



# Building and plumbing newsflash number 487

## Commissioning and maintenance of fire safety installations, child care centres code, footings inspections and various plumbing standards

### Purpose

To advise the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No.4) 2011 has been made amending a range of building and plumbing standards as outlined below.

### Queensland Development Code (QDC) Mandatory Part (MP) 6.1— Commissioning and maintenance of fire safety installations

There is no standard methodology and no established process for testers to use when testing fire hydrants and sprinkler systems. This has resulted in inconsistencies in the application of maintenance standards (AS1851:2005) and in commissioning testing. To promote consistency in commissioning, applying the maintenance standard and reporting, the department established a technical working group to develop a testing procedure and communication protocol.

A revised version of QDC MP 6.1 will commence on 1 January 2012 and require testers of water-based fire safety installations (hydrants and sprinkler systems) to follow a standard testing procedure and use an approved form. For commissioning tests, the tester must give a copy of the form to the building owner within ten business days. Building certifiers will keep a copy of the test results with the building approval documentation. The procedure, form and guideline are available [here](#).

The revised QDC MP 6.1 covers compliance with the building assessment provisions for the commissioning of newly installed water-based fire safety installations, and compliance with the maintenance requirements for fire safety installations under the Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008 (BFSR).



The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) is a concurrence referral agency for alternative solutions for performance criteria 3 to 5. The BFSR has also been amended to prescribe that fire protection plumbers licensed through the Plumbing Industry Council (PIC) are ‘appropriately qualified persons’. This will allow plumbers with the necessary endorsements to perform maintenance of water-based fire safety installations.

## **Plumbing amendments**

### **Deletion of Schedule 5 list**

Schedule 5 of the Standard Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2003 (SPDR) lists local governments whose jurisdictional areas may contain relevant remote areas. These local governments can dispense with the requirement for plumbing inspectors to inspect plumbing and drainage work for compliance with the relevant technical standards. Schedule 5 is for reference purposes only and the operational provisions for defining the remote areas are contained elsewhere in the SPDR. The schedule serves no technical purpose and has been removed.

### **Amendment of Part 2 provisions**

The terminology for plumbing work, drainage work and on-site sewerage work has been aligned to clarify the intention that all plumbing and drainage work must comply with the relevant parts of the Plumbing Code of Australia (PCA) and the QDC mandatory parts referred to in the SPDR and the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code (QPWC).

### **Exclusion of certain Australian Standards from the application of the PCA**

The SPDR requires that plumbing and drainage work comply with specified parts of the PCA, subject to certain exceptions. Additional exceptions have been created for AS/NZS 3500.3:2003 (Storm water drainage) and AS/NZS 1546.2:2001 (Waterless composting toilets).

### **Updating Schedule 1—removing Australian/New Zealand standards**

The Australian and New Zealand standards cited in the SPDR as ‘applied provisions’ for plumbing and drainage work are referenced separately within relevant parts of the PCA and the QPWC. Duplicated standards have now been removed from the SPDR.

### **Updating Schedule 1—including QDC MP 4.2 and 4.3**

Various components of these mandatory QDC parts include standards for plumbing and drainage work. The SPDR has been amended to clarify that the plumbing and drainage components of those mandatory parts are ‘applied provisions’ for which all plumbing and drainage work must comply. Plumbing inspectors may inspect the plumbing and drainage works at the inspection stage to ensure that works comply with the relevant mandatory parts. Building certifiers will continue to assess compliance of the proposed works in accordance with

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the relevant mandatory parts, at the building approval stage. Building certifiers will be responsible for certifying that the work complies with the relevant code.

### **Removal of the trade test**

The trade test is one of a number of criteria listed in the Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2003 (PDR) Schedules for determining the qualifications or practical experience of an applicant for certain plumbing licences and endorsements under the PDR. In the past, the trade test has been treated as a means of gaining recognition of prior learning for all of the competencies that lead to fire protection licensing outcomes. Registered training organisations in Queensland are currently conducting alternative recognition of prior learning processes which have superseded the trade test. As the trade test has not been administered by a registered training organisation for some time, after extensive consultation, all references to the trade test have been removed.

### **QDC MP 2.3—Fire safety in existing residential care buildings (pre 1 June 2007) —new referral agency**

Recently, the Building Regulation 2006 (BR) was amended to introduce a new chapter dealing with fire safety for residential care buildings built, approved or applied for, before 1 June 2007. The Sustainable Planning Regulation 2009 (SPR) has been amended to make the QFRS an advice referral agency for alternative solutions under the new QDC MP 2.3.

### **QDC MP 5.4—Child care centres**

New national laws for early childhood education and care services, prepared on the basis of a National Agreement endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in December 2009, will commence on 1 January 2012. Under consequential amendments to the Queensland laws, most early childhood education and care services will be required to comply with the National Construction Code (including the Building Code of Australia) from May 2012.

QDC MP 5.4 has been revised so that it will no longer apply to early childhood education and care services to which the new laws apply. It will continue to apply only to services licensed under the *Child Care Act 2002*, which are not captured by the new laws.

### **Competent persons for footing inspections**

The BR provides mandatory inspection stages for single detached houses, sheds and swimming pools. Each stage of building work comprises a range of ‘aspects’ to be inspected. For example, an aspect of a footing stage includes a check of the boundary clearances. Under the current regime, building certifiers may use any ‘competent person’ to provide assistance with inspections for any of the ‘aspects’ of the footings stage. However, the BR previously specified



a building certifier must inspect the footings of a detached house and undertake the home's final inspection.

If a building certifier chooses to rely on competent persons for inspection help, the amendments to the BR now specify that for the 'boundary clearance' aspect of the footing inspection, only a cadastral surveyor is a 'competent person' able to assist a building certifier with the inspection. For the 'reinforcement of slab and footing system' aspect of the footings inspection, the amendments specify that only a registered professional engineer is a 'competent person'.

For all other aspects, there are no restrictions on who a building certifier decides would be a competent person. This is subject to the requirement for a competent person to hold an appropriate licence class if necessary to give the inspection help.

Provided the above aspects are inspected by competent persons, including a person specified in the new restricted categories, the building certifier responsible for approving the work may sign the certificate of inspection without personally inspecting the footings stage.

Amendments to the BR also clarify that a building certifier must not accept aspect inspection certificates for all aspects of the final stage. A building certifier must still personally inspect the final stage and can rely on inspection help from competent persons for selected aspects.

Further information is available in the department's 'Inspection of single detached Class 1a buildings or Class 10 buildings or structures' [Guideline](#).

## Contact for further information

**Department of Local Government and Planning**

Building Codes Queensland Division

tel +61 7 3239 6369

[buildingcodes@dlgp.qld.gov.au](mailto:buildingcodes@dlgp.qld.gov.au)

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