



INFORMATION SHEET

BUILDING SERVICES

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WHAT SHOULD SUPPLIERS KNOW WHEN RELEASING NEW BUILDING PRODUCTS?

This information sheet is intended to provide guidance to suppliers who are interested in releasing a new building product into the market. Suppliers need to be aware that there are technical standards and requirements that need to be met for building products and that they are responsible for providing information to the buyers of their products about any legal requirements, such as Building Code of Australia (BCA) or Australian Standards conformance, along with relevant warranties and support services.

What are a Suppliers Obligations?

Suppliers have an obligation to deliver a product that is fit for purpose. This means that they will need to understand

- what will the product be used for and how it should not be used;
- whether the product needs to conform to the BCA;
- what factors need to be considered when demonstrating conformance; and
- how evidence of suitability can be presented.

This information sheet assumes that you have undertaken the necessary research and development for releasing a new building product onto the market and included product development, testing and refinement.

What will the product be used for?

You will need to consider the use or range of uses that the product is being promoted as suitable for. Perhaps it is a product that is used as a structural element of a home, or serves to seal the home from weather, or it may be designed to minimize the spread of fire in a fire event. The product may be offering an alternative solution to a traditional product such as bricks, weatherboards or fibre cement sheeting or could potentially fill a niche in the building product sector.

Regardless of its intended use, you will need to show that the product is 'fit for purpose'. In addition, you may need to demonstrate that it meets technical standards under the BCA, which are also part of being fit for purpose.

It is also important to advise whether there are any potential uses of the product that are not appropriate. For example, vapour barriers (being specific plastic sheeting used in concrete slabs) are required to meet a specific standard under the BCA. Other forms of plastic sheeting can be readily obtained that may 'look the same' but they do not meet the requirements for a vapour barrier.

What products need to conform to the BCA and how are they verified?

As a supplier of a new building product you will need to understand how your building product relates to the BCA. This information sheet focuses on the Volume 2 of the BCA (Housing Provisions), which governs what is acceptable for the construction of a house.

It is important to understand and adhere to the performance requirements within the BCA and the products that need to provide evidence of conformance generally relate to the structural elements of a home.

DISCLAIMER - The above is intended to provide general information in summary form. The contents do not constitute specific advice and should not be relied upon as such. Formal specific advice should be sought by members with respect to particular matters before taking action.

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The structural elements and *verification methods* include but are not limited to:

- Concrete – *evidence from concrete supplier* , which may include test results
- Reinforcing (mesh and bar) - *certificate from an engineer or appropriately qualified person, or certificate from industry conformance scheme*
- Structural grade timber and laminated veneer timbers - *certificate from industry conformance scheme*
- Structural steel - *certificate from an engineer or appropriately qualified person*
- Steel framing - *certificate from an engineer or appropriately qualified person*
- Timber framing - *certificate from an engineer or appropriately qualified person*
- Windows and glazed doors – *appraisal from a Registered Testing Authority (RTA)*
- Masonry – *product technical information; and*
- Termite management – *product certification such as Codemark.*

Where products are supplied that may influence the weatherproofing, fire safety and energy efficiency of a home you will need to refer to the BCA for the relevant performance requirements and confirm their suitability. More information on how to check what a product needs to conform to the BCA is available by contacting HIA's Building Services team.

What factors need to be considered when demonstrating conformance?

If the product is a deemed to satisfy solution under the BCA, the criteria set out in the conformance documentation can be sourced directly from the Acceptable Construction Practice or Acceptable Construction Manual.

If the product is going to be an alternative solution under the BCA, evidence will be sought to demonstrate the criteria used for the alternative solution and to show how the product meets these criteria.

Demonstrating conformance is generally around:

- **Product performance** – does the performance of my product conform to the performance requirements for that product type e.g., a cladding that is water tight?
- **Manufacturing controls** – how can users be assured that every product made is to the same specification and quality?
- **Limitations** - where, when and how can the product be used so it is fit for purpose, and are these limitations clearly stated for designers, installers and builders?
- **Maintenance** – what are the requirements and their impact on ongoing performance, particularly durability?

How should the evidence of suitability be presented?

It is not sufficient to simply create a document stating that the product complies with the BCA. Conformance with the BCA needs to be demonstrated by obtaining and then providing appropriate technical documentation about a building product. This may involve independent authorities and in some cases reports from qualified testing laboratories to verify the product claims.

The BCA sets out the options to demonstrate suitability and conformance of a product (Section 1 Clause 1.2.2 *Evidence of suitability*).

Subclause a) details the type of evidence that is required to demonstrate that a product meets a performance requirement or deemed to satisfy solution. This can be done through one or a combination of the following:

- A report issued by a Registered Testing Authority.*
- A current certificate of conformity or a current certification of Accreditation.*
- A certificate from a professional engineer or other appropriately qualified person.*
- A current certificate issued by a product certification body that has been accredited by the Joint Accreditation Scheme of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ).*
- Any other form of documentary evidence that correctly describes the properties and performance.*

Once the product has been found to conform to the BCA then you should be able to provide this proof and documentation at the time of supply or where a request has been made, prior to or following supply, to verify the products performance under the BCA.

How do I find out what I need to know?

Building in Australia is governed by the BCA which is a set of technical provisions for the design and construction of buildings and other structures throughout Australia. The BCA references Australian Standards which are technical standards written as a means of detailing an acceptable construction method or manufacturing specification for a product. It is important for you to refer to the BCA first and then where referenced, address the Australian Standard that covers your type of product to determine whether they offer any testing procedures.

You could also approach an industry association relevant to your product to seek advice. Bear in mind that these are typically membership based associations. Approaching your State Building Regulator can also provide some valuable information.

**HIA members can contact HIA's Building Services team for more information on
1300 650 620 or hia_technical@hia.com.au.**