

Building Information Sheet: Converting a patio, carport/garage or alfresco to a habitable room

Definition

A habitable room is defined by the National Construction Code (NCC) as a room used for normal domestic activities such as a bedroom, living room, lounge room, music room, television room, kitchen, dining room, study playroom, family room and sun room. (List not exhaustive)

It excludes a bathroom, laundry, water closet, pantry, walk-in wardrobe, corridor, hallway, lobby clothes-drying room, and other spaces of a specialized nature occupied neither frequently nor for extended periods. These are considered non-habitable rooms. (List not exhaustive)

Frequently Asked Questions

Is a Building Permit required for the conversion work?

All non-habitable room conversions require an approved Building Permit prior to the commencement of building work. Most patio's, carport's/garage's or alfresco's do not achieve many of the National Construction Code requirements of a habitable room. It is common that major modifications are necessary to achieve the requirements of the NCC for a room to be used for habitable purposes.

Is Planning Approval required (Development Approval)?

An example of when development approval is required when converting to a habitable room.

- Development that is not compliant with the Residential Design Codes with regards to – Setbacks to boundaries, site coverage and alteration of outdoor living spaces.

Please discuss with The City's Planning Department if you are unsure if development approval is required.

How do I know the zoning of my property and the density?

If you are unsure of the zoning and the density of your property, please phone the City's Planning Services on (08)9231 0606 or visit the mapping module on The City's website

Can I apply to vary the rules of the Residential Design Codes or Council policy on residential development?

Yes, you may make an “Application for Development Approval”. Significant justification is required for the variation and in some cases consultation is required with affected adjoining landowners. Applying for a variation does not necessarily mean that approval will be given.

Who else should I consult with?

Check with the City’s Engineering Services Department and Water Corporation to ensure that your proposal does not affect any existing drainage easements.

Who submits the application?

Either the property owner or the Builder/Agent can submit the application. The Builder must always sign the application for a Building permit.

Can I build or alter a single residence as an owner builder?

Yes. If the value of construction is over \$20,000 you will need to apply to the Building Commission for an Owner Builder certificate. A Building Permit cannot be issued on works valued over \$20,000 unless an Owner Builder certificate has been received or a registered Builder has been contracted to do the work.

Do I need a Structural Engineer’s certification for alterations to a dwelling?

Yes, you will need to have the design checked and certified by a professional Structural Engineer if structural alterations are carried out.

How long will my application take to process?

- Certified Applications – The City must process a certified application within 10 working days of it being lodged.
- Uncertified Applications – The City must process an uncertified application within 25 working days from being lodged. If additional information is required the applicant will be given 21 calendar days to provide the information. The City then has the balance of the remaining 25 working days in which to provide a determination.

What plans and specifications do I need to submit with an uncertified application for a Building Permit?

Along with a completed application form for Building Permit – Uncertified (Form BA 2) you will need to supply each of the following:

- A site plan showing all setback distances to a minimum scale of 1:200 as well as north point and any road reserves.
- Floor plan(s) to a minimum scale of 1:100
- All elevations which include dimensioned window locations, existing and proposed ground levels to a minimum scale of 1:100
- Cross section of the building to minimum scale of 1:100
- A contour survey showing spot levels, datum point, finished floor and ground levels
- An electrical services plan which includes location of smoke alarms and details of any mechanical ventilation requirements.
- Details of the stormwater disposal system
- Ink signed Structural Engineers details
- An energy efficiency report with stamped plans from the Assessor
- Termite management details
- Specifications
- Housing indemnity insurance (if works is more than \$20,000)
- Any other approvals required.

Requirement's that may need to be met.

- Moisture must be prevented from entering the room. This includes damp rising between the ground and the floor slab, and preventing moisture through walls and a roof. Cavity wall construction is generally required and can be double brick, brick veneer, timber or steel stud wall lined externally and internally.
- A complying termite barrier is to be installed under the concrete floor and around perimeter.
- A complying ceiling is to be installed under the roof cover with a minimum/average of 2400mm finished floor to ceiling height.
- Energy efficiency certification of compliance showing how the proposed habitable room will comply with energy efficiency in accordance with the National Construction Code.
- Natural lighting and ventilation shall be provided in all habitable rooms of buildings in accordance with the National Construction Code.
- Enclosures over windows to existing rooms may have an effect on lighting and ventilation.
- Hard wired smoke alarms may be required if the habitable room is a bedroom in accordance with the National Construction Code.

- Should a meter box exist within the proposed enclosure, it must be relocated to an external wall.

What plans and specifications do I need to submit with a certified application for a building permit?

Along with a completed Application form for Building Permit – Certified (Form BA1) you will need to supply:

- A Certificate of Design Compliance (CDC) that has been signed by an appropriately registered Building Surveyor
- Copies of all the approved plans and any other documents referenced in the CDC
- Housing Indemnity insurance
- Any other approvals required.

What are the fees for a permit application?

For application fees please refer to the “building fees schedule” on The City’s website.

Disclaimer

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