



Building Classifications

Fact Sheet

Every building is classified according to what it is used for. If you plan to change a building's use, for example by turning a shop into a café, you may have to make changes. This fact sheet helps you understand what those changes may be.

Why are building classifications important?

Classifying a building helps ensure it is designed so that:

- the number of people allowed inside can leave in an emergency
- the fire risk is managed (materials used, fire hose/hydrant access etc)
- emergency services personnel can carry out search and rescue
- there are enough toilets, emergency exits and ventilation for everyone
- people of all abilities can enter and move around inside

Another important factor is how many storeys the building contains.

- To ensure health and amenity of the occupants

The higher a building is, the more stringent the provisions are relating to fire resistance, fire isolation of stairs, and fire equipment like sprinklers, hydrants, hose reels and extinguishers.

So, if an extra storey is constructed within an existing building with enough ceiling space (like a warehouse or factory), even though it's not increasing the overall height of a building, the addition of the extra storey would result in compliance implications.





Class 1



Class 3



Class 6



Class 7b



Class 9a



Class 10b

Building classifications

RESIDENTIAL

Class 1

Houses, townhouses, some smaller residential buildings.

Class 2

Apartment buildings.

RESIDENTIAL/COMMERCIAL

Class 3

Residential buildings other than a Class 1 or Class 2, building providing accommodation like a hotel, workers' quarters, rooming house or residential care building.

Class 4

A single domestic dwelling within a Class 5-9 building, e.g. a caretaker's residence within a hospital.

COMMERCIAL

Class 5

Office buildings.

Class 6

Buildings where retail goods are sold or services are supplied, like shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, salons, public laundries, shopping centres and showrooms.

Class 7

7a - carparks.

7b - warehouses, storage buildings or buildings for the display of wholesale goods.

Class 8

Factories - buildings used for production, assembling, altering, packing, cleaning etc. of goods or produce. This class may also include mechanic's workshops, abattoirs and laboratories.

Class 9

Public buildings - includes three sub-classifications:

9a - healthcare buildings like hospitals and day surgery clinics.

9b - buildings where people assemble for social, political, theatrical, religious or civic reasons, e.g. schools, universities, sports facilities, night clubs.

9c - aged care facilities.

Class 10

Non-habitable structures - includes three sub-classifications:

10a - sheds, carports, private garages.

10b - fences, masts, antennas, retaining walls.

10c - private bushfire shelter.

Different buildings may have different classifications on the same property, depending on their use.

I'm opening a business, what else do I need to know?

All businesses that change the use of a building, even if the previous business was in the same class, will need a building permit. If you are providing a like-for-like business, like a new restaurant where an old restaurant was, this will not trigger a 'change of use' but you should always check with your council first.

This table outlines some of the other key considerations for businesses.

Business	Class	Considerations
Café, bar or restaurant	Class 6 or 9b pending access for the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquor licensing requirements would require compliance with number of exits and toilets, size of rooms etc. Wheelchair access through the main entry and to any accessible toilets is required. Other approvals that may coexist could be planning, health, and local laws.
Small live music venue	Class 6 or 9b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are only permitted a Class 6 classification if you have a floor area under 500m² and no more than two storeys. For more information, read the Victorian Building Authority Building Practice Note GE-08: Small Live Music Venues
Hotel or rooming house	Class 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation triggers safety features around fire safety like fire separation, smoke detection/ alarm, emergency pathways and exits. These critical features may be difficult to comply with in an existing building - you may need advice from specialist consultants in fire safety.
Animal day care	Class 6	
Beauty, Tattoo or hairdressing salon	Class 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other approvals that may coexist could be planning, health and local laws.
Childcare	Class 9b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the size of the building, additional exits may be required. Outdoor play spaces require fencing to a similar standard as a pool safety barrier (minimum 1.5m in height). For other regulatory requirements visit: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/vcs.aspx

Business	Class	Considerations
Education Centre, employment training Gym/fitness studio Indoor recreation Nightclub Place of assembly such as shisha, conference room, function centre, art gallery, cultural/community clubs, cinema Place of worship	Class 9b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the current permitted use is not for a Class 9b building, there may be implications like upgrading materials that don't meet this classification's higher fire safety standards, stair construction, wheelchair access, accessible toilets, occupant warning systems etc. • Other approvals that may coexist could be planning, health, and local laws. • For education facilities, contact the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
Microbrewery, distillery or winery	Class 8 and/or 6 if public access is required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the building will only be used for manufacturing and packing drinks occupied by employees only, a Class 8 classification would apply - check with the Council to confirm the building's current approval. • If you want the public to enter the premises, a Class 6 classification would apply (which is more onerous). • Other approvals that may coexist could be planning, health and local laws.
Medical centre, including GP, dentistry, physiotherapy and other specialist practitioners	Class 5 or 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the surgery or patient care includes overnight stays this would attract a Class 9a classification. • Other approvals that may coexist could be planning, health and local laws.
Office	Class 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the building or tenancy's approved use currently permits a Class 5 use, a building permit would only be required where building work is proposed
Recording studio	Class 5 or 6 if public access is required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the building or tenancy's approved use currently permits a Class 5 use, a building permit would only be required where building work is proposed
Restricted retail (big box retail)	Class 6 and 7 if including a warehouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the building or tenancy's approved use currently permits a Class 6 and/or 7 use, a building permit would only be required where building work is proposed. If storage of goods exceeds 1,000m³ and greater than 4m in height fire sprinklers are required.
Service industry business e.g motor repair, car wash, dry cleaner	Class 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the building or tenancy's approved use currently permits a Class 6 use, a building permit would only be required where building work is proposed. • Fire sprinklers are required for vehicle repair premises.
Warehouse/Storage	Class 7b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the building or tenancy's approved use currently permits a Class 7 use, a building permit would only be required where building works is proposed. • Installation of fixed racking would require a building permit as this can impact essential safety measures like fire sprinklers, travel distance to exits, emergency lighting coverage etc.