

This factsheet provides general information on changing a shed to a dwelling

This factsheet is intended to assist Hinchinbrook Shire residents to understand requirements in relation to living in sheds while planning or building a primary dwelling or planning to reclassify a shed to dwelling.

Class 10A buildings such as a private garage, carport, shed, or the like are defined as non-habitable buildings in the *Building Code of Australia* (BCA) and are not permitted to be used for residential purposes.

Property owners who wish to use a shed for habitations purposes and incorporate habitable rooms in the building, such as kitchen, bedrooms, living room, dining room, must not do so without first obtaining all relevant approvals and permits.

Class 10A buildings must be upgraded to the minimum standard of a Class 1A dwelling, as required by the BCA, prior to the building being occupied for residential purposes.

Why Live in a Shed?

While building a shed may seem like a cheaper option, in theory it can often turn out to be more expensive in the long run. More than often this turns out not be the most cost effective choice and people can fall into the trap of a shed or temporary home becoming permanent causing further problems down the track.

The idea may start out to live in the shed while a dwelling is being built or for weekend/holiday stays, but circumstances change and the money spent on making the shed comfortable can prevent making a start on a new house.

The cost of setting up a temporary kitchen, laundry, bathroom and toilet facilities can be quite significant, and these are all required when setting up temporary accommodation.

Sheds are not the most comfortable living. They can typically be very hot in summer and quite cold in winter. They are also very difficult to seal against insects and vermin.

It may be a better option to build a small dwelling rather than a 'livable' shed as the finished value of a dwelling will far exceed the value of a shed set up for occupation.

Am I Allowed to Live in a Shed?

No, it is illegal to occupy a shed or garage any type for habitable purposes. Under the BCA, residential buildings or a dwelling requires a higher standard of construction than sheds, especially in cyclonic areas.

Council may approve a "Temporary Occupancy Permit" subject to conditions for sheds and garages for limited periods while a dwelling is being built. The conversion of a shed for habitable purposes requires a Building Permit for the reclassification. This is essential whether building work is required or not.

The process will require a Development Application for Building and if necessary a Plumbing and Drainage Application and an Amenity and Aesthetics Application.

Approvals Required

Prior to submitting a Building Application, landowners should check the *Hinchinbrook Shire Planning Scheme 2017* and Concurrence Agency requirements. These requirements may relate to:

- A Structural Engineer to ensure the shed and concrete slab meets the requirements of the Australian Standards;
- Siting;
- Flood Hazard areas;
- Bushfire Hazard areas;
- Minimum size requirements;
- Power supply;
- Road access; and
- Water storage.

There are typically two approvals that are required for such a project:

1. Building Approval from a Building Certifier to change the classification of the building from Class 10A to Class 1A; and
2. Plumbing Compliance Permit, to be obtained prior to any plumbing work carried out. Any plumbing or drainage work carried out without approval will need to be inspected and upgraded if necessary to comply with the *Plumbing Code of Australia*.



Adjoining Properties

If the proposed building or structure has the potential to impact on a neighbour, it is recommended that you consult with that neighbour before starting any work.

Consultation with your neighbour may help to avoid disputes later.

Further information about avoiding disputes can be found on the Queensland Government Website, *Disputes about fences, trees and buildings page*.

If the adjoining property owner is Council, contact Council's Built Environment Team 4776 4600 to discuss your proposal.

Further Information

All carports, sheds, garages and the like must be designed by a suitably qualified person. Some carports, sheds or garages have manufacturer specifications and installation details which should be followed. For further information please also refer to the Building section of the *Department of Housing and Public Works* website.

Changing a Shed into a Dwelling

The Queensland *Building Act 1975* and *BCA* stipulate the minimum requirements for the construction of all buildings. Changing a shed into a dwelling is never a simple process and involves compliance with mandatory building requirements. Sheds are not constructed to the same building standards as houses and it is not always practical or economical to convert a shed into a dwelling.

Step One

A structural engineer must be engaged to ensure the shed and concrete slab meet the requirements of the Australian Standards for houses. Council's Built Environment Team should be contacted to ensure that no restrictions apply to the siting and reclassification to a dwelling on your property.

