Guideline

April 2019

Welcome to this update on technical and informative advice for the building and construction industry on issues relating to building controls and good construction practices.

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Disturbing advice

Hopefully a one-off case

We heard from a little birdie that a BCA told a client they don't need to bother designing their new dwelling to the requirements for the very high wind zone when BRANZ Maps says high is OK. As reported to the writer, the BCA did not want to accept a design to a higher level of performance.

This raises two key issues:

1. It is the designer's/owner's prerogative to design to the level they want to, as long as it exceeds the minimum requirements of the Building Code. This case is a bit like a building consent applicant being told that R2.2 thermal insulation is compliant (which it is for 90 mm framing under the schedule method of NZS 4218), and the BCA won't accept a higher level of insulation.

2. BRANZ Maps is an experimental tool that can assist in determining a wind zone – it is not yet sufficiently precise to give a definitive wind zone for a specific site. This is the order of resolution of wind zone determinations, with the most precise at the top:
   - Calculations made specifically for a site following AS/NZS 1170.2:2011 *Structural design actions – Part 2: Wind actions*.
   - Calculations made specifically for a site following NZS 3604:2011 *Timber-framed buildings*.
   - Council wind maps (if based on AS/NZS 1170.2:2011 or NZS 3604:2011).
   - BRANZ Maps.

In summary, it seems strange that a BCA would demand of an applicant compliance on the least precise form of wind zone determination.

Past seminars available online

Watch at home – better than TV

At each BRANZ seminar, we ask for suggested topics that attendees might like to see as a future seminar. A number of responses identify topics that have been covered in the past and are available for viewing online – in fact all seminars since 2007 are available here.

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Lightweight cladding to paving clearance
Big fingers blamed

The correct clearance for a lightweight cladding to paving is 100 mm – not 150 mm as given in the table in the March *Guideline*.

Change of use – existing single dwelling to multiple flats
Clarifying section 115 wording

The aim of the change of use article in the March *Guideline* was to highlight the Code clauses that need to be considered for conversion of a single dwelling to multiple flats.

The wording of section 115(a) of the Building Act involving "the incorporation in the building of 1 or more household units where household units did not exist before" only applies to non-residential buildings that are being converted to residential and not, as we had implied, for a residential building where the use remains residential.

Where a single dwelling is converted to multiple dwellings, section 115(b) of the Building Act should be applied. Under Building Act clause 133AA(2), a single dwelling that has 2 or more storeys and is being converted into three or more household units must be assessed for its earthquake-proneness.

While this clarifies the approach to be taken to the change of use, the remainder of the March *Guideline* article correctly outlines the Building Code clauses that need to be complied with as near as reasonably practical as:

a. means of escape for fire, protection of other property, sanitary facilities, structural performance and fire-rating performance
b. access and facilities for people with disabilities (if this is a requirement under section 118 of the Building Act).

The building must continue to comply with other Building Code provisions to at least the same extent as before.

In addition to the Code requirements listed in a and b above, the following Code clauses as we stated in the March *Guideline* should also be complied with to provide good accommodation for occupants:

- G6 *Airborne and impact sound* for all inter-tenancy walls and floors
- E3 *Internal moisture* to prevent water flow into adjacent tenancies within the building
- G4 *Ventilation* – mechanical ventilation will likely be required for bathrooms and kitchens as they are typically internal (which will also be a requirement for rental homes under the recently introduced healthy homes standards)
- D2 *Mechanical installation for access* – if lifts are to be installed.

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