

Classification of certain residential care buildings

This updates the previous *Practice Note 2005-30* issued June 2005.

1. Summary

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) classifications for residential care buildings reflect the changing nature of this type of accommodation. It is now common to use buildings of typical domestic type construction for the purpose of residential care.

These buildings may house children, disabled or aged persons, who need physical assistance in conducting their daily activities and help to evacuate the building during an emergency. The BCA classification will depend on the building size, population and resident characteristics. Two contrasting examples are described below—a converted domestic dwelling and a nursing home.

2. Case study: converted domestic dwelling

In the case of an existing three-bedroom brick veneer house proposed for use as a residence for six disabled persons and a full time live-in carer:

If the occupants undergo medical treatment, have full-time nursing care and would generally need physical assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency, then the building meets the criteria for a health care building and is a Class 9a building.

If the occupants do not undergo medical treatment or do not have full-time nursing care, then the building meets the criteria for a Class 3 building, under paragraph (d) of the Class 3 classification in BCA Part A3.

Note that the building cannot be a Class 1b, as this only relates to a boarding house, guest house, hostel or similar with a total floor area not exceeding 300 m² and in which no more than 12 persons would ordinarily reside (i.e. a small Class 3 paragraph (a) building). Also, the building would not be a Class 9c building as it does not accommodate aged persons.

3. Case study: nursing home

Nursing home housing 50 aged residents, of which:

- a) 15 are undergoing medical treatment and generally need physical assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency.
- b) the remaining 35 need physical assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency.

This building may have multiple classifications. Part (a) is Class 9a and Part (b) is Class 3 or 9c. With this type of building, a building practitioner should consider any likely changes of occupant mix and advise the owner of the regulatory implications. The BCA allows buildings to have multiple classifications. This nursing home could be an example of a building designed to provide environments ranging from a low level of care to a high level, and could be classified as partly Class 3, 9c and 9a.