



# Capital Development Guideline — Series 7

## Fire Risk Management Policy and Procedures

Single Dwellings

Fire Risk Management — 2013

7.8





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## Fire Risk Management Policy and Procedures

Single Dwellings

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## Abbreviated Terms

The following abbreviated terms are used in this document.

<b>ABCB</b>	Australian Building Codes Board
<b>AFAC</b>	Australasian Fire Authorities Council
<b>AS</b>	Australian Standard
<b>BAB</b>	Building Appeals Board
<b>BCA</b>	National Construction Series – Building Code of Australia
<b>CDG</b>	Capital Development Guideline(s)
<b>CFA</b>	Country Fire Authority Victoria
<b>CSO</b>	Community Service Organisations
<b>DH</b>	Department of Health Victoria
<b>DtS</b>	Deemed-to-Satisfy
<b>FBIM</b>	Fire Brigade Intervention Model
<b>FEB</b>	Fire Engineering Brief
<b>FER</b>	Fire Engineering Report
<b>FERPTF</b>	Fire and Emergency Response Procedures and Training Framework
<b>FIP</b>	Fire Indicator Panel
<b>FRM</b>	Fire Risk Management
<b>FRMU</b>	Fire Risk Management Unit of the Department of Human Services
<b>FSE</b>	Fire Safety Engineer
<b>IFEG</b>	International Fire Engineering Guidelines 2005
<b>MFB</b>	Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government organisation
<b>RBS</b>	Relevant Building Surveyor
<b>SOU</b>	Sole Occupancy Unit
<b>SWMS</b>	Safe Work Method Statement



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 General

Guideline 7.8 – Single Dwellings specifies the minimum fire risk management requirements for all new and existing single dwellings owned by the Director of Housing (DoH) or Department of Human Services (DHS). These are Class 1a buildings as defined in the *Building Code of Australia* (BCA).

Single dwellings provide residential accommodation for tenants, who are considered to be broadly representative of the general community.

Where DoH or the Department has established a special client management plan that identifies *clients* with the potential risks related to fire safety, a referral must be made to the FRMU for appropriate action. Additional fire safety measures may be required for these *clients*.

Where it is impractical for the occupants to safely evacuate the building promptly, then additional precautions may be required.

Most buildings used for public housing are not places of work, rather residences in which people live without any support from DoH or other Department staff. The following criterion needs to be considered when determining if it is practicable to address a particular hazard:

- (a) The rights of the tenants to quiet enjoyment of the property.
- (b) The limited control that the Department of Human Services or DoH can exercise over the activities of its tenants. Tenants have the right, to a certain degree, to set their own fire safety standards within their own home. Therefore, they must take some responsibility for the safety of themselves, their families and others.

DHS and DoH considers fire prevention and fire safety forms an integral part of any fire risk management strategy. Since these are not addressed in the BCA to the level of detail required, this document includes specific guidance.

The building regulations have evolved over the years, reflecting higher community expectations for fire safety and developments in building and fire safety technology. However, building regulations have not required retrospective upgrades unless significant building works are undertaken or the building use changes.

## 1.2 The purpose of this Guideline

The purpose of this Guideline is to provide appropriate levels of fire safety for residents and other occupants of a building subject to the Guidelines, in part, by providing for appropriately qualified professionals such as *Fire Safety Engineers*, *Building Surveyors*, *Building Inspectors* and *auditors* to audit, assess and recommend steps to minimise fire risk, and to assess and report on acceptable standards of fire safety, in specific settings.

The use of this Guideline is subject to the following:

- (a) The Guideline does not constitute all of the possible fire safety matters that could apply to a specific situation, but is provided for assistance in determining appropriate fire safety measures. It is up to individuals acting with appropriate professional advice to determine its application to particular situations.

- (b) This Guideline must only be used for purposes within the range set out in the 'General' section at the start of this document.
- (c) In addition to the fire safety requirements and standards in the Guideline, owners, and occupiers of the buildings may be subject to various other statutory, common law and contractual obligations. They should seek advice, including legal advice, on the existence and scope of these obligations.

### 1.3 Interpretations

In this guideline, unless the contrary appears:

- headings are for convenience only and do not affect interpretation
- a reference to a statute or other law includes regulations and other instruments under it and consolidations, amendments, re-enactments or replacements of any of them
- words in the singular include the plural and vice versa
- where a word or phrase is defined, its other grammatical forms have a corresponding meaning
- mentioning anything after include, includes or including does not limit what else might be included.

