FACT SHEET

Living in Sheds and Changing a Shed into a Dwelling

April 2025

Class 10a buildings (such as a private garage, carport, shed, or the like) are defined as *non-habitable buildings* under the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and are *not permitted to be used for residential purposes* without approval from the Local Government (refer section 119 of the *Building Act 1975).*

Am I allowed to live in my shed?

No, it is unlawful (an offence under section 119 of the *Building Act 1975*) to use a shed, garage, or the like for residential purposes.

Under the BCA, residential buildings or a dwelling, require a higher standard of construction than non-habitable buildings.

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 'liveable' shed as the finished value of a dwelling will far exceed the value of a shed set up for occupation.

While building a shed may seem like a cheaper option to many, in reality it usually ends up being more expensive in the long run. It is important to understand all the requirements before choosing this option to ensure the project will be financially viable for you.

It is possible to apply for a "Temporary Home Approval" through Council for the occupation of a temporary home (caravan or the like) as defined in Scenic Rim Regional Council's *Subordinate Local Law No.1.3 (Establishment or Occupation of a Temporary Home) 2011.* An approval would apply for a limited period and subject to conditions while an approved class 1a dwelling is being built.

Can I change my shed into a dwelling?

It may be possible, however changing a shed into a dwelling is not a simple process and requires approval from a privately engaged licensed building certifier, licensed to practice in Queensland.

The *Building Act 1975* and BCA stipulate the minimum requirements for the construction of all buildings.

What documentation is typically required for a Building Approval?

The following information is required to be submitted to a privately engaged licensed building certifier as part of the building application process (you will need to confirm with your privately engaged licensed building certifier for their exact requirements).

General Requirements:

- DA Form 2 - Building work details;
- QBCC Home Warranty Insurance if a licensed builder is to carry out the work and the work is valued at over $3,300;
- Owner-Builder permit if the owner is to carry out the work and the work is valued at over $11,000;
- Q Leave receipt if the value of work is greater than $150,000.00 (not including GST);

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- Building approval fee. Architectural Plans as required;
- Site plan, scale 1:200, incorporating existing buildings, boundary clearances, site levels & north point;
- Floor plan, scale 1:100, fully dimensioned, including door & window sizes, room layouts, and location of hard-wired smoke detectors; and
- Elevation plan, scale 1:100, minimum 2 elevations, showing ceiling height & slab height.

Other Documentation:

- Energy efficiency assessment;
- Structural design plans - Provide an Engineer's design for a steel-framed building, OR, provide a bracing layout, timber schedule and tie-down schedule for a timber-framed building; and
- A Structural Engineer's Inspection Certificate/Report may also be required for slab and frame (see below).

Important Issues to Note

The following points should be carefully considered, as not all Class 10a buildings may be suitable to be converted into a Class 1a dwelling.

Siting requirements

The *Scenic Rim Planning Scheme 2020* (the Scheme) and Queensland Development Code (QDC) stipulate minimum boundary clearances for buildings in Queensland. A Class 1a building requires a greater setback to side and rear boundaries than does a Class 10a building in the QDC, typically being 1.5 metres from rear and side boundaries and 6m from street frontage boundaries to the outermost projection of the building for residentially zoned properties, and can be up to 10m for Rural properties. In some circumstances when converting a shed to a dwelling, a variation in the setback requirements will be required to be assessed by Council, if the shed has been constructed within the boundary setback distance required for a dwelling.

This may not be approved in all cases, as Council needs to consider the amenity and privacy of residents on adjoining lots.

Structural inspections

It will need to be demonstrated that the construction of the shed complies with BCA requirements. This may require an inspection to be carried out by a Registered Professional Engineer of Queensland (RPEQ) Engineer on the adequacy of an existing slab or structural frame and may result in the upgrading of the building being required.

Vapour barrier

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

Termite barrier

All "primary building elements", as defined in the BCA, must be protected from termite attack. This 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.

Slab and ceiling height

The building would need to comply with BCA requirements for finished slab height to protect against surface water inundation. In addition, ceiling height requirements for habitable and non-habitable rooms would need to be met.

Flood, landslide and bushfire hazard areas

If the building is located within a flood hazard overlay under the Scheme and has a defined flood level, there will be a minimum floor level required and may require further assessment by a privately engaged licensed building certifier and Structural Engineer against the QDC MP3.5, Construction of buildings in flood hazard areas. If a bushfire hazard overlay covers the

building site, the building may need to comply with the Australian Standard, AS 3959, Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas, for the appropriate “Bushfire Attack Level” as determined by the privately engaged licensed building certifier.

These overlays may also trigger a development assessment.

You should always discuss any plans you have in relation to building work with Council, prior to commencing. This will allow you to ensure you are fully aware of all of the requirements and restrictions associated with the proposed works on your property in order to assess the financial viability of the project before investing in it.