



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.

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Why are building classifications important?

Classifying a building helps ensure it is designed so that:

- people are safe when inside a building
- 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 enter and operate in an emergency
- there are enough toilets, emergency exits and ventilation for everyone
- people of all abilities can enter and move around inside
- health and amenity of occupants is maintained

Another important factor is how many storeys the building contains. If a building has several storeys or is over a certain size there are more complicated rules like fire resistance, fire isolation of stairs, exit signs, emergency lighting and fire equipment (sprinklers, hydrants, hose reels and extinguishers etc.).

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.

Building classifications



Class 1



Class 3

RESIDENTIAL

Class 1

Houses, townhouses, boarding houses or hostel buildings that accommodate less than 12 people

Class 2

Apartment buildings (i.e. separate units on top of one another or above offices, shops or a common carpark)

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 factory.

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

Factory type buildings used for production, assembling, altering, packing, cleaning etc. of goods or produce. This class may also include mechanic's workshops, abattoirs, farm buildings 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 – swimming pools/spas, fences, masts, antennas, retaining walls

10c – private bushfire shelter



Class 6



Class 7b



Class 9a



Class 10b

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 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 City of Casey first.

Any works to a building like fitout, alterations or changes to essential safety measures (exits, fire services, emergency lighting or wall and floor linings etc.) will require a building permit (this can be included in a change of use permit).

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

BUSINESS	CLASS	CONSIDERATIONS
Café, bar or restaurant	Class 6 or 9b	• Building and liquor licensing permits require compliance with number of exits and toilets, size of rooms, maximum number of people allowed etc. • Disabled access must be provided to and within all areas normally used by the occupants and to any accessible toilets • Other approvals that may coexist could be planning, health, and local laws.
Small live music venue	Class 6	A restaurant or bar that provides live music or entertainment, has a floor area under 500m ² and is no more than two storeys is a small live music venue. For more information, read the Victorian Building Authority Building Practice Note GE-08: Small Live Music Venues
Hotel or rooming house	Class 3	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	Other approvals that may coexist could be planning, health and local laws.

Childcare	Class 9b	- Depending on the size of the building, there are more complicated rules like fire resistance, exit signs, emergency lighting and fire equipment (sprinklers, hydrants, hose reels and extinguishers etc.). Additional exits may also 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
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	- 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, disabled 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 6, 7 or 8	- If the building will only be used by employees for manufacturing and packing drinks, a Class 8 classification would apply. If, however, the packaged drinks are sold from the building by wholesale, a Class 7 would apply - 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	- 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	If the approved use of the building is for a shop (Class 6) a building permit to change the use to a Class 5 is required. This may involve providing additional toilets and upgrading accessibility.
Recording studio	Class 5 or 6 if public access is required	If the approved use of the building currently permits a Class 5 and the proposed studio is to be leased out to the public, a Building Permit for a change of use to a Class 6 would be required.
Restricted retail (big box retail)	Class 6 if goods are to be sold to the public or Class 7 if goods are for sale by wholesale	If the floor area of the building is greater than 3500m² OR 2000m² and storage of combustible-goods exceed an aggregate volume of 2,000m³ stored to a height greater than 4m, sprinklers are required to be installed under a building permit.
Service industry business e.g. service station, motor repair, car wash, dry cleaner	Class 6	Class 6 is not intended to cover buildings where panel beating, auto electrical, muffler replacement, tyre replacement and the like are solely carried out. Such buildings should be classified as Class 8 buildings.
Warehouse/Storage	Class 7b	Internal fitout (including fixed shelving units) may require a building permit as this can impact essential safety measures like fire sprinklers, travel distance to exits, emergency lighting coverage etc.