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Australian Standard[®]

Inspection of buildings

**Part 1: Pre-purchase inspections—
Residential buildings**



This Australian Standard® was prepared by Committee BD-085, Inspection of Buildings. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 4 December 2007. This Standard was published on 20 December 2007.

The following are represented on Committee BD-085:

- Association of Consulting Engineers Australia
 - Australian Consumers' Association
 - Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association
 - Australian Institute of Building
 - Australian Institute of Building Surveyors
 - Building Services Authority of Queensland
 - Concrete Masonry Association of Australia
 - Engineers Australia
 - Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation
 - Housing Industry Association
 - Institute of Building Inspectors
 - Insurance Council of Australia
 - Master Builders Australia
 - Royal Australian Institute of Architects
-

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Australian Standard[®]

Inspection of buildings

Part 1: Pre-purchase inspections— Residential buildings

Originated as AS 4349.1—1995.
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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee BD-085, Inspection of Buildings, to supersede AS 4349.1—1995.

The objective of this Standard is to provide persons and organizations concerned with pre-purchase inspections of residential dwellings with the basic criteria necessary in order to facilitate inspections and reports that satisfy the requirements of both the client and inspector.

This Standard may be applicable for inspections of residential buildings carried out for purposes other than pre-purchase inspection. This Standard does not include compliance with building regulations or assessment of a building under construction.

This Standard is part of the AS 4349 series of Standards, which covers minimum requirements for the visual inspection of buildings, as follows:

AS

4349	Inspection of buildings
4349.0	Part 0: General requirements
4349.1	Part 1: Pre-purchase inspections—Residential buildings (this Standard)
4349.3	Part 3: Timber pest inspections

The changes to previous edition of this Standard comprise the following:

- (a) Modification of scope and general section:
 - (i) Clarifying scope, application, limitations.
 - (ii) New definitions.
- (b) New section for inspection agreement.
- (c) Modification of inspection process—Clarifying areas to be inspected, defects, inspection records.
- (d) Modification of inspection report section—Clarifying report content.
- (e) New normative appendices:
 - (i) Pre-purchase structural inspection.
 - (ii) Building elements and services to be inspected.
- (f) New informative appendices:
 - (i) Strata and company title property inspection.
 - (ii) Exclusion of items from inspection.
 - (iii) Cracking of building elements.
 - (iv) Types and examples of defects.
- (g) Inclusion of commentary to some clauses.

Notes to the text contain information and guidance. They are not an integral part of the Standard.

The terms ‘normative’ and ‘informative’ have been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. A ‘normative’ appendix is an integral part of a Standard. An ‘informative’ appendix is only for information and guidance.

This Standard incorporates commentary on some of the clauses. The commentary directly follows the relevant clause is designated by 'C' preceding the clause number and is printed in italics in a panel. The commentary is for information only and does not need to be followed for compliance with this Standard.

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FOREWORD

The purchase of residential property is an important decision and should be supported by knowledge of the physical state of the property. Independent and objective advice is often required to enable informed decisions.

It is implicit in this Standard that the inspection includes subjective appraisal by an inspector competent to assess the condition of residential buildings. It is not expected that this Standard will be relevant where an inspection involves wholly objective application of a prescribed technique of appraisal. In any subjective application it is inevitable that different inspectors or even the same inspector, on a different occasion, may reach different conclusions. The Standard seeks to provide an appropriate balance between reliability of outcomes, economic constraints and the flexibility required to address numerous different types of residential building.

The inspection is not intended to include rigorous assessment of all building elements in a property.

STANDARDS AUSTRALIA**Australian Standard
Inspection of buildings****Part 1: Pre-purchase inspections—Residential buildings****SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL****1.1 SCOPE**

This Standard sets out minimum requirements for the inspection of and preparation of an associated report on a residential property carried out by a suitably qualified inspector in order to provide advice to a prospective purchaser or similar interested party. The inspections specified herein may be useful in circumstances other than where a property is subject to purchase.

NOTE: For example an owner or similar interested party may seek an assessment of the condition of the property valuation purposes.

The respective State or Territory legislation may include requirements beyond this Standard.

This Standard covers to residential buildings including, but not limited to the following:

- (a) Freestanding houses.
- (b) Semi-detached houses.
- (c) Terrace-style houses.
- (d) Villas.
- (e) Town-houses and row housing.
- (f) Multi-unit residential buildings.

