Certificates of classification

A guide to assist with issues relating to certificates of classification
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**Purpose**

The purpose of this guideline is to provide guidance to local governments, building certifiers, building owners and other stakeholders about information to be included in certificates of classification and where these certificates should be displayed.

This guideline is made under section 258 of the *Building Act 1975* (BA). Section 258 provides for guidelines to be made to help achieve compliance with the BA. It is recommended that the information given in this guideline be followed, however strict compliance with this guideline is not mandatory under the BA.

**Background**

In 1997 performance requirements were introduced in the National Construction Code (NCC). Compliance with the performance requirements can be achieved by complying with the deemed-to-satisfy provisions in the NCC or by formulating an alternative solution. Like the NCC, the Queensland Development Code (QDC) is also performance based and allows for alternative solutions to be developed.

In many cases, alternative solutions include restrictions or limitations on how a building can be used. Owners, occupiers and enforcement agencies may have been unaware of alternative solutions, limitations or restrictions applying to a building because this information was not required to be displayed.

To address this issue, changes were made to the BA which became effective on 23 April 2008. From this date details of alternative solutions, including any restrictions on the use of the building, must be recorded on certificates of classification and certificates must be displayed. This will provide owners, occupiers and enforcement agencies with concise and practical information about the building. It will also help to ensure the ongoing use of a building and future modifications do not compromise compliance with the performance requirements.

**Legislation**

The following legislation is applicable:

**Building Act 1975**

- Amended section 103 provides the requirements for certificates of classification.
- New section 108A requires the display of the certificate of classification, other than class 1a and class 10 buildings, where the certificate was given after 1 July 1997.
- New section 114A requires the owner of a building to comply with a restriction or requirement mentioned on the certificate of classification.
Information for building certifiers about the requirements for certificates of classification

After a building certifier has inspected a building and is satisfied that it complies with the relevant requirements of the BA, they must provide the owner of the building with a certificate of classification. The certificate of classification must be in the approved form and comply with the requirements of section 103 of the BA. The example below will assist building certifiers in complying with this provision.

Example 1 is a scenario for a building with mixed classifications, alternative solutions and restrictions relating to its use.

Example 1

A warehouse building incorporating an office has been constructed in accordance with a building development approval which included the use of alternative solutions. The building has an 8 metre ceiling height in the warehouse part to accommodate high rack storage. The alternative solutions were used to remove sprinklers, extend travel distances to required exits in the warehouse part, and reduce ceiling heights in the office part.

The alternative solution includes a smoke detection and alarm system to provide early warning to occupants in the event of a fire. The system is integrated with smoke exhaust fans that operate on activation of the alarm system. The fans are designed to maintain tenable conditions for a sufficient period of time to allow occupants to safely exit the building. These installations also help to facilitate fire brigade intervention.

The alternative solutions include limitations and restrictions relating to:

- the storage of materials
- the number of people occupying the building
- attachments to ceilings.

Important note: Example 1 is a purely hypothetical example. Its only purpose is to demonstrate how to complete a Certificate of Classification. Example 1 does not relate to an actual building or a proposed building. It should not be construed that the technical details of the example comply with the Building Code of Australia or the Queensland Development Code.

The sample certificate on the following page indicates how the requirements for the alternative solution and restrictions on the use of the building can be recorded.
The parts of the building with different classifications should be clearly set out and referenced to plans or approval documents.

Restrictions may be imposed on the way the building is to be used in this section. The items should be brief and clearly explain what the restrictions or limitations relate to. If there are several complex restrictions, it is acceptable to refer to them in a separate document kept in a nominated location in the building.

The Building Act 1975 is administered by the Department of Housing and Public Works

Queensland Government
The requirements of the alternative solutions are to be summarised and recorded here. The items should be brief and provide practical information to inform building owners and occupiers about specific materials, systems, procedures or other matters used in the alternative solution.

These items may refer to other documents such as evacuation strategies and identify where they are to be located in the building. For example, they may be kept with the building’s management office or in the area of the fire indicator panels.

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**Location of certificates of classification**

Certificates of classification (CofC) are required to be conspicuously displayed as near as practicable to the main entrance of all class 1b to 9 buildings. Building owners are responsible for ensuring that this requirement is met at all times. These requirements do not apply to class 1a buildings (e.g. detached houses, row houses, terrace houses, town houses or villa units) or to class 10 buildings (e.g. private garages or carports).