### 1.4 Definitions

Words and expressions used in this document and throughout the associated Guidelines that are shown in *italics* are defined terms.

Appendix 1 of this document includes definitions used in this document.

### 1.5 Commentary

Commentary is provided in Appendix 2 for some clauses of this Guideline to provide explanatory or background information in relation to the clause. Clauses that have commentary are identified with an asterisk (\*) in the clause heading.

### 1.6 Field of Application

This Guideline only applies to single dwellings as defined as a class 1a in BCA, typical of those that exist in the general community.

#### 1.6.1 BCA Classification\*

Single dwellings subject to this Guideline are classified as a Class 1a by the BCA. They may be single or multi-storey with no other dwellings located above or below.

#### 1.6.2 Sole Occupancy Unit

The SOU provisions do not apply to BCA Class 1a buildings.



## 1.7 Determining compliance with this Guideline

Compliance with this Guideline is achieved if the building complies with the BCA DtS provisions, and the matters in sections 2 and 3 of this Guideline.

The process for determining compliance is detailed in CDG 7.1 and CDG 7.2 and summarised in the process below.

- (a) Confirm the applicable Guideline to the building being considered.
- (b) Where the building does not comply and cannot be modified to comply, then a *fire risk assessment* must be undertaken and signed off by an *accredited fire safety engineer* who is responsible for the *fire risk assessment* in accordance with CDG 7.2.
- (c) Any *mandatory measures* (refer to section 2 of the Guideline) which are not complied with, must be referred to the *FRM Review Panel* for a determination.

## 1.8 Client and Staff Profiles

A guide to determining *client profile* and *staff profile* is set out in the Department's CDG 7.2.

The typical *client profile* expected in a building covered by this Guideline is Type 1. The *staff profile* is Type 1 (no staff present).

A *fire risk assessment* must be undertaken to determine if any additional fire safety measures are required for that building where a tenant or *client* (or someone on their behalf) submits a special accommodation requirements form that includes a report from their treating practitioner, occupational therapist, carer or disability care provider that highlights that the person has a particular risk to fire arising from their disability and/or fire risk behaviours.

## 2. Mandatory Measures

### 2.1 Introduction

*Mandatory measures* must comply with the nominated design codes and standards, in addition to any requirements of the BCA DtS provisions or any alternative solutions.

Should a *mandatory measure* be considered inapplicable or inappropriate to adopt in full, then a written application outlining the reasons and including supporting justification must be made to the *FRM Review Panel*, for its consideration. Unless there are exceptional or very specific circumstances, the *FRM Review Panel* is unlikely to approve a variation to any of the *mandatory measures*.

### 2.2 Physical Fire Safety Measures

#### 2.2.1 Smoke Detection and Alarm

A dwelling must have at least one smoke alarm complying with AS 3786, located in accordance with the BCA Volume 2. The smoke alarms must be mains powered comprising of an inbuilt non-removable rechargeable battery having an expected lifespan of 10 years.

### 2.3 Management in Use Measures

Management in use measures are operational systems, procedures and policies which:

- (a) minimise the potential for fire starts
- (b) minimise the potential fire growth & fire severity
- (c) maintain the reliability of physical fire safety measures so they are likely to operate in the event of fire
- (d) provide ongoing fire safety awareness to *clients* of appropriate actions to take in the event of a fire.

### 2.4 Doors and locks

Deadlocks must not be installed to any doors leading from a Class 1a dwelling. Where a tenant requests to install a deadlock as an insurance or security requirement, the FRMU may consider this installation at the tenant's expense, subject to a *fire safety risk assessment*. The request must be referred to the *FRM Review Panel* or DoH for a determination.

The type of deadlock installed must include a visual indication of internal deadlock status (locked or unlocked) and include a safety release which automatically unlocks on the activation of the internal lever handle being operated in a downward action.

If approval is given, it must be in writing from the DoH. Additionally, written advice must be provided to the tenant regarding the potential dangers of dead locks in the case of emergency.

## 2.5 Client capability

*Clients* of single dwellings are considered to be representative of the general population housed in rental accommodation and may include a higher proportion of non-English speaking residents. Therefore, information on fire safety precautions and responsibilities to be exercised by *clients* must be made available in the most common community languages by the relevant Divisional areas and in any new lease agreement being entered into.

## 2.6 Electrical installations

Earth leakage protection employing cut-off devices must be provided to:

- (a) all buildings that are proposed to be fully upgraded
- (b) all buildings at the time of electrical re-wiring
- (c) where an electrical audit confirms that it is required.

