



TRENTO FULLER

Building Certifiers & Consultants

The scope of changes to the NCC in 2019 are unprecedented. There is so much to cover, and our usual one-page synopsis is insufficient to summarise them all. As a result, Trento Fuller is offering a presentation at your office outlining any particular changes that you would like to discuss and are likely to affect your organisation.

If you are interested, please contact Lydia on (08) 7071 7106 to arrange a date and time

What a start to the year... there have been a raft of changes relevant to the building surveying industry being introduced in 2019, including amendments to the new National Construction Code [NCC] 2019 (more on this later), revision of a majority of the Australian Standards, and the delisting of a number of CodeMark Certificates. In addition, the outcome of the Lacrosse Ruling and Opal Tower is expected to have a significant impact on consultants and the broader community, particularly in relation to liability and PI Insurance... there are uncertain times ahead...

Lacrosse

There are significant implications arising from the Lacrosse ruling, we take this opportunity to provide our comments and thoughts.

The comprehensive ruling from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal is a highly recommended read, particularly considering that all the relevant parties have and may continue to be affected. Looking ahead, we have summarised what we consider to be useful takeaway points for each of the above parties involved:

Builder – The Builder was relatively safe and fortunate, not only because of the Contract that was in place, but also since approval to alter the cladding was requested prior to its installation. It is recommended that any changes which occur during construction that may affect fire, life safety, health and amenity are appropriately reviewed by the relevant parties, including the Private Certifier;

Architects & Designers – Although the product was approved and accepted by the Private Certifier as Deemed-To-Satisfy, the Judge found that the Architect still had a duty of care to specify products that are fit for purpose. This has far reaching implications not just for product selection. Maintaining the necessary skills to read and interpret the NCC is as important to Architects as it should be for Private Certifiers;

Private Certifier – The Certifiers can no longer accept a product or methodology based on traditional understanding and thinking. The Judge was highly critical of this approach. Rather Courts take a close look at the text, context and purpose of a Clause to determine whether the interpretation applied is correct.

Fire Engineer - The contractual obligations of the Fire Engineer will need to be clearly defined in the services contract agreement. This will ensure that the Fire Engineer is not liable for non-compliances outside their scope of work.





NCC 2019 – The Changes

At first, the NCC will look different. Noting that it has remained relatively unchanged since 1996. All tables have been amended and reformatted to assist copy-and-paste. There is also a shift to add new Verification Methods, allowing greater flexibility to meet the performance requirements. The Australian Building Codes Board is moving to increase the number of Verification Methods over successive editions of the NCC. The Verification Methods in the BCA are too numerous to discuss with this synopsis. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these with your organisation further.



Sprinkler Protection

There are currently specific requirements that apply to Class 2 apartment and Class 3 hotel buildings less than 4 storeys and where over 25 metres in effective height. The NCC has now introduced mandatory sprinkler protection to all Class 2 and 3 buildings that are constructed between 4 storeys and 25 metres. The sprinkler systems named FPAA101D and FPAA101H [D is for drinking (domestic supply) and H for Hydrant] provides a relatively inexpensive opportunity to considerably increase the safety in mid-rise buildings with sleeping occupants. We anticipate the FPAA sprinklers will be utilised in most Class 2 and 3 buildings in lieu of an AS2118.1 sprinkler system. Several general concessions or exclusions also apply depending on the system that is proposed to be installed.

Timber in Buildings

The use of fire-protected timber in buildings was previously limited to Class 2 and 3 buildings. The NCC now permits this concession for all buildings that are less than 25 metres in effective height and protected with sprinklers.



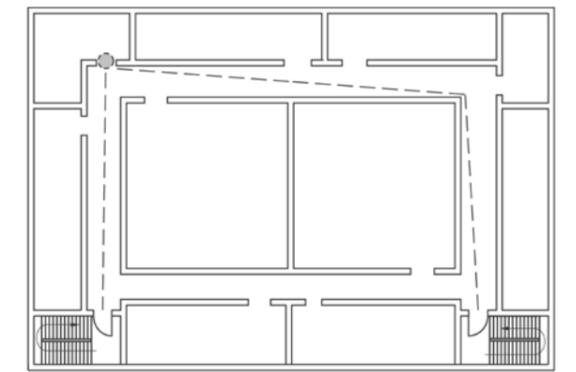
Battery Protection

C2.12 contained provisions to separate equipment and in particular batteries that have a voltage exceeding 24 volts and a capacity exceeding 10 ampere hours. This has now been amended to a battery system installed that has a total voltage exceeding 12 volts and a storage capacity of 200 kWh. The separation required does not apply to electricity network substations.