Certificates of classification should be:
- securely placed in locations where they can be easily read by authorised officers and other occupants of the building
- made of suitably durable materials (weatherproof materials if they are located on the outside of a building)
- if displayed electronically, be connected to a power source that will not be interrupted if there is a power failure or malfunction or failure of the power source. This may require a back-up power source. If displayed electronically, all certificates must be constantly and concurrently displayed at all times (24 hours a day, every day of the year). It is **not** acceptable for users to be required to scroll through certificates or to search for a certificate.

The following examples show some options and suitable locations for the certificate of classification for different types of building configurations.

Please note, that for a multi-tenancy building, the term ‘building’ under the BA can mean the part of the building to which the CofC relates.

**Number of certificates**

It is preferable for building certifiers to issue one CofC for an entire building. However, in some instances a CofC may be issued for part of a building only and in these instances, where the building certifier does not wish to issue an amended certificate for the entire building, a new CofC may be issued for the relevant part.

In a multi-tenancy building, if a CofC for the entire building is displayed near the main entrance of the complex, it is generally not necessary for owners of individual units to also display that CofC at their unit. The following examples address this matter in more detail.

**Owners obligations**

An owner of a building must comply with the requirements and any restriction on the CofC. To achieve this, an owner may place in a rental or lease agreement the requirements of the certificate of classification which must be complied with.

Failing to comply with the requirements of a CofC may result in the local government taking enforcement action against the owner. If the enforcement action is ignored or not complied with, financial penalties may also be imposed.
**Example 1:** Factory building with individual units (different occupiers and perhaps different owners), each having its own entrance door.

**Explanation:**
The building in example 1 is made up of several units each with their own entrance on the outside of the building. In most cases these types of buildings will have one CofC for the entire building.

**Option 1:** An owner may choose to display a copy of the CofC in each individual unit as near as practicable to the entrance of the unit.

**Option 2:** A building owner may also choose to display the CofC in one location on the outside of the building. It is recommended that the CofC be displayed as close as practicable to the entrance of the property and if possible, next to the building’s Fire Indicator Panel. If a CofC is located outside the building, the owner must ensure that it is protected from the effects of weather and that it is securely attached to the wall of the building.
Example 2: Shopping centre with multiple entrances and individual tenancies.

**Option 1**
Display CoF for the overall building in a selected main entrance. If there are multiple main entrances, it is recommended to select the main entrance emergency services personnel are most likely to use and where the Fire Indicator Panel is located. While it is not necessary, it would also be acceptable to display a copy of the CoF at all entrances of the building.
(Note: Only if no tenancy CoF is issued)
- CoF for overall building
- Emergency Service Entrance

**Option 2**
Display all certificates of classification, including certificates for individual tenancies, in one main entrance to the building.
- CoF for overall building
- Emergency Services entrance
- CoF(s) for individual tenancies

**Option 3**
Display certificates of classification for individual tenancies as close as practicable to the entrance of each of the individual tenancies.
- CoF for overall building
- Emergency Services entrance
- CoF(s) for individual tenancies

**Explanation:**
The building in example 2 is a typical shopping centre with multiple entrances and several tenancies inside. These types of buildings usually have one CoF for the overall building, however the tenancies are often the subject of individual building development approvals and may also be issued with a separate CoF. Therefore, it is not uncommon to have several CoFs for the building even though building certifiers have the option to issue a new amended whole-of-building CoF when they approve a tenancy fit-out. In these cases there are different options for displaying the certificates and complying with the requirements of the BA. Some of these options are outlined above.
Example 3: Multi-block unit complex with main reception where individual blocks may or may not be joined.

Explanation:
In some cases there may be several buildings on one block of land recorded on a certificate of classification. Even though the certificate covers all of the buildings, a copy must be located near the entrance of each building. This will ensure any specific information relating to each building is available to any authorised officers or occupiers.
Example 4: Single block unit complex (class 2)—both single and multiple storeys with one main entrance

Explanation:
Where a building shares a common stairway or foyer, it is suitable to place the certificate of classification in that area on the ground floor. This will ensure information is readily available to occupants, enforcement agencies or emergency services personnel. For buildings that do not have any common internal space, it is recommended that the CofC be located either on the wall of an undercover car park or on an external wall. As per previous examples, if the CofC is located outside, it is the owner’s responsibility to ensure that the document is protected from the effects of the weather and is securely fixed.