DoH has established the following electrical safety regime for its public housing properties:

- (a) Replacement of any older wiring, i.e. original braided cotton or toughened rubber sheeting (TRS), with new AS/NZS3000 compliant wiring.

**Note:** Where braided cotton wiring or TRS cannot practically be replaced, those properties will have electrical wiring checks at a frequency not exceeding five years.

- (b) For all upgraded properties, provision of a new circuit breaker board complete with one RCD for the power circuit and one RCD for the lighting circuit (unless already existing).
- (c) Where practical, a full rewire including new mains, sub-mains and switchboard if required.

**Note:** The switchboard must be of the circuit breaker type with main switch and one RCD for the power and one RCD for the lighting circuit.

- (d) Responsive maintenance for any reported faults within:
  - i. 24-hours for urgent electrical faults
  - ii. 7-days for priority electrical repairs.

## 3. Other Department specific measures

### 3.1 Introduction

In addition to the *mandatory measures*, there are a range of other fire safety measures that must be provided within the building to satisfy the Department's prescriptive requirements for houses.

Although adoption of these measures (including DtS provisions) is not mandatory, a *fire risk assessment* must be undertaken which addresses the measures which are not proposed to be implemented in full or in part. The *fire risk assessment* must be submitted to the FRMU for approval prior to implementation of the final design solution.

### 3.2 BCA Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions

For new buildings, the BCA DtS provisions must be complied with, unless varied by a *fire risk assessment* in accordance with CDG 7.2.

#### 3.2.1 Measures which vary from the BCA DtS Provisions

Nil.

#### 3.2.2 Measures which are additional to the BCA DtS Provisions

Nil.

### 3.3 Other measures

#### 3.3.1 Fire separation of buildings

The requirements of these Guidelines for fire separation distances in existing single dwellings are the same as what would have applied under the building regulations for existing buildings at the time of their construction.

#### 3.3.2 Floor, wall & ceiling linings

When carpets are being installed or replaced, consideration may be given to selecting a carpet with low flammability and low flame spread characteristics.

When refurbishing or replacing existing walls or ceiling linings, or installing new wall or ceiling linings, non-combustible linings should be considered. For example, plasterboard, cement sheet or similar.

### 3.3.3 Protection against external environmental hazards\*

If a new building is located in a designated bushfire prone area (as defined in the *Building Regulations*), or in a wildfire or bushfire management overlay in any planning scheme, the DtS provisions of the BCA for bushfire (including AS 3959) must be complied with.

For existing buildings if the site has been classified as a BAL of Low or higher in designated bushfire prone area (as defined in the *Building Regulations*), or in a wildfire or bushfire management overlay in any planning scheme, then it must be referred to the Department for any additional requirements.

If a building is located (where works are being proposed) in an alpine area (as defined in the *building regulations* and the BCA), the requirements of BCA Volume 2 for alpine areas must be complied with, if required by the Regulations or the BCA.

### 3.3.4 Appliance Safety

The Department or DoH is unable to effectively control portable appliances brought into single SOU by *clients*. Accordingly, *clients*, tenants or residents are responsible for the safety and adequacy of portable appliances.

Ducted heating/cooling systems can facilitate smoke and fire spread through a building. It is recommended that if the use of ducted heating/cooling systems cannot be avoided, then consideration must be given to offsetting their effects by, as a minimum, the following precautions:

- (a) using ductwork for air-handling systems in buildings complying with AS 4254
- (b) provision of adequate fire prevention and fire spread measures at the heat source.

## 3.4 Fire Prevention and Fire Safety Management

Fire prevention and management is the responsibility of the client, tenant or resident as the Department does not have the authority to control smoking within tenants' homes, nor does it have the authority to control furnishings supplied by tenants.

## 3.5 Emergency Plans and Procedures

Fire emergency information booklets or similar must be provided to all new tenants. The information must include how to react and report a fire emergency, and evacuate the building.

## 3.6 Record keeping and documentation

DoH and/or the Department must keep records of:

- (a) all fire incidents to any assets (DHS Fire Damage to Asset forms)
- (b) maintenance and testing of fire safety equipment as required
- (c) any electrical inspections
- (d) other inspections and checks carried out
- (e) details of any fire safety issues reported, action required and evidence that actions have been completed satisfactorily.

### 3.6.1 Electrical and Gas Safety

Whilst not forming part of these Guidelines, the following matters are assumed to be installed or included, as they form part of other legislation. However, they must still be checked by an appropriate qualified person at least once every 5 years.