Residential Care Building and Residential Aged Care Building

A residential aged care building is an existing defined term that has been altered to now mean “a Class 3 or 9a building whose residents due to their incapacity associated with the ageing process, are provided with physical assistance in conducting their daily activities and to evacuate the building during an emergency”. A new term residential care building means “a Class 3, 9a or 9c building which is a place of residence where 10% or more of persons who reside there need physical assistance in conducting their daily activities and to evacuate the building during an emergency (including any aged care building or residential aged care building) but does not include a hospital.” With the increase in Specialist Disability Accommodation, some Class 2 apartment buildings may consider accommodating more than 10% of apartments for people who require high physical support triggering the requirement for the building part to be considered a Class 3 building and protected with a sprinkler system, irrespective that it has a rise in storeys less than 4.



A point from which travel in different directions to 2 exits is available determined by D1.4
 Travel distance between exits, measured through the point of choice, limited by D1.5 (maximum 60 m)

Egress from Buildings

Rather than a change, a clarification regarding the distance of travel between required Exits has been provided. Although only a minor correction, we consider this will have far reaching consequences. The Clause requires that the distance between alternative Exits is not the straight line between them, but rather the distance is measured from the point of choice. The implication is that an additional fire stair may be required, or an Alternative Solution considered for extended travel distance for exceeding the distance permitted between the two Exits.





Hydrant & Hose Reel Protection

Hydrant protection in buildings over 500 m2 may not be required in situations where the fire brigade station is more than 50 km from the building measured along roads and does not have equipment that is capable to use with a fire hydrant.

Where a hydrant booster is located within 10 metres from a sprinkler protected building, an Alternative Solution is no longer required to permit this. Where the booster is located adjacent a building that is not sprinkler protected there are now deemed to satisfy concessions which allow a reduced distance to the building [between 3.5 metres and 10 metres to the building].

Hose reels are no longer required to buildings that are Class 5 offices. Queries that would previously have been asked regarding hose reel reach to existing offices will no longer apply. Of course, with the deletion of hose reels there are new provisions for additional protection by way of portable fire extinguishers.

Lifts

A low-riser low speed constant pressure lift is no longer permitted in high traffic public use areas in a building such as a theatre, cinema, auditorium, transport interchange, shopping complex or the like.



Operation of a Latch

The NCC now clarifies that the pushing action on a single device to activate a door requires the control to comply with the requirements in AS1428.1 for operation [500 mm from an internal corner, etc] with the added provision that braille and tactile signage is needed to identify the latch operation device. Note that this applies to doors in paths of travel to an Exit.



Accessible Carparking

Provisions in the NCC relating to accessible carparks have been clarified to confirm that identification of an accessible carparking bay is not required where there is a total of not more than 5 carparking space. This does not mean that the carparking space layout and access [shared zone and bollard] is not required. As an aside, there has also been a change confirming braille and tactile signage is required to be 'Title Case' rather than sentence case.



Facilities, Waterproofing, Adult Change Facilities & Condensation

The requirement for contractors to be provided with sanitary facilities in Class 2 buildings with greater than 10 sole occupant units has been removed.

An adult change facility cannot be considered a toilet pan for the purposes of the calculation of sanitary facility numbers. The requirement for their installation is limited to very large buildings. It is unlikely that any works to sanitary facilities located in a building required to be provided with an adult change facility will trigger the installation of a new facility since they are not referenced in the Access to Premises Standard. An addition to a shopping centre, sports venue, museum, art gallery, theatre, or airport terminal that increases the size or occupant numbers past the threshold might be the trigger for a new adult change facility to be installed.

The NCC now prescribes the requirements for condensation management to sole occupant units in a Class 2 or Class 4 building. The condensation requirements relate to pliable building membranes such as sarking, exhaust discharge, as well as ventilation of roof spaces.



Occupiable Outdoor Areas

An additional section 'occupiable outdoor areas' has been incorporated into the Building Code to cover situations where rooftops are occupied, however, the space is not a storey [unroofed] and does not need to comply with the BCA provisions. Part G6 attempts to address this by mandating requirements for fire hazard properties, fire separation, escape, construction of exits, firefighting equipment, lift installations, visibility in an emergency, light & ventilation, and fire orders.

A judgement call is still required regarding whether an outdoor area is deemed enclosed, or open to the sky, since this is one of the criteria required for the space to be nominated an occupiable outdoor area rather than a storey. The definition of "enclosed" has been clarified for Atriums and could be used for comparison purposes to determine whether an outdoor area is open to the sky or not.



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