C1.1 *If an inspection generally in accordance with this Standard is to be combined with an inspection of elements or requirements for reporting that are not within the scope of this Standard, the variations to this Standard have to comply with the requirements of AS 4349.0 and be recorded in a separate report, or be clearly described and differentiated in the inspection agreement.*

AS 4349.0 sets out the requirements for building inspections other than those detailed in other parts of AS 4349.

Types of non-standard inspections may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (g) Pest inspection—In areas where termites are a problem all prospective purchasers should have a pest inspection carried out.*
- (h) Electrical installation—In the interests of safety, all new owners should have a report on the electrical installation carried out by a suitably qualified person.*
- (i) Other specialist inspections—These include plumbing, hydraulics, mechanical services or geotechnical where appropriate.*

The property inspection should be undertaken as early in the buying process as practicable. This way, the purchaser will know about the condition of the property and will be able to make a better informed decision as to whether to proceed with the purchase.

This Standard may be suitable also for a vendor to include with the papers for the sale of a property.

1.2 LIMITATIONS OF STANDARD

A report prepared in accordance with this Standard is not a certificate of compliance of the property within the requirements of any Act, regulation, ordinance, local law or by-law, and is not a warranty against problems developing with the building in the future.

This Standard does not include the identification of unauthorized building work or of work not compliant with building regulations.

This Standard assumes that the existing use of the building will continue.

1.3 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

AS	
4349	Inspection of buildings
4349.0	Part 0: General requirements
4349.3	Part 3: Timber pest inspections

ABCB	
BCA	Building Code of Australia

1.4 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Standard, the definitions below apply.

1.4.1 Access hole (cover)

An opening in flooring or ceiling or other part of a structure (such as service hatch, removable panel) to allow for entry to carry out an inspection, maintenance or repair.

1.4.2 Accessible area

An area of the site where sufficient, safe and reasonable access is available to allow inspection within the scope of the inspection.

1.4.3 Appearance defect

Fault or deviation from the intended appearance of a building element.

1.4.4 Building element

Portion of a building that, by itself or in combination with other such parts, fulfils a characteristic function.

NOTE: For example supporting, enclosing, furnishing or servicing building space.

1.4.5 Client

The person or other entity for whom the inspection is being carried out.

1.4.6 Defect

Fault or deviation from the intended condition of a material, assembly, or component.

1.4.7 Inspection

Close and careful scrutiny of a building carried out without dismantling, in order to arrive at a reliable conclusion as to the condition of the building.

1.4.8 Inspector

Person or organization responsible for carrying out the inspection.

1.4.9 Limitation

Any factor that prevents full or proper inspection of the building.

1.4.10 Major defect

A defect of sufficient magnitude where rectification has to be carried out in order to avoid unsafe conditions, loss of utility or further deterioration of the property.

1.4.11 Minor defect

A defect other than a major defect.

1.4.12 Serviceability defect

Fault or deviation from the intended serviceability performance of a building element.

1.4.13 Significant item

An item that is to be reported in accordance with the scope of the inspection.

1.4.14 Structural defect

Fault or deviation from the intended structural performance of a building element.

1.4.15 Structural element

Physically distinguishable part of a structure.

NOTE: For example wall, columns, beam, connection.

1.4.16 Subfloor space

Space between the underside of a suspended floor and the ground.

1.4.17 Roof space

Space between the roof covering and the ceiling immediately below the roof covering.

1.4.18 Site

Allotment of land on which a building stands or is to be erected.

SECTION 2 INSPECTION AGREEMENT

2.1 GENERAL

An inspection agreement between the client and inspector shall be entered into prior to the inspection taking place. The inspection agreement shall include the defined purpose, scope and acceptance criteria in accordance with this Section. Where necessary for clarification, details from Sections 3 and 4 shall be included in the agreement.

Any changes to the purpose, scope or acceptance criteria shall be agreed by all parties at the appropriate time.

Where the client or other interested party requires assessment of the structure of the property only, the inspection shall be in accordance with Appendix A. Such inspection shall be agreed prior to the inspection and clearly specified in the inspection report.

The inspector shall be licensed or registered in accordance with any applicable statutory requirements. If required by the client, the inspector shall provide details of qualification and experience before beginning the inspection.

NOTE: The inspection agreement should be in writing and signed by all parties to the agreement.

C2.1 *The person carrying out a property inspection should be suitably qualified and experienced.*

The inspector may recommend that other specialists be engaged to report, in detail, on particular problems that are encountered in the course of a building inspection.

It is not the role of the inspector to explain title and ownership matters and to deal with matters concerning easements, covenants, restrictions, zoning certificates and all other law-related matters.