#### Electrical protection

Earth leakage protection and Residual Current Device (RCD) must be installed to electrical switchboards and all electrical services in accordance with AS/NZS3000.

#### Gas Appliance Safety

Gas appliances where a sprinkler system has been installed or to be installed must include a flame-guard system so that extinguishment of the flame will stop the flow of gas. Alternatively, where appropriate appliances are not available with flame guard devices fitted, a gas safety shut-off system must be provided in accordance with Energy Safe Victoria Gas Information Sheet No. 16.

#### Meter Location

Gas and electric meters should be externally mounted.



## 4. Reporting

### 4.1 General

All reporting must utilise nominated templates published by the FRMU using *accredited* practitioners available from the FRMU. Refer to website:

[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/fire-risk-management](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/fire-risk-management)

### 4.2 Fire Risk Assessment

A *fire risk assessment* is required to be undertaken to assess:

- (a) Variations to *mandatory measures* (after approval by the *FRMU Review Panel*).
- (b) Variations to non-mandatory measures.
- (c) Variations to BCA DtS provisions (BCA alternative solutions following the approval by the *FRMU Review Panel*).

Where a tenant or *client* (or someone on their behalf) submits a special accommodation requirement form that includes a report from their treating practitioner, occupational therapist, carer or disability care provider that highlights that the person has a particular risk to fire arising from their disability or special needs and/or fire risk behaviours, a fire risk assessment must be undertaken by a Fire Safety Engineer appointed by the FRMU.

Any *fire risk assessment* must be in accordance with Section 4 of CDG 7.2.

An alternative solution is a building solution that demonstrates compliance with the relevant Performance Requirements other than by using DtS provisions of the BCA. The documentation for the proposed alternative solutions must contain sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the identified performance criteria of all relevant clauses of the BCA will be met.

### 4.3 System Maintenance

All fire safety equipment must be inspected and tested:

- (a) prior to commencement of a new tenancy
- (b) as part of any upgrade works
- (c) within 24-hours of a fault being reported
- (d) at least once every five years.

Smoke alarms (dusting and testing) should be checked by tenants on a regular basis and should be a requirement included in the tenancy agreement, unless otherwise expressed.

For single dwellings owned by DoH, each property will be subject to a compliance check at least once every five years. A compliance certificate will be issued listing all the properties inspected.

#### 4.4 Fire Safety Handbook

Only applicable if a *fire risk assessment* has been undertaken and it was required by that *fire risk assessment* to have a Fire safety Handbook. If a *fire safety handbook* is required it must be in accordance with CDG 7.2 using the template published by the FRMU.

#### 4.5 Fire Safety Audit Report

Only applicable if a *fire risk assessment* has been undertaken and it was required by that *fire risk assessment* to have an audit undertaken.

## Appendix 1: Definitions

The following definitions apply where used (either in lower or upper case) in these Guidelines.

### Accredited

Means a person accredited by the Department of Human Services in the appropriate category to undertake a specific task.

### Advisory Note

Means formal advice issued by the Department of Human Services in relation to application or interpretation of the Guidelines. Advisory notes are not mandatory but must be taken into account in any assessment process.

### Auditor

Means a practitioner who is *accredited* to undertake *fire safety audits*. Accreditation may be limited to specific building or buildings and/or occupancy types.

### Building Act

Means the *Victorian Building Act 1993* or as amended.

### Building Code of Australia (BCA)

The National Construction Code Series – Building Code of Australia, as published from time to time by the Australian Building Codes Board.

### Building Inspector

A person, who is registered in the category of building inspector (unlimited) by the Building Practitioners Board of Victoria or other appropriate Statutory Body for registering practitioners in the state of Victoria and has the appropriate experience in fire safety to apply and interpret these Guidelines and has been *accredited*.

### Building Legibility

Relates to the complexity of the building layout which has an impact on the ease of way finding by the occupants or rescue personnel.

### Building Regulations

Means the *Victorian Building Regulations 2006* or as amended.

### Building Surveyor

A person who is registered under the category of *building surveyor* (unlimited) or *building surveyor* (limited) and be registered or eligible to be registered in the category of building inspector (unlimited) by the Building Practitioners Board of Victoria or other appropriate Statutory Body for registering practitioners in the state of Victoria and has appropriate experience in fire safety to apply and interpret these Guidelines and has been *accredited*.

