



Architects Advisory Service

## Building Regulations & Your Home

**Building codes are changing all the time as safety standards improve and materials and construction techniques evolve. Please use this checklist to make sure your home complies.**

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) is the overarching regulatory framework for building in Australia. It refers to various standards and legal requirements that are regularly updated, making it likely that many houses will not comply with current building requirements. By law, you are only required to bring the house up to new standards when undertaking renovation work, however, you should consider upgrading from a safety and regulatory point of view.

Some examples of recent changes to the code are:

- **GLASS** Where glass is within 500 mm of the floor or ground it will need to be generally of a greater thickness than before, or laminated safety glass, (exact requirements may vary between States).
- **HANDRAILS/BALCONIES ETC** Handrails on balconies, porches, pathways etc which have a metre or more drop must now be one meter in height themselves, be non-climbable and with maximum openings of 125 mm between uprights or similar.
- **PARTY WALLS** Party walls must now be built up to the underside of the roof lining or above, in all cases where the wall has to be "fire-rated"(e.g.. walls between houses).
- **DOMESTIC FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES** The installation of all "domestic solid fuel burning appliances" now needs a building permit for fire safety reasons.
- **POOL REGULATIONS** Due to numerous child drowning, regulations governing pool fencing have become stricter over recent years. The intent of the Australian Standard AS1926 adopted by the Building Code of Australia (BCA) is to prohibit a child's unsupervised access to swimming, wading pools, deep ponds or water features. Each state's requirements are slightly different, so check the details with your local council's building department. Fines are now in place for non-compliance.
- **ROOF REGULATIONS** Minor roofing faults can cause serious structural damage if not addressed. Make sure your roofing and gutters are inspected regularly, particularly after severe storms or winds. Care should be taken to maintain roof-mounted solar hot water units or pool heating systems to avoid leaks, which may affect flashings and guttering, particularly where the re-circulating water may contain corrosive chemicals.
- **WATER SUPPLY** With rising costs and more emphasis on using water wisely, many people are diverting grey-water (that is, household waste-water from the bathroom, hand basin, shower, and laundry) onto the

garden. While greywater diversion is increasingly popular, be aware that dispersal of untreated waste-water onto open ground is a health hazard. Most waste-water is contaminated and should be treated to a minimum standard before re-use. Contact your local council or water authority for advice.

- **HOME SECURITY**

Deadlocks, window locks and security bars can prevent escape from a burning home. Homeowners should be extremely careful not to lock themselves inside a home unless they are certain they can release the locks immediately in the event of fire.

- **FIRE PREVENTION**

Hard-wired smoke alarms are mandatory in new homes. It is recommended that hard-wired alarms be fitted to older homes as well, and that they be linked to a monitored

security system if present. Wireless alarms should have their batteries replaced regularly or be fitted with long-life lithium batteries. An appropriately located, hand-held extinguisher and/or fire blanket is also recommended.

- **ELECTRICITY SAFETY**

Safety switches are now mandatory for new homes. Old fuses and switchboards should be replaced with safety switches as a matter of urgency.

**If you would like to talk to an Archicentre Australia architect – a building expert - about a particular matter, please call Archicentre Australia on 1300 13 45 13 or go to [www.archicentreaustralia.com.au](http://www.archicentreaustralia.com.au)**