS 2118.1 or AS2118.4 (if applicable).

Until the proposed changes are introduced, it is recommended building designers use class 9c or the *residential aged care building* requirements, for buildings intended for the provision of aged care rather than class 9a, 3 or 1b.

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