2.2 PURPOSE OF INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to provide advice to a prospective purchaser or other interested party regarding the condition of the property at the time of inspection.

Where the client or other interested party requires only assessment of the structure of the property, the purpose of the inspection shall be limited to that described in Appendix A.

2.3 SCOPE OF INSPECTION

2.3.1 General

The inspection shall comprise visual assessment of the property to identify major defects and to form an opinion regarding the general condition of the property at the time of inspection.

Where the client or other interested party requires only assessment of the structure of the property, the scope of the inspection shall be limited to that described in Appendix A.

An estimate of the cost of rectification of defects is not required in an inspection report in accordance with this Standard.

C2.3.1 *The cost of rectification of building defects is notoriously difficult to estimate reliably. This is primarily because the actual extent of work cannot be known before commencement of the work. There is also reduced competition as many contractors are unwilling to undertake rectification work.*

Where it is agreed that an estimate will be provided, the preparation of the estimate is outside the scope of this Standard. The preparation of rectification estimates is commonly based on standard industry cost guides or the inspector's own experience. In either case, the reliability of the resulting estimate should be used as a guide only.

A more reliable estimate of rectification cost can sometimes be obtained by documenting the expected rectification work and obtaining quotations for the specified extent of work. Alternatively, a quantity surveyor or similar construction cost estimator may be commissioned to estimate the cost of a specified extent of work.

2.3.2 Areas for inspection

The inspection shall cover all accessible areas.

The client shall arrange right of entry, facilitate physical entry to the property and supply necessary information to enable the inspector to undertake the inspection and prepare a report. The inspector is not responsible for arranging entry to property or parts of property.

Areas where reasonable entry is denied to the inspector, or where reasonable access is not available, are excluded from, and do not form part of, the inspection.

NOTE: Those areas may be the subject of an additional inspection following the provision of reasonable entry and access (also see Clause 3.2).

2.3.3 Inspection process

The inspection shall comprise visual appraisal and limited assessment of serviceability.

2.3.4 Limitations

Limitations that are reasonably expected to be present or that reasonably may occur shall be identified.

NOTES:

- 1 The inspector may be able to anticipate many limitations of an inspection.
- 2 Known limitations relating to access should be included.

C2.3.4 *Many disputes between the client and inspector occur because the client did not expect the inspection to be subject to some form of limitation. In order to avoid such disputes it is necessary that the inspector, who is normally the more knowledgeable party, inform the client during the agreement phase of limitations that may restrict the full achievement of the client's purpose of inspection. The opportunity to inform the client prior to the inspector's visit to the property is limited and there will always remain the possibility of unexpected limitations that will be apparent only when the inspector visits the property; however, it is important that the client have a realistic understanding of the inspection limitations prior to the inspection.*

Examples of expected limitations include legal right of entry, locked doors, security system, pets, furniture and similar obstructions, While these are common and expected limitations, the inspector should not assume that the client is aware of the significance of the various factors, but rather should inform the client.

Examples of limitations that may not be expected at any particular inspection, but which are common, include access restrictions due to height or narrow boundary clearance, thick vegetation, small roof or crawl space and adverse weather conditions. It is not practicable for the inspector to anticipate and inform the client of all possible limitations that may be present when the inspector visits the property; however, the client should have an appreciation, during the agreement period, of the types of limitation that may occur.

2.3.5 Extent of reporting

Significant items to be reported are as follows:

- (a) Major defects.
- (b) A general impression regarding the extent of minor defects.
NOTE: For example, significantly deteriorating exterior paint.
- (c) Any major defect that is an urgent and serious safety hazard.
NOTE: For example, unsafe balustrades or imminent collapse of a structural member.

C2.3.5 *The definition of 'major defect' includes defects that have to be rectified to avoid the development of unsafe conditions, and thus any defect that is a safety hazard has to be reported as a major defect; however, if in the opinion of the inspector, a defect is a serious hazard to occupants or is about to become a serious hazard to occupants it is considered that the inspector has a professional duty to ensure that the report clearly identifies the hazard in such a manner that it is not easily overlooked by a reader of the report.*

2.3.6 Acceptance criteria

The building shall be compared with a building that was constructed in accordance with the generally accepted practice at the time of construction and which has been maintained such that there has been no significant loss of strength and serviceability.

