



BUILDING NOTE

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CLASSIFICATION OF LARGE FARM BUILDINGS

The Department of Local Government and Regional Development has been requested to provide a view on the classification of large farm buildings. Concerns have been raised that some buildings classed as 10a are in fact structures built for commercial purposes in which varying numbers of people are employed.

The *Building Regulations 1989*, states that “*Every building shall be classified by the local government in accordance with Part A3 of Volume One of the Building Code.*” It is therefore the responsibility of the local governments to ensure that a building is correctly classified.

The Building Code of Australia Guide, under the heading of ‘Difficult Classifications’, states that “*In some States or Territories, appropriate authorities may classify farm buildings as Class 10a, which covers non-habitable buildings. They would only make this decision if a classification of Class 7b or Class 8 would not be more appropriate.*” Using this criteria, it would seem appropriate that local governments should rule out the other classifications of 7b and 8 before adopting a 10a classification for a large farm building.

It’s been suggested that some applicants propose to install services such as exit signs, fire hose reels or extinguishers in order to satisfy the concerns of the local government that such large farm buildings may pose a significant fire safety threat. Local governments need to exercise caution when relying on such services being placed as a condition on a building licence for a Class 10a development. Such conditions, imposed on a Class 10a building, may not be enforceable, as they are not required by the BCA.

If a local government is of the opinion that some form of additional fire safety measures are needed in a Class 10a building, then it should reconsider the 10a classification.

It is the Department’s view that issues such as low fire load, low occupant risk and low risk of fire spread should not be used as justification for choosing a less stringent classification for a building. These issues should be utilised when assessing an Alternative Building Solution to the Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions of the BCA. Such Alternative Building Solutions may only require minimal fire safety measures for Class 7b or 8 buildings.

Recommendation:

The following recommendations by the Department may assist local governments in determining the classification of large farm buildings:

1. If persons are likely to be employed to stack or remove materials from storage building(s) then, in this instance, a classification of 7b may be appropriate.
2. If persons are likely to be employed to pack or process materials within building(s) then, in this instance, a classification of 8 may be appropriate.
3. If persons are likely to be employed to feed, clean or collect produce from animals or plants within the building(s) then, in this instance, a classification of 8 may be appropriate.

Other BCA requirements:

As well as fire safety issues associated with large farm buildings local government should also consider other BCA requirements such as access for persons with a disability and the provision of sanitary facilities. It should also be noted that access for persons with disability is required for some Class 10a buildings, as per D3.1 and Table D3.2 of the BCA.

Where Deemed-To-Satisfy provisions of the BCA are considered inappropriate, local government should consider Alternative Building Solutions that meet the performance requirements of the BCA.



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