

BUILDING REFORM 2021

FACT SHEET

Summary of Reforms

Reforming building regulation is a key focus for the Northern Territory Government and it is looking at ways in which the building regulation system in the Territory can be improved to ensure safety and compliance of our built environment, enhance consumer protections and give the public greater confidence in the local building industry.

Building regulation in the Territory aims to deliver a safe and efficient built environment. It does this by registering certain tradespeople and professionals, and setting safety standards for building work. This ensures that building work achieves a set level of safety, health and well-being for users and allows the performance of those in the building industry to be checked to ensure high standards are met and maintained.

Proposed Building Reforms

Government is working with the local building industry to develop priority reforms that target these key issues:

- Third Party Review of Complex Buildings – structural design
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Practitioner Registration for Commercial Builders

The reforms to improve safety and compliance in the Territory align with recommendations for the national Building Confidence Report, and link to nationally agreed models where possible whilst ensuring the protection of Territory consumers.

These key issues are a priority and the first group of potential changes to building regulation in the Territory. As the work on building reforms develops, further communication with the building industry and community will occur.

Feedback from the building industry on the priority building reforms is important. Government is committed to ensuring that community and industry expectations are considered prior to changing the building regulation system.

Third-Party Peer Review of Complex Buildings – structural design

One of the reforms being considered is the introduction of third-party review of the structural design of certain types of buildings.

A building certifier involved with the certification of a building does not always have skills and experience to review and confirm the compliance of all building design documents. The certifier will rely on the competency of the designer. That means that there is a risk of non-compliant designs being approved without a system in place to check the design.

Introducing third party reviews for the structural design of complex buildings would mean that any proposed building of medium building complexity or higher (e.g. a residential building of three or more storeys) would be required to have its structural design reviewed by a qualified independent reviewer before a building permit can be issued by a building certifier.

A building's complexity looks at attributes that increase the likelihood of non-compliance and situations where the consequences for safety and/or health of non-compliance would be significant. Focusing on buildings with a medium complexity or higher is a risk based approach that will ensure the right resources, time, effort and costs are directed at the buildings where the risk of non-compliance may occur.

Under this reform any design issues would be identified and rectified earlier in the process, resulting in more robust, transparent and independent reviews of building designs, enhancing public confidence in the building industry and the resulting building.

Continuing Professional Development

The Government is also proposing to introduce Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme for building practitioners registered in the Territory. CPD is where registered professionals maintain their skills and knowledge by doing ongoing education and training to meet registration requirements.

The proposal is to establish a mandatory scheme that will include delivery of professional development on National Construction Code requirements and Territory building regulations for registered building practitioners. The scheme would ensure that those practitioners undertake the required level of professional development prior to the renewal of their two yearly registration.

Through this reform, the public and industry would have confidence that registered practitioners are continually expanding their knowledge and skills, staying up to date with building standards and regulation, and meeting community expectations of safety and amenity.

Registration of Commercial Builders

The Territory Government is looking at introducing registration for commercial builders. This would see builders who build boarding/guest houses, commercial offices, large public gathering buildings, warehouses, carparks and office fit-outs registered for the first time in the Territory.

The Department has proposed three options for commercial registration requirements to the building industry for consultation. One option follows the draft national requirements developed by the Australian Building Codes Board.

This new category of registration will ensure commercial builders have the appropriate qualifications and experience to build specific buildings, giving confidence to consumers and the reinforcing trust in the local building industry.

Further information and feedback

If you wish to know more about the priority building reforms or would like to provide feedback please email bas.policy@nt.gov.au.

