

Improving fire safety Performance Solutions

What are the proposed changes?

We are proposing changes to Volume One and Two of the NCC to improve the robustness of Performance Solutions for the fire safety of buildings.

This includes removing Expert Judgement as an Assessment Method for fire safety Performance Solutions (A2G2).

We are not proposing any changes to the NCC fire safety Performance Requirements for the next edition of the NCC.

Why are these changes proposed?

Performance-based NCC

The National Construction Code (NCC) is a performance-based code containing Performance Requirements. To comply with the NCC, a solution must achieve compliance with the Governing Requirements and the Performance Requirements, which are the mandatory requirements of the NCC.

Practitioners can develop Performance Solutions to meet the Performance Requirements of the Code. This supports innovation by designers and allows them to determine the most effective way to demonstrate compliance for their particular building. However, some of the Performance Requirements don't contain clear targets that need to be met. This means practitioners can, to some extent, determine the acceptable policy level to be achieved or misinterpret the level of performance needed to comply with the NCC.

Related to this, many stakeholders have expressed a desire to reduce subjectivity and increase robustness in safety-critical areas such as fire safety, to ensure the desired level of public safety is achieved.

Expert Judgement

Expert Judgement is an NCC Assessment Method that allows the judgement of an expert (someone that has relevant qualifications and experience) to determine whether a Performance Solution complies with the Performance Requirements. What is defined as an expert for the purposes of this Assessment Method may differ between jurisdictions (e.g. airports and national parks).

To increase the robustness of building solutions in safety-critical areas, such as fire safety, and reduce subjectivity, we are proposing to remove the Expert Judgement Assessment Method in Part A of the NCC to demonstrate compliance for fire safety Performance Solutions. The aim is to prevent practitioners from setting levels of public safety solely at their own discretion. This will help produce more robust outcomes, leading to improved occupant safety.

The Expert Judgement Assessment Method will remain available for Performance Solutions to other parts of the NCC, which remain unaffected.

How were the changes developed?

We have collaborated with key stakeholders to determine the best way to improve fire safety Performance Solutions. This included considering changes to the NCC or developing updated non-mandatory guidance for practitioners through the [Australian Fire Engineering Guidelines \(AFEG\)](#).

Who has been involved?

We consulted with members of our peak technical committee, the [Building Codes Committee](#) and the following key stakeholders:

- [The Society of Fire Safety \(SFS\)](#)
- [Institute of Fire Engineers \(IFE\)](#)
- [Australian Institute of Building Surveyors \(AIBS\)](#)
- [National Council for Fire and Emergency Services \(AFAC\)](#)

What are the impacts?

Practitioners undertaking fire safety Performance Solutions will no longer be able to use the Expert Judgement Assessment Method. It means practitioners must use another Assessment

Method as part of developing a Performance Solution to meet the fire safety Performance Requirements.

Removing Expert Judgement as an Assessment Method will not prevent practitioners from applying their own professional judgement, which remains feasible under other Assessment Methods or when using Evidence of Suitability outlined in Part A5 where appropriate.

These amendments will improve the robustness of Performance Solutions and will give users of the NCC greater certainty that they are meeting the Performance Requirements.

More information and relevant links

To support practitioners and further improve the robustness of fire safety Performance Solutions, we will update the [AFEG](#) to include:

- An optional quantification framework along with additional background material and guidance.
- A more detailed discussion on applying engineering judgement.

We've proposed similar changes to improve [structural Performance Solutions](#)

- [Understanding the NCC Assessment Methods](#)
- [Increased and competent use of performance](#)

To read the full details of the changes, please review the NCC 2025 Volume [One](#) and [Two](#) PCD.

Want to provide feedback?

Responses to the Public Comment Draft are invited until 11:59 PM AEST Monday 1 July 2024.

In line with the ABCB's process for undertaking public consultation, comment will only be accepted through the ABCB's online [Consultation Hub](#).

To access the Public Comment Draft and response form:

1. Download the NCC volume(s) you wish to view and provide comment. You can also download the supporting information PDF for detailed information on the more significant/complex changes.
2. Download the response form.

Once you've reviewed the draft, complete the response form, and include your feedback on the suggested changes to the NCC.

To submit your comments:

1. Enter our Public Comment Draft consultation hub.
2. Start by agreeing to the privacy statement.
3. Let us know if you'd like your submission published publicly.
4. Enter your contact details.
5. Upload your completed form in .doc format (please make sure each file is under 25MB) and submit.