

Access and egress

Compliance with the National Construction Code



TOOLBOX

GREENHOUSE CONSTRUCTION AND SAFE OPERATION

Australia currently does not have a unified building classification of horticultural buildings within the National Construction Code (NCC). This means that greenhouses or grow structures can be classified as Class 7 or Class 8 within the NCC which can be onerous and inappropriate.

Access and egress requirements should be completed in accordance with the NCC. Access must be provided to enable people to approach the greenhouse from the road boundary, car park, any accessible building, and other spaces or amenities, as well as identify accessways at appropriate locations that are easy to find.

Under the current NCC Part H3, the Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions of Section D1 do not apply to a farm shed, except for D1.2, D1.4 to D1.6, D1.9, D1.10(a), D1.13(c), D1.14 and D1.15. This is further explained for greenhouses in the table below.

Table 1: Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions for access and egress

NCC SECTION	AREA	DEEMED-TO-SATISFY PROVISIONS FOR GREENHOUSES
D1.2	Number of exits required	Every building must have at least one exit from each storey. Access to exits – without passing through another sole-occupancy unit every occupant of a storey or part of a storey must have access to an exit.
D1.4	Exit travel distances	No point on a floor must be more than 20 m from an exit, or a point from which travel in different directions to 2 exits is available, in which case the maximum distance to one of those exits must not exceed 40 m.
D1.5	Distance between alternative exits	Exits that are required as alternative means of egress must be: - Distributed as uniformly as practicable - Not less than 9 m apart - Not more than 60 m apart - Located so that alternative paths of travel do not converge such that they become less than 6 m apart.
D1.6	Dimensions of exits and paths of travel to exits	In a required exit or path of travel to an exit the unobstructed: - Height throughout must be not less than 2 m - Width of each exit or path of travel to an exit, except for doorways, must be not less than 1m.

KEY MESSAGES

- Greenhouses or grow structures can be classified under the sometimes onerous and inappropriate classification of Class 7 or Class 8 within the National Construction Code (NCC)
- It's important to understand the access and egress requirements of your greenhouse under the NCC
- There are several Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions for greenhouses under the NCC that you need to be aware of, which cover exits, ramps, occupancy, and measurement of distances



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Table 1 continued

NCC SECTION	AREA	DEEMED-TO-SATISFY PROVISIONS FOR GREENHOUSES
D1.9	Travel by non-fire-isolated stairways or ramps	A non-fire-isolated stairway or ramp serving as an exit must provide a continuous means of travel to the level at which egress to a road or open space is provided. The distance from any point on a floor to a point of egress to a road or open space by way of a required non-fire-isolated stairway or ramp must not exceed 80 m. A required non-fire-isolated stairway or ramp must discharge at a point not more than: - 20 m from a doorway providing egress to a road or open space - 40 m from one of 2 such doorways or passageways.
D1.10(a)	Discharge from exits	An exit must not be blocked at the point of discharge and where necessary, suitable barriers must be provided to prevent vehicles from blocking the exit, or access to it.
D1.13(c)	Number of persons accommodated	The number of persons accommodated in a greenhouse must be determined considering the layout of the floor area by any suitable means of assessing its capacity.
D1.14	Measurement of distances	The nearest part of an exit means in the case of a: - Non-fire-isolated stairway, the nearest part of the nearest riser - Non-fire-isolated ramp, the nearest part of the junction of the floor of the ramp and the floor of the storey - Doorway opening to a road or open space, the nearest part of the doorway - Horizontal exit, the nearest part of the doorway.
D1.15	Method of measurement	The following rules apply: - Only the shortest distance is taken along a corridor, hallway, external balcony or other path of travel that curves or changes direction - The distance between exits is measured in a straight line between the nearest parts of those exits (subject to above) - If more than one internal path of travel connects required exits, the measurement is along the path of travel through the point at which travel in different directions to those exits is available - If a wall that does not bound a greenhouse or hallway causes a change of direction in proceeding to a required exit, the distance is measured along the path of travel past that wall - In the case of a non-fire-isolated stairway or ramp, the distance is measured along a line connecting the nosings of the treads, or along the slope of the ramp, together with the distance connecting those lines across any intermediate landings.



Read the toolbox fact sheets *Construction of exits* and *Fire* in this series for further information on access and egress requirements.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Australian Building Codes Board (2016) National Construction Code 2016; Volume 1; Building Code of Australia; Class 2 to Class 9 Buildings, Commonwealth of Australia and States and Territories of Australia:

Part H3 Farm Building and Farm Sheds, pp. 377-380

Section D, Section D1.2, D1.4 to D1.6, D1.9, D1.10(a), D1.13(c), D1.14 and D1.15 Access and Egress, pp. 155-218

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Have I considered and appropriately addressed the Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions that cover exits, ramps, occupancy, and measurement of distances under the NCC?
- Who is my local accredited building certifier and/or professional fire engineer with experience in the protected cropping industry?