



Building and Plumbing **NEWSFLASH**



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Queensland Housing Code and updated Modern Homes Standards to make building homes easier

The [Queensland Development Code](#) (QDC) has been updated to reflect contemporary design and siting practices for houses, while streamlining planning and building applications through a new Queensland Housing Code (QHC).

The QDC has also been amended to support more cost-effective housing construction, without compromising high accessibility and energy efficiency standards for the Modern Homes standards.

These reforms support the Queensland Government's 'Building Reg Reno' program by reducing regulatory burden, improving construction productivity and helping increase housing supply. The changes also deliver on the government's response to the Queensland Productivity Commission's final report *Opportunities to improve productivity of the construction industry* through more practical and consistent building requirements.

Queensland Housing Code

The QHC introduces a contemporary, consistent statewide approach to the design and siting of new houses. It replaces the QDC Parts 1.1 and 1.2. Amendments have been made to the Building Regulation 2021 and Planning Regulation 2017 to support implementation.

The QHC provides design and siting standards for detached dwellings and secondary dwellings (class 1 buildings) across Queensland. Through its adoption, the QHC will streamline building approvals, reduce regulatory burden, improve consistency across local government areas, and support more efficient delivery of housing.

The QHC retains flexibility for local governments by allowing some limited variations for streetscape, and alternative provisions that support gentle density and local character where they are aligned with existing planning scheme provisions.

QHC adoption and transitional arrangements

Adoption of the QHC by local governments is voluntary and is supported by a 3-year transition period to align planning schemes with the new code through a range of pathways. The QHC transitional period commences 1 September 2026 and will end 1 September 2029. During this period, the QHC will apply in a local government area when the relevant planning scheme specifies how the QHC applies. If this has not occurred by 1 September 2029, the QHC will apply at the end of the transitional period.

QHC guidance material

Guidance has been prepared to assist local governments with adopting the QHC.

Amendments to Modern Homes standards

The QDC has two parts that support Queensland's implementation of the National Construction Code (NCC) 2022 Modern Homes standards:

- i. Mandatory Part 4.1 – [Sustainable buildings](#) (QDC 4.1)
- ii. Mandatory Part 4.5 – [Livable dwellings and grading to floor wastes](#) (QDC 4.5).

Both parts have been amended to provide cost-effective and practical acceptable solutions, including additional compliance options.

The updated QDCs commenced 14 August 2026.

What are the changes?

The major changes to QDC 4.1 and QDC 4.5 are presented below:

QDC 4.1 – Residential energy efficiency

To address the significant challenge for some types of houses to cost-effectively comply with the 7-star standard for their building shell, the following applies:

- **small homes** (<50 m² floor area) – a minimum of 5-stars is required
- **houses with raised floor construction** (e.g. Queenslander-style homes) – a minimum of 6-stars is required
- **houses in NCC climate zone 5 with an unenclosed floor** – a 7-star elemental (deemed-to-satisfy (DtS)) pathway for houses where the floor is over an unenclosed space becomes available by prescribing a minimum level of floor insulation (R-2.5).

With the lower star ratings required for both small homes and houses with raised floor construction, the optional credits of up to 1-star under QDC 4.1 for designs that include a compliant outdoor living area will continue to be available for use towards their relevant star rating required.

While not a QDC 4.1 change, the nationally accredited software tools used for energy efficiency (star rating) are currently being updated to more appropriately assess for small homes. A technical adjustment is being finalised to the software tool's 'area correction factor', from 50 m² down to 15 m² as the minimum floor area. It is anticipated this change will generally result in improved star ratings for small homes.

QDC 4.5 – Livable housing design

- **‘Ramp-ready’ compliance option for elevated houses**

A new ‘ramp-ready’ compliance option is available for providing future step-free access with an elevated home. This approach can reduce the upfront construction cost of the new home while ensuring accessibility needs are able to be provided in the future e.g. when it is needed by the homeowner. In these cases, house plans will need to include the location and specifications associated with the ramp for its future installation as part of the home’s building application.

- **Integrating step-free entry, weather-proofing and termite management requirements**

A range of practical acceptable solutions that integrate step-free entry, weatherproofing and termite management requirements are provided as compliance options.

- **Australian Standard as a compliance option for step-free access**

An additional compliance pathway for step-free access into the dwelling is provided by reference to the relevant ramp clauses of the *Australian Standard 1428.1 – Design for access and mobility* (AS 1428.1) as an acceptable solution.

- **Additional compliance options for accessible bathrooms**

An additional compliance option is provided to allow doors swings in the accessible bathroom to overlap with the circulation space. Reference to the relevant clauses of AS1428.1 enables these existing specifications to be used as an acceptable solution.

An additional compliance option is also provided in an accessible bathroom for the positioning of the toilet. This allows some flexibility for where the toilet can be installed within the bathroom’s circulation space.

- **Extension of exemption for houses on narrow lots**

The exemption for houses on narrow lots (≤ 12.5 m frontage) to comply with the livable housing design standards is extended for 3 years i.e. until 30 September 2029.