Key Issues to Consider

- Flood Levels - Floor levels to be 300mm above Q100 flood level;
- Flood Certificate to be procured from Council; and
- Site setback distances to comply with the Queensland Development Code and the Hinchinbrook Shire Planning Scheme 2017.

Step Two

Contact a Builder or Building Designer to arrange an on-site assessment of your property.

Key Issues to Consider

- Building plans are to be drawn by a qualified building designer;
- Stormwater needs to be directed away from the building and must not affect neighbouring properties;
- Termite design to comply with Australian Standard 3660.1 (2000);
- A vapour barrier is required to prevent rising damp entering the building through the floor slab;
- Engineer's certification including plans required confirming the building is structurally suitable to be changed from a shed into a dwelling;
- An energy efficiency report required indicating the building will comply with BCA requirements;
- Compliance with sustainability requirements for water conservation fittings, energy efficient lighting and hot water supply;
- Smoke Alarms to comply with Part 3.7.2 of the BCA, Volume 2, 2013 and AS3786;
- Waterproofing of wet areas to comply with the BCA;
- Waterproofing of external walls and roof;
- Room heights to comply with Part 3.8.2 of the BCA, Volume 2, 2013;
- Owner builder permit or Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC) Insurance for building work – if applicable; and
- Proof of payment of Long Service Levy – if applicable.

Step Three

Contact Council on 4776 4600 to determine any requirements for sewage disposal on your property.

Step Four

Lodge a Building Application with Council or a private Building Certifier. DA Forms and a checklist outlining documentation required to be submitted with a Building Development Application are available on Council's Website page or by utilising Council's Main Office.

Siting

The *Hinchinbrook Shire Planning Scheme 2017* and *Queensland Development Code (QDC)* stipulate minimum boundary clearances for buildings in Queensland. Building setbacks vary subject to zoning requirements.

A Class 1A building requires a greater setback to side and rear boundaries than a Class 10A building does in the QDC. Typically 1.5 metres to the outermost projection of the building.

Structural, Slab and Ceiling Height, Vapour Barrier, Termite Barrier etc.

It will need to be demonstrated that the construction of the shed complies with BCA requirements. This will require an inspection be carried out by a Registered Professional Engineer of Queensland (RPEQ) on the adequacy of an existing slab or structural frame and may result in the upgrading of the building being required. In addition, ceiling height requirements for habitable and non-habitable rooms would need to be met.

The applicant will need to demonstrate that the building is provided with a vapour barrier (damp-course) under the slab, in accordance with BCA requirements, or an equivalent barrier is provided to protect against ground moisture.

All “primary building elements”, as defined in the BCA, must be protected from termite attack. This not only includes all members which take building loads but also includes door jambs, window frames and reveals, architraves and skirtings. Therefore, a steel framed shed may still need a termite barrier if all of the above elements are not termite resistant.

Flooding

It will need to be demonstrated that the construction of the shed slab height is protected from flood water inundation.

Council has adopted a 1% Annual Recurrence Interval (Q100), requiring that all new dwellings are developed free of inundation of floodwaters arising from a 1% Annual Recurrence Interval flood event.

Fire Protection

The BCA outlines the fire protection requirements which are applied to all classes of buildings. The objective set out in this Code is to protect the house or similar building from fire damage.

There are a number of methods which satisfy the fire protection requirements. The most commonly applied methods include:

- Provision of a 900mm clearance between the boundary and the Class 10 building;
- Provision of a 900mm clearance between the house and the Class 10 building; and

- Provision of a 60/60/60 fire rated wall between the house and the boundary. This wall should have no openings and would generally be of masonry construction, although there are other alternatives.

Energy Efficiency

Sustainable dwelling design can save money over the long term as well as reduce impact on the environment.

Sustainable housing laws are intended to make Queensland homes more comfortable to live in, minimise water and energy use, and assist with reducing Queensland’s greenhouse gas emissions.

The Queensland Development Code MP 4.1 purpose is to ensure;

- a) Class 1 and class 2 buildings are energy and water efficient;
- b) The electricity supplied to each meterable premises is able to be measured appropriately; and
- c) End of trip facilities are provided in major developments located in designated local government areas.