### Client

Is a natural person who is:

- (a) provided with accommodation, supervision and/or care or a young person on statutory supervision in the criminal justice system or any other person on statutory supervision in the care of the Secretary of the Department of Human Services or Secretary of Department of Health; or
- (b) provided with support for accommodation, supervision or care from another Authority, organisation or agency that has a service agreement with the Department of Human Services or Department of Health; or
- (c) a tenant or resident who is housed in rental accommodation provided by the Director of Housing or Department of Human Services.

Staff members, visitors or the public are not considered *clients*.

### Competent person

Is a natural person who holds required academic qualifications relevant to the activities they are undertaking under these Guidelines and is either:

- (a) not registered as a building practitioner in Victoria; or
- (b) is registered as a building practitioner in Victoria in the relevant category but either does not have the appropriate experience, or has not yet been assessed, for *accreditation* under these Guidelines.

A *competent person* is permitted to undertake work in relation to these Guidelines under the direct supervision of an *accredited* person who takes full responsibility and liability for the assessment, report and work.

### Department

Is either the Department of Human Services (DHS) or Department of Health (DH) as appropriate that has authority to make decisions or has control, management or supervision of the subject matter or provides funding.

### Desktop audit

Used in reference to either a *fire safety audit* or a *fire safety compliance check*.

This type of audit does not involve a physical site inspection and is therefore reliant on a careful examination of relevant documentation.

### Evacuation Capability

The ability of the occupants (including *clients*, residents, visitors and staff), to evacuate a building. The evacuation capability takes account of the ability of staff and residents to assist each other during the evacuation.

### Existing Building

A building that existed prior to the adoption of these Guidelines, whether or not that building was used for the purpose being considered under these Guidelines.

### False alarm

Activation of an alarm system in a building that does not result from the effects of fire. For the purposes of this definition, a false alarm is alarm activation by water vapour (i.e. steam), animal hair, lint, faulty installation, wiring, corrosion or lack of maintenance. Alarm activation resulting from burnt toast, cooking appliances or heating appliances is not a false alarm for the purposes of this definition.

### Fire Brigade Intervention

Means all fire agency activities from the time of notification up until fire extinguishment and overhaul and includes fire brigade operations.

### Fire Risk Assessment

An assessment of the potential for the realisation of an unwanted fire event, which is a function of the hazard, its probability and consequences. A *fire risk assessment* is one or more, but normally a combination, of:

- a qualitative analysis;
- a quantitative analysis; and
- a regulatory assessment;

Depending upon the particular application, *fire risk assessments* can be undertaken by *accredited fire safety engineers* for specific buildings, or may form part of the specific technical outcomes of a Guideline.

### Fire Risk Management (process)

The process of determining, by *fire safety audit* and *fire risk assessments*, whether an appropriate level of fire safety is achieved in a facility or building. As a minimum, an appropriate level of fire safety means the minimum statutory requirements applicable to that building or facility and implementation of the outcomes of a *fire risk assessment* based on use, building type, *client profile*, occupant profile, *staff profile* (if any), fire prevention training and ongoing maintenance.

### Fire Safety Audit

The structured auditing of fire safety measures in a facility or building against nominated audit criteria, including those relating to life safety as described in AS 4655–2005. Definitions in AS 4655 have the same meaning when used in these Guidelines, unless otherwise noted. For a new building, change of use of a building, or where major renovation work is proposed the *fire safety audit* can consist of a *desktop fire safety audit*.

### Fire Safety Compliance Check

A check performed by an accredited *Building Surveyor*, *Building Inspector* or *Fire Safety Engineer* in lieu of a *fire safety audit* and *fire risk assessment* on buildings that comply, or are to be brought into compliance, with the relevant Department guidelines.

### Fire Safety Engineer

A person, who is registered in the category or engineer of class of *fire safety engineer*, by the Building Practitioners Board Victoria or other appropriate statutory body for registering practitioners in the state of Victoria, has appropriate experience in conducting *fire safety audits* and *fire risk assessments* and has been *accredited*.

### Fire Safety Strategy

A combination of physical essential safety measures and human measures/factors including maintenance and management in use systems which have been specified to achieve the nominated *fire risk management* objectives.

### FRM Review Panel

The Board established in accordance the Capital Development Guidelines -Series 7, Fire Risk Management (FRM) to hear and make determinations in relation to any matter contained in the Guidelines and into the performance of any *accredited* practitioner pursuant to the Guidelines.

### Mandatory Measures

Provisions in the Guidelines that cannot be varied by a *fire risk assessment*, unless approved in writing by the *FRM Review Panel*.