C2.3.6 *It is necessary that the inspector agree with the client the criteria against which the subject building will be assessed. In this Standard, the basis for comparison is a building of similar age and similar type to the subject building and which is in reasonable condition, having been adequately maintained over the life of the building. It follows that the subject building may not comply with Australian Standards, building regulations and the like that are applicable at the time of inspection.*

SECTION 3 INSPECTION

3.1 GENERAL

Accessible areas shall be inspected in accordance with this Section.

3.2 AREAS TO BE INSPECTED

3.2.1 General

The inspector shall inspect accessible parts of the building and appurtenances, together with relevant feature of the property within 30 m of the building and within the boundaries of the site, or as otherwise agreed in the inspection agreement. In this context, relevant features include car accommodation, detached laundry, ablution facilities and garden sheds, retaining walls more than 700 mm high, paths and driveways, steps, fencing, earth embankments, surface water drainage and stormwater run-off.

Inspection of Strata and Company Title residential property shall be limited to the nominated residence and does not include common property.

NOTE: Further information regarding inspection of Strata and Company Title residential property is given in Appendix B.

The following areas shall be inspected where applicable:

- (a) The interior of the building.
- (b) The roof space.
- (c) The exterior of the building.
- (d) The sub-floor space.
- (e) The roof exterior.
- (f) The property within 30 m of the building subject to inspection.

Building elements to be inspected in the nominated areas shall be in accordance with Appendix C.

NOTE: The inspection does not include all building services, furnishings, and the like, that may be present in the building. A representative list of exclusions to the inspection is provided in Appendix D.

3.2.2 Safe and reasonable access

The extent of accessible areas shall be determined by the inspector at the time of inspection, based on the conditions encountered at the time of inspection. The inspector shall also determine whether sufficient space is available to allow safe access.

The inspection shall include only accessible areas and areas that are within the inspector's line of sight and close enough to enable reasonable appraisal. Reasonable access shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Table 3.2.

The inspector shall inspect an elevated area only where—

- (a) it is at a height at which safe reasonable access is available, or where safe and reasonable access is otherwise available; or
- (b) an unobstructed line of sight is present from safe use of a 3.6 m ladder and the building elements present are close enough to allow appraisal.

NOTE: 'Elevated area' includes the roof, roof space, crawl space, landing feature, and the like, generally elevated above the ground and not intended for normal use by occupants.

TABLE 3.2
DIMENSIONS FOR REASONABLE ACCESS

Area	Access hole mm	Crawl space mm	Height
Roof interior	400 × 500	600 × 600	Accessible from a 3.6 m ladder
Roof exterior	—	—	Accessible from a 3.6 m ladder placed on the ground

NOTES:

- 1 Reasonable access does not include the cutting of access holes or the removal of screws and bolts or any other fastenings or sealants to access covers.
- 2 Subfloor areas sprayed with chemicals should not be inspected unless it is safe to do so.

TABLE C3.2 *A 3.6 m ladder is considered generally reasonable for safe use by one operator during an inspection. Regardless of the ladder length, weight and size, safe use of ladder or safe access may mean that inspection of a roof, elevated platform or roof space is not possible in part, or at all, during an inspection and, in such circumstances, an inspector may recommend the use of special access equipment and that a further inspection be undertaken when a safe method of access is present.*

3.3 DEFECTS

The inspector shall appraise building elements, including structural elements, for the presence of defects, as specified in Table 3.3.

C3.3 *During an inspection the inspector should be alert to the possibility that a building element is defective but that the defect does not fall neatly into one of the categories of defect described in Table 3.3. In such a case the inspector should use a combination of defect properties or otherwise assess and describe the defect in his/her own words, based on his/her own experience.*

In many cases, the actual structural elements of a building will be obscured by finishes and other non-structural building elements, and the inspector may be unable to assess directly the state of the structural member. In such cases, the inspector has to infer the performance of the structure by observing the effect of the structure on the non-structural building elements. For example, the inspector normally will be unable to inspect the footings of a house as they are buried beneath the ground; however, cracking in non-structural masonry walls above the ground may indicate that a defect exists within the footing system.

TABLE 3.3
TYPES OF DEFECTS

Type	Defect	Identifier
A	Damage	The fabric of the element has ruptured or is otherwise broken
B	Distortion Warping Twisting	An element or elements has been distorted or moved from the intended location
C	Water penetration Damp related	Moisture is present in unintended or unexpected locations
D	Material deterioration (rusting, rotting, corrosion, decay)	An element or component is subject to deterioration of material or materials
E	Operational	An element or component does not operate as intended.
F	Installations (including omissions)	The element or component is subject to improper or ineffective installation, inappropriate use, or missing components

NOTE: Guidance on inspection and reporting of cracking of building elements is given in Appendix E, which also provides information on types of defects and inspection considerations.

