

Plumbing newsflash number 394

Request for plumbers to complete a Form 16—inspection certificate

Purpose

To explain the use of Form 16—inspection certificates under the *Building Act 1975*, for work that is subject to building assessment processes undertaken by licensed plumbers.

Background

The department has received requests for advice about the appropriate uses of Form 16. Licensed building certifiers may use competent persons to assist with inspections upon completion of a particular aspect of building work.

All building work which is subject to building development approval may be the subject of an inspection certificate, including plumbing-related work such as the installation of special fire services, dual-flush toilets, 3-star shower roses and rainwater tanks.

Licensed building certifiers are responsible for assessing building applications, approval of building works and inspection of the various stages of construction. The code of conduct for all building certifiers requires a certifier to operate within the level of their competence and scope of expertise. A copy of the code is available on the department's [website](#).

A cadet certifier may be appointed to assist the licensed building certifier with performing building certifying functions provided the cadet has met the requirements stated in the Building Regulation 2006 and outlined in [newsflash number 389](#). The cadet certifier must have been employed by either a local government or private certifier for at least three months, within the previous six months or be undertaking study which meets the education standard for accreditation of building certifiers. The cadet certifier must work under the direct supervision of a licensed building certifier and may only provide assistance within the limits of the licence held by the supervising certifier. The licensed building certifier will still be responsible for the entire certification process.

When inspecting an aspect of building work, licensed building certifiers have three options. They can:

1. inspect the work themselves, or as outlined above, use the assistance of a cadet certifier
2. rely on evidence of suitability to support a decision. Evidence of suitability could be, for example, a report issued by a registered testing authority, which provides proof that a particular product or form of construction has undergone performance testing. The report must demonstrate the suitability of the product or form of construction, for its specified building application. Also, a certificate of conformity issued under the CodeMark scheme which is administered by the Australian Building Codes Board may be considered as conclusive evidence of suitability
3. where building certifiers are not experienced in a particular scope of work, they may seek inspection help from a competent person. In particular circumstances where it may not be practical for a building certifier to be on site at the time when certain fixtures e.g. such as fire sprinkler or hydrant systems are being installed, the building certifier may seek inspection help from the licensee who is responsible for the installation of, or who installed, the fixtures.

Legislation

Building Act 1975 (BA)—Part 2 Persons responsible for assessing building development applications

Building Regulation 2006—Part 5 Competent persons, Part 7 General provisions about certificates

Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 (PDA) — Part 4 Compliance assessments

Building Regulation 2006 — Part 5A Cadet building certifiers

Interpretation

Use of competent person

A person must be assessed as competent by a licensed building certifier to inspect an aspect of work to ensure compliance with the relevant codes and standards that are applicable to the aspect under the BA.

The decision to seek inspection help from a competent person can only be made by the licensed building certifier assessing the application or inspecting the building work. Where a licensed building certifier seeks inspection help, they must first ensure the person is suitably qualified and experienced to provide inspection help. The licensed building certifier must keep a record of the documents or information relied on and reasons for considering the person giving the Form 16 to be competent.

A licensed building certifier may rely on design or inspection help with this help recorded in either a Form 15 or 16. For example, a civil engineer may certify the design of the building is structurally adequate (Form 15) or the engineer may undertake inspections that the work has been carried out correctly (Form 16). The Form 16 may then be used to document the decision made by the licensed building certifier that the work has been carried out in line with the building code and the relevant approval. Further, licensed building certifiers should only ask for a Form 16 where the certifier has a genuine need for it.

There is no obligation under the PDA for a plumber to complete a Form 16. However, a licensed plumber, whom the building certifier has assessed to be a competent person, may provide a Form 16 to certify that a plumbing fixture has been installed in accordance with relevant technical specifications, plumbing and building codes. The provision of approved forms in these circumstances is a matter which is governed by the agreement and arrangements between the relevant parties.

The BA does not contain a requirement for a person to provide a Form 16 to persons or entities other than licensed building certifiers. For example, advice agencies may request a copy of a Form 16 that has been provided to a licensed building certifier however, this is not mandatory.

Use of Form 16

The Form 16 is intended to provide inspection help to the licensed building certifier that the stages (or aspects) of building work have been constructed in line with the relevant development approval. For example, a Form 16 could be used to certify that an appropriately trained and qualified Queensland Building Services Authority (QBSA) licensee has competently undertaken a particular aspect of building work.

The competent person may certify that a particular aspect of inspected work, as described in, and limited in, the signed Form 16, is compliant with the building assessment provisions and the development approval for the identified work. For example, the building code may specify an AS 2118.4–1995 Automatic fire sprinkler systems—residential sprinkler system is required for the building and the building approval may also require the sprinkler system to cover additional areas in the building that are not normally required to be covered by the standard, as a performance solution. In this example, the Form 16 would state that the sprinkler system has been installed in compliance with AS 2118.4 and that the additional compliant sprinkler



coverage has been installed in the identified areas of the building in accordance with the approval.

Completing the Form 16

Form 16s provided by the competent person must contain their personal signature. Certificates provided by a licensed company must contain the personal signature of the authorised person of the company who is competent to certify compliance of a material, system, method of building, building element design or other thing under the provisions of the Building Regulation 2006.

This means that the person signing the form needs to have knowledge about the compliance that is being certified. By signing a Form 16 to certify that a 4-star toilet has been installed in accordance with the Queensland Development Code (QDC) MP 4.1—Sustainable buildings, would indicate that the person understands the compliance requirements for MP 4.1 e.g. the toilet cistern has a dual flush function, is compatible with the size of the toilet bowl, and is minimum 4-star under the Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme.

Building assessment provisions and regulated plumbing work

Regulated plumbing work such as the installation of a fire hydrant or fire sprinkler system is assessed under assessment provisions of the BA and PDA.

Regulated plumbing work shall be inspected by a local government plumbing inspector as part of the plumbing compliance assessment process. The assessment is limited to determining that suitable methods of jointing and supporting fixtures have been used and appropriate backflow prevention devices have been installed.

A licensed building certifier is generally not qualified to assess or certify plumbing work and therefore may seek inspection help from a licensed plumber, whom the certifier has deemed competent. The licensed building certifier may request a Form 16 for the installation of fire hydrant and fire sprinkler systems certifying the installation is in accordance with the approved design, standards, codes and industry best practice. This is not a certification by the plumber that the fire hydrant and fire sprinkler system will work as designed. The initial commissioning test is the responsibility of the owner and it is overseen by the licensed building certifier. Further, the ongoing operation and maintenance is the responsibility of the owner/occupier.

Certification function under the QBSA

Plumbers providing a Form 16 for a particular aspect of building work under the building assessment provisions are not providing certification functions under the QBSA contractor licence. For example, a plumbing contractor who holds a QBSA fire hose reels and fire hydrants licence, is entitled to install and maintain a fire hose reel and hydrant system. They cannot certify the system design complies with the Building Code of Australia. However, the same contractor could, if requested, provide inspection help to a certifier stating that their work was installed in accordance with the approved design, standards, codes and best industry practice.

Contact for further information

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