

# Building Newsflash

**Building Certifiers**

**Building Designers**

**Architects**

## CLASSIFICATION OF FARM BUILDINGS

### Purpose

This Newsflash gives guidance in determining the classification of buildings used for farming purposes.

### Classification

It is the responsibility of the building certifier to determine the most appropriate classification of a building, based on the purpose for which the building is designed, and is to be used.

Building certifiers need to be aware that the classification of use under the Building Code of Australia (BCA), may be different to the definition used in a planning scheme. For example, a building certifier may determine a farm building to be Class 10, whereas the planning scheme may have a specific definition for the use. Examples of general definitions include: agriculture, rural and rural industry, while specialist definitions include such uses as hydroponics, preparation of produce for market, mushroom growing and roadside stalls. It is important building certifiers check whether the use is assessable under the planning scheme before issuing a development permit.

The BCA Guide, page 2454, states:

“a classification of 10a for farm buildings should only apply where a classification of 7 or 8 is not more appropriate. However, when determining the classification a building certifier should consider the size, purpose, operations and the extent to which people are employed in the building.”

Using the criteria from the Guide, if the proposed use is associated with farming and no process or commercial activity is to be undertaken in the building, the certifier may consider it appropriate to make it Class 10a. This would typically include a farm machinery shed, even though a mechanic may be engaged only occasionally to carry out repairs to equipment in the shed. However, if mechanical repairs were to be carried out on a commercial basis for other farmers, the certifier may decide the correct classification is 8.

Where persons are likely to be employed in a farm shed e.g. itinerant workers for the processing of produce, such as washing and packing potatoes, the certifier would most likely determine the building to be Class 8. A battery-poultry shed where employees are involved in the operation of feeding, cleaning and collecting eggs, is another example where a building certifier might determine the building is Class 8. Similarly, if persons are likely to be employed in a shed (other than a hayshed), or a cool-room, storing or removing produce, e.g. the storage of pineapples in crates, it is likely the certifier will determine the building to be Class 7.

## Categories of development for class 10 farm buildings and structures

In relation to a proposed Class 10 farm building, it is first necessary to determine whether an approval is required. The *Standard Building Regulation 1993* (SBR) prescribes those Class 10 buildings and structures that are either self-assessable or exempt, i.e. no approval is required.

The SBR categories for Class 10 farm buildings comprise:

### Exempt

Farm buildings such as haysheds, barns and other buildings used for similar purposes, on land used for agricultural, horticultural, floricultural or pastoral purposes, and situated more than 200 m from a property boundary, are exempt development. No planning scheme provisions can apply to such development.

### Self-assessable.

If these types of farm buildings, other than ones situated within Wind Region C, are situated closer than 200 m to a boundary, they are self-assessable providing:

- they are associated with a single detached house or another Class 10 building; and
- their maximum size complies with the following limits; area 10 m<sup>2</sup>, length 5m, and height 2.4m.

Where SBR self-assessable buildings or structures are proposed, although a development permit is not required under the SBR, they must comply with the siting requirements of the SBR. If a planning scheme prescribes different, self-assessable setbacks for such buildings and structures, these must be complied with.

### Assessable

If farm buildings do not fall within the exempt or self-assessable categories under Schedule 5, they become assessable development for the purposes of the SBR. A development permit is required, and they must comply with the siting requirements of the SBR.

Where alternative siting or other requirements apply under a planning scheme, these must be complied with. For development that is self-assessable under a planning scheme, a development approval is not required under the scheme, providing such development complies with the applicable scheme requirements.

However, if SBR assessable development does not comply with the self-assessable provisions of the planning scheme, it may become assessable development under the scheme. It would then require preliminary approval under the planning scheme, before a development permit could be issued under the SBR.

## Fire fighting facilities

Where a farm building having a floor area over 500 m<sup>2</sup> is classified as 7 or 8, the deemed-to-satisfy provisions require the installation of fire hose reels and fire hydrants. However, performance requirement EP1.3 applies only where a fire brigade is available to attend. QFRA guidelines indicate a response time of 30 minutes by an operational fire service should be used in determining the availability of the fire service for buildings up to 1000m<sup>2</sup>. If outside this response time, the performance requirements and deemed-to-satisfy provisions would not apply. As many farm buildings would be within 30 minutes of an operational fire service, EP1.3 will apply in many cases.

Where EP1.3 applies but it is difficult to provide fire hose reels and hydrants, as a reticulated water supply is not available, it may be appropriate to consider an alternative solution. In these circumstances the building certifier should seek the advice of the QFRA before issuing a development permit.

In considering an alternative solution, the building certifier should assess issues such as:

Fire load – The proportion of the floor area used for storage. This may be minimal due to the need to manoeuvre vehicles and store equipment. As a result the use may not constitute a major fire load.

Occupant risk – The risk to occupants. This may be low due to the small numbers involved, and the relative openness of the building, and the ease of escape.

Risk of fire spread - The risk of fire affecting adjoining buildings. This may be very low if other buildings are situated well clear of the building.

## **Other BCA requirements**

If the building is classified as Class 7 or 8, compliance with other provisions of the BCA also needs to be considered, e.g. means of egress, sanitary facilities for employees, and access for persons with disabilities. Again, if the deemed-to-satisfy provisions are considered inappropriate, an alternative solution could be considered which meets the relevant performance requirements.