3.4 INSPECTION RECORDS

The inspector shall record the following information prior to, or during the course of, the inspection:

- (a) Identity of the inspector undertaking the inspection.
- (b) Identity of the client
- (c) The address of the property inspected.
- (d) Date of inspection.
- (e) Weather conditions at the time of the inspection.
- (f) Limitations of inspection with respect to accessible area.
- (g) Observation of defects

NOTE: The inspection records should be retained for a period of at least three years.

C3.4 *It is considered necessary that the inspector record various data on site at the time of inspection, and that this record be retained by the inspector. This site record may or may not become part of the formal report provided to the client.*

The purpose of this site record is to allow checking of the formal report in the event of discrepancies or other problems. The inspector is considered to be an expert practitioner within that field of practice and it is expected that such a practitioner will be able to demonstrate the basis for his/her conclusions in the event of problems. An appropriate site record made at the time of inspection is a suitable method of demonstrating such basis.

SECTION 4 THE REPORT

4.1 GENERAL

An inspection report shall be provided in writing or otherwise in a form that will enable the client to retain a permanent written record of the report.

NOTE: It is necessary to inspect each of the areas and items set out in Section 3; however, it is not necessary to report on each one. An inspector may choose to report only on an 'exceptions basis', i.e., listing only defects, rather than also reporting items that are in acceptable condition.

C4.1 *The facts obtained from the inspection have to be clearly and comprehensively presented in the report. An evidence-based and objective approach should then be used to develop interpretations and conclusions given in the report.*

The interpretations, conclusions and the inspector's opinion as to the overall condition of the property should be reasonably able to be checked by a suitably competent and experienced person who is external to the client-inspector relationship. Thus, the report should include sufficient data from the inspection and the conclusions should be derived by logical and rational examination of those data.

Due to the litigious nature of this industry, it is desirable for the benefit of both the client and the inspector that the report be clearly written.

Where reports involving standard clauses are used, for example 'check box format', care should be taken to ensure that sufficient and unambiguous detail, relevant to the particular inspection, is included.

4.2 REPORT CONTENT

4.2.1 General

The report shall include, but not be limited to, the elements listed in Clauses 4.2.2 to 4.2.8.

C4.2 *The report should not contain any assessment or an opinion in relation to the following:*

- (a) *A matter that is not within the inspector's expertise.*
- (b) *A matter the inspection or assessment of which is solely regulated by statute.*
- (c) *Cost of rectification.*
- (d) *The assessment of any apparent defect including rising damp and leaks, the detection of which may be subject to prevailing weather conditions or recent occupancy/use of services.*

In cases where services have not been used for some time prior to the inspection being carried out, such conditions may inhibit the detection of defects such as dampness caused by water leaks. For example, in the case of a shower enclosure, the absence of any dampness at the time of inspection does not necessarily mean that the enclosure will not leak.

4.2.2 Administrative

The following shall be included:

- (a) The name, address and licence number or registration under State and Territory legislation, where applicable, of the inspector responsible for the inspection.
- (b) The name of the person who undertook the inspection.
- (c) Identity of the client.
- (d) The address of the property inspected.
- (e) Date of inspection.
- (f) Details of inspection agreement.

4.2.3 Inspection details

The following shall be included:

- (a) Prevailing conditions at the time of the inspection.
- (b) Description and identification of the property inspected.

4.2.4 Significant items

4.2.4.1 Major defects

Any major defect observed shall be identified in the report. The location and description of each major defect, as specified in Table 3.3, shall be recorded in the report.

C4.2.1 *Where a major defect is mentioned in the report, it should be clearly described, including a general statement as to any observed minor defects arising from that major defect, and an explanation given as to why it is a major defect, along with its specific location. This will allow the client and others, as necessary, to locate the major defect and its consequent minor defect, to be aware of the justification for it being reported as a major defect and to be able to estimate the extent of the repairs likely to be required.*

4.2.4.2 Minor defects

The report shall describe the overall extent of minor defects. The inspector is not required to comment on individual minor defects and imperfections.

C4.2.4.2 *Minor defects are common to most properties and may include minor blemishes, corrosion, cracking, weathering, general deterioration, unevenness, and physical damage to materials and finishes, such as de-silvering of mirrors. It is expected that defects of this type would be rectified as part of normal ongoing property maintenance.*

4.2.4.3 Safety hazard

The report shall identify any observed item that may constitute a present or imminent serious safety hazard.