### Owned, operated or funded

In relation to **owned**, means buildings or facilities that are owned by the Department of Human Services Victoria, Department of Health or Director of Housing or the Crown in the right of the State of Victoria and are under the control or management of the Department, or Director of Housing.

In relation to **operated**, means buildings or facilities that are operated, managed or controlled by the Department of Human Services Victoria, Department of Health, Director of Housing whether or not the building is owned by the Department or the Crown in right of the State of Victoria.

In relation to **funded**, means building or facilities that are directly or indirectly funded by the Department and for which the Department of Human Services, Department of Health or Director of Housing has a non-delegable duty of care to ensure adequate fire safety is provided.

### Practice Note

Means a *practice note* issued by the Department of Human Services in relation to an application or interpretation of the Guidelines. Compliance with *practice notes* is mandatory and may modify or enhance existing requirements of the Guidelines.

### Private Home

A home owned by the occupant or a home formally or informally leased by the occupant.

### RBS

Means the relevant building surveyor, which has the same meaning as Section 3 of the *Building Act 1993*.



### Staff Profile

Means one or more of the following:

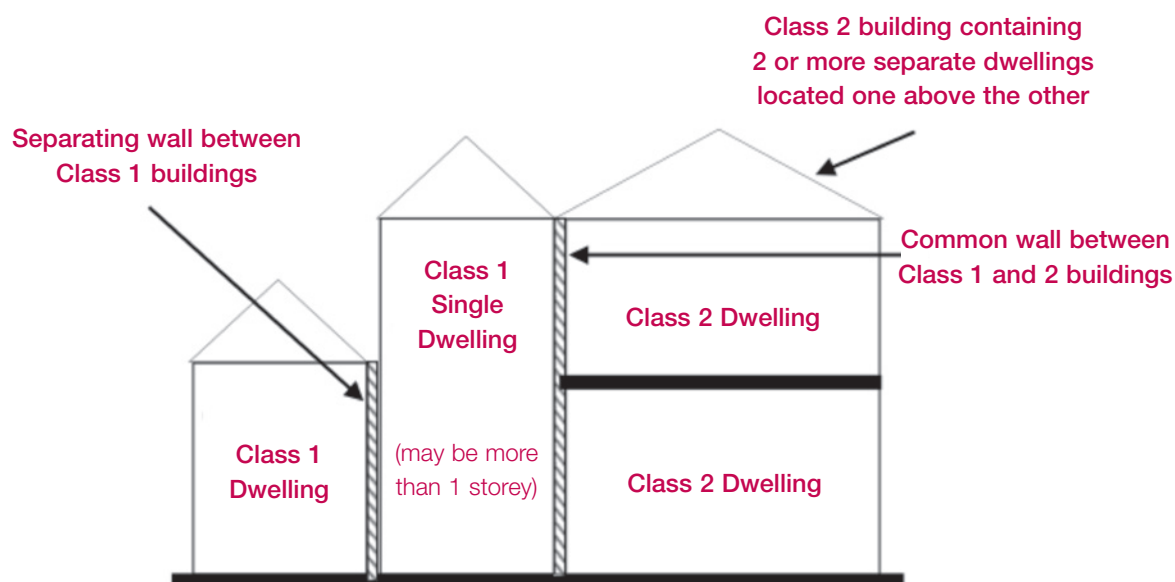
- Staff Profile 1 no staff present.
- Staff Profile 2 at least one staff member present during part of any 24 hour period.
- Staff Profile 3 at least one staff member present during all of each 24 hour period, but staff may be asleep at night (also referred to as 'sleepover' staff).
- Staff Profile 4 at least one staff member present during all of each 24 hour period, staff awake during all shifts (also referred to as 'stand up' staffing).

## Appendix 2: Commentary

The commentary below is provided for specific clauses in the body of this Guideline. The commentary is informative to provide explanation of specific requirements, but the commentary must not be read to modify or change any of the requirements stipulated in the body of the originating text.

### Clause 1.6.1

Class 1a Single dwellings may be located side-by-side and separated by a separating wall or common wall (to BCA class 2 building). This is described pictorially below.



This Guideline is not applicable to Class 2 dwellings (refer to Guideline 7.9).

### Clause 3.3.3

For new buildings this is not an additional requirement as the DtS already requires assessment against AS3959 and the Building Regulations requires a minimum Bushfire Attack Level of BAL-12.5.

For existing buildings where the building is to be extended (addition) the site must be assessed to AS 3959-2009 as amended and the relevant BAL is to be applied as required by the *Regulations*. The relevant details are to be referred to the FRMU for advice on any additional requirements.

