

Building and Plumbing Newsflash 623

Commencement of the amended Queensland Development Code Mandatory Part 3.7 – Farm buildings and vehicle storage farm sheds and updates to Form 33 and referral requirements

Purpose

To advise industry about:

- commencement of the amended Queensland Development Code Mandatory Part 3.7 – Farm buildings and vehicle storage farm sheds (QDC MP 3.7) on 8 December 2023
- amendments to Form 33 – Notice to QFES of an on-site water storage or supply under Queensland Development Code MP 3.7 – Farm buildings and vehicle storage farm sheds.
- amendments to the development applications requiring referral under the performance criteria of QDC MP 3.7.

Background

Before June 2015, all buildings and structures irrespective of their location, use or level of occupancy had to comply with the requirements outlined in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) for that class of building. In many circumstances, this created high costs for the farming and agricultural industry for certain farm buildings and structures. These costs were often disproportionate to the location, use and limited occupancy levels of these building and structures.

In June 2015, QDC MP 3.7 – Farm Buildings was introduced in response to requests from the agricultural industry to reduce costs and requirements for the construction of new farm buildings, as well as additions or significant alterations to existing farm buildings. The new concessions in QDC MP 3.7 related to access and egress, artificial lighting, exit signs, emergency lighting and water supply. These included reduced water supply for fire hydrant systems or the installation of on-site water tanks instead of a fire hydrant system.

In May 2016, amendments to the BCA commenced, introducing concessions for farm buildings. In some cases, the concessions offered by the BCA go beyond the concessions in QDC MP 3.7. The amendments to QDC MP 3.7 will provide Queensland farmers with similar options for the provision of dedicated firefighting water supply to those provided in the BCA for farm buildings, while retaining adequate protections for firefighters and residents.

The amendments will also create significant cost savings including a:

- construction cost saving of up to \$100,000, where farmers opt to use additional on-site water supply options – such as dams, lakes, and bores – rather than constructing a water storage tank
- construction cost saving, where a structure falls in the definition of a vehicle storage farm shed as the structure does not require an on-site water storage or supply
- cost saving in referral application fees as these will no longer be required where the additional on-site water supply options outlined in QDC MP 3.7 are used.

The differences in fire safety requirements between the QDC MP 3.7 and the BCA are outlined in the following table.

Original QDC MP 3.7 requirements	2016 BCA requirements
A dedicated 144,000 litre water tank for all farm buildings including a vehicle storage farm building.	Additional on-site water supply options such as dams, bores and rivers for firefighting purposes for farm buildings in addition to a water tank.
On-site supply of water for all farm buildings in the form of a water tank.	No firefighting water supply for a farm shed.

QDC MP 3.7 amendments

Following consultation with stakeholders from the agriculture and building and construction industries, the Department of Energy and Public Works updated the QDC MP 3.7 to better align with the BCA firefighting water supply requirements for farm buildings.

The amendments to QDC MP 3.7 are outlined in the table below. Schedule 7 of the Building Regulation 2021 gives effect to the amended QDC MP 3.7.

The amendments continue to maintain protections for firefighters and residents in line with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) policies while ensuring Queensland farmers are not at a financial or logistical disadvantage when compared to other jurisdictions.

Category	Description of amendment
Administrative	Clarify that Part I3 of the BCA 2022 and BCA definitions for a farm building and farm shed do not apply in Queensland and are replaced by QDC MP 3.7
Concession	Provide additional on-site water supply options such as dams, bores and rivers for firefighting purposes for farm buildings through acceptable solution A3(4).
Concession	Add a new vehicle storage farm shed definition, which includes a very low fire risk (no walls, infrequent occupancy, etc.), with no requirement for a dedicated onsite firefighting water supply.
Safety	Prescribe a water quality requirement for all water storage or supply options (storage tanks and additional water supply options) for the safety of firefighters in Queensland through acceptable solution A3.
Safety	Add siting requirements for additional water supply options to be located close to farm buildings and to be accessible to firefighters through acceptable solution A3.
Administrative	Update references to outdated or repealed legislation and modernise the QDC part to be consistent with the structure of the BCA.
Administrative	Adopt the latest version of referenced Australian Standards, where possible and as referenced in the QDC part.
Administrative	Adopt the BCA 2022 provisions when and as referenced in the QDC part.
Administrative	Update all definitions contained in the QDC part to be self-contained.

Form 33 – On-site water storage tanks under QDC MP 3.7

Currently, there is a requirement for building certifiers to make the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) aware of farm buildings and their associated water storage tanks through the completion of a [Form 33](#). Form 33 has been updated to extend this requirement to farm buildings using additional on-site water supply options outlined in QDC MP 3.7.

This addition was made to ensure building certifiers notify QFES when additional on-site water supply options are used to meet the QDC MP 3.7 requirements for firefighting water for farm buildings. This requirement already exists in relation to water tanks.

Form 33 is the approved form under section 88 of the Building Regulation 2021.

Referral requirements for building certifiers

There is also a requirement to refer building applications to QFES for assessment, where water sources that do not comply with QDC MP 3.7 are used. This requirement has been updated so that a referral is not needed when the new additional water supply options are used.

The Planning Regulation 2017 outlines the relevant development applications requiring referral under QDC MP 3.7 in schedule 9, part 3, division 3, table 3.

More information

Please visit the Business Queensland website for more information about:

- [QDC MP 3.7](#)
- [Form 33](#)
- [Farm buildings and vehicle storage farm sheds](#)
- [Building and Other Legislation \(Queensland Development Code Update\) Amendment Regulation 2023](#)

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