For further details on the QDC changes for Modern Homes standards, refer to the attached table Summary of Amendments.

QDC guidance material

Further to the QDC changes, additional guidance materials have been prepared for both QDC 4.1 and QDC 4.5 to support practitioners and homeowner’s understanding of the amended provisions. The guidelines have a practical focus and include drawings and case studies.

Guidance material can be viewed on [Queensland’s measures to support implementation of the Modern Homes standards](#).

Background

Queensland Housing Code

QDC Parts 1.1 and 1.2, which regulate residential design and siting, had become outdated and increasingly inconsistent with contemporary housing design needs. Over time, 56 of Queensland's 77 local governments have introduced alternative provisions under section 33 of the *Building Act 1975*. This has resulted in fragmented design and siting standards, regulatory complexity between different local governments, and increased costs for industry and homeowners.

Modern Homes Standards

In Queensland, implementation of the MHS occurred in a phased approach:

- 1 October 2023 – livable housing design standards, and
- 1 May 2024 – residential energy efficiency.

The department undertook a review of the MHS provisions 12 months after they were fully implemented (1 May 2025). Feedback from stakeholders identified some confusion with certain technical aspects, as well as opportunities for more cost-effective and practical solutions to improve their application.

The changes to QDC 4.1 and QDC 4.5 also support the Government's response to the Queensland Productivity Commission's Final Report Opportunities to improve productivity of the construction industry, specifically Recommendation 34 – Impacts arising from National Construction Code (NCC) 2022.

For more information

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please contact Building Policy: buildingpolicy@hpw.qld.gov.au.

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Summary of Amendments to QDC 4.1 and QDC 4.5

QDC 4.1 – Sustainable buildings	
Issue	Amendment
Small homes and houses with raised floor construction face significant challenges to cost-effectively comply with the 7-star standard for energy efficiency of their building shell.	Small homes (<50 m² floor area) – requiring a minimum 5-star rating for compliance of its building shell. - The existing optional credits available under QDC 4.1 for inclusion of a compliant outdoor living area (up to 1 star) can continue to be used towards the star rating. That is, the building shell can be rated at 4-stars where the home's design includes a compliant outdoor living area with ceiling fan. - This change recognises that achieving compliance with the 7-star standard for small homes is technically challenging and provide a more practical and cost-effective pathway. - The whole of home score for the home's energy budget for its major fixtures and appliances remains unchanged i.e. 60 (out of 100).
	Houses with raised floor construction (e.g. Queenslander-style home) – requiring a minimum 6-star rating for compliance of its building shell. - The existing optional credits available under QDC 4.1 for inclusion of a compliant outdoor living area (up to 1 star) can continue to be used towards the star rating. That is, the building shell can be rated at 5-stars where the home's design includes a compliant outdoor living area with ceiling fan. - This change recognises the value of more traditional raised-floor homes in Queensland and provides a more practical and cost-effective pathway to achieving energy efficiency. - The whole of home score for the home's energy budget for its major fixtures and appliances remains unchanged i.e. 60 (out of 100).
Houses in NCC climate zone 5 with an unenclosed floor do not have a 7-star elemental (DtS) pathway available under the NCC.	Houses in NCC climate zone 5 with an unenclosed floor – use an elemental (DtS) pathway for compliance with the 7-star standard. QDC 4.1 prescribes a minimum level of insulation (R-2.5) to the floor where the floor is over an unenclosed space. This can be used in conjunction with the other relevant NCC elemental (DtS) provisions.

QDC 4.5 – Livable dwellings grading to floor wastes

Issue	Amendment
Some of the livable housing design requirements can be difficult and costly to apply in certain situations. There are areas where the requirements could be more practical, flexible and easier to comply with while still supporting accessible housing design outcomes.	‘Ramp-ready’ for elevated homes – introducing a ramp-ready compliance option for elevated homes to reduce upfront construction costs while preserving the ability to achieve step-free access in the future. - This option can allow the homeowner to install a ramp to provide step-free access into the home at a later time i.e. when they need it. - House plans need to designate the location and associated specifications (e.g. landings and footings) of the ramp for its future installation as part of the home’s building application.
	Integrating step-free entry provisions with other NCC requirements for termite management and weatherproofing to provide holistic, to provide several practical options as an acceptable solution.
	Additional compliance options for: step-free access into the home by using clauses for ramps from the Australian Standard 1428.1 – Design for access and mobility (AS 1428.1) as an acceptable solution. This allows practitioners already familiar with the standard to use it as an acceptable solution. door swings in the accessible bathroom by allowing them to overlap with the circulation space using the relevant specifications of AS 1428.1. positioning of the toilet in an accessible bathroom to allow some flexibility for where the toilet can be appropriately installed within the bathroom’s circulation space.
	Narrow lot exemption extended for 3 years for houses on narrow lots (≤ 12.5 m frontage for a lot created prior to 1 October 2023) to comply with livable housing design standard i.e. to 30 September 2029.