4.2.5 Limitations

The report shall identify any area or item within the scope of an inspection that was not inspected and the factor that prevented inspection.

NOTE: Areas where inspection was restricted (such as by insulation, airconditioning ducts or pipework) with recommendations to gain access where practicable and considered necessary, should be included in the report.

Identification of inaccessible areas (such as enclosed patios, concrete slab-on-ground floors, fireplace hearths, double brick cavity, roof space in low pitch or flat roofs), with recommendations to gain access where practicable and considered necessary, shall be included in the report.

4.2.6 Recommendations for further inspection

Where applicable, the inspector shall include a recommendation for further inspection by a specialist inspector.

NOTE: In the inspection report, the inspector may recommend that a specialist inspector (for example, a pest consultant, an electrician, a plumber, a structural engineer, a geotechnical engineer, a fire-safety consultant, a surveyor) undertake further inspection of some specific aspect of the building.

4.2.7 Conditions

A report may be conditional on the following:

- (a) Information provided by the person, the employees or agents of the person requesting the report.
- (b) Apparent concealment of possible defects.
- (c) Any other factor limiting the preparation of the report.

4.2.8 Conclusion

The report shall give conclusions regarding the incidence of major defects and an opinion regarding the incidence of minor defects, relative to the average condition of similar buildings of approximately the same age that have been reasonably well maintained. The conclusion shall give comment on the overall condition of the property.

C4.2.8 *Minor defects are common to most properties and may include minor blemishes, corrosion, cracking, weathering, general deterioration, unevenness, and physical damage to materials and finishes, such as de-silvering of mirrors. It is expected that defects of this type would be rectified as part of normal ongoing property maintenance.*

It is neither intended nor expected that the report will include details of specific minor defects; however, a poorly maintained residence may have more numerous and extensive minor defects than a reasonably maintained property that is otherwise similar. It follows that it may be necessary for a purchaser to allocate substantial resources to return a poorly maintained property to a reasonable standard for occupancy. For this reason the Standard requires that the report include a general assessment of the general incidence of minor defects in the subject residence compared with otherwise similar properties.

4.2.9 Summary

A summary shall be included to provide an overview of the report, including the purpose of the inspection, the scope and the conclusion.

APPENDIX A
PRE-PURCHASE STRUCTURAL INSPECTION
(Normative)

A1 GENERAL

Where a pre-purchase inspection is limited to assessment of the structure of the property, the requirements of this Appendix shall apply in preference to the relevant requirements of Sections 2, 3 and 4. Where no requirements are stated in this Appendix, the relevant requirements of Sections 2, 3 and 4 shall apply.

A2 PURPOSE OF INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to provide advice to a prospective purchaser or other interested party regarding the condition of the structure of the property.

A3 SCOPE OF INSPECTION

The inspection shall comprise visual assessment of accessible areas of the property to identify major defects to the building structure and to form an opinion regarding the general condition of the structure of the property.

NOTE: The structural report should not contain any assessment or an opinion regarding the following:

- (a) Any non-structural element, e.g., roof plumbing and roof covering, general gas, water and sanitary plumbing, electrical wiring, partition walls, cabinetry, windows, doors, trims, fencing, minor structures, non-structural damp issues, ceiling linings, floor coverings, decorative finishes such as plastering, painting, tiling, etc.
- (b) An assessment of any aspect or component of the property that cannot be seen or that requires testing and/or measurement to determine soundness.
- (c) Any area or item that was not, or could not be, observed by the inspector.
- (d) General maintenance other than that which is deemed to be directly related to the ongoing structural performance of the property.
- (e) Serviceability damp defects such as condensation, rising damp, lateral damp, falling damp should only be assessed and reported on where structural damage has occurred, is occurring, or may occur (e.g., fungal rot) significant spalling of masonry or concrete structural elements, significant fretting or mortar, rusting of primary structural elements. Stormwater drainage and surface water defects commonly cause or exacerbate foundation instability and these issues should be assessed and reported on where relevant.

A4 DEFECTS

The types of defect to be considered are as described in Section 3. The presence or otherwise of defects shall only be relevant when such defects relate to the structural condition of the building.

APPENDIX B
STRATA AND COMPANY TITLE PROPERTY INSPECTION
(Informative)

B1 GENERAL

Pre-purchase inspections on strata and company title buildings and similar forms of community title are subject to particular issues that can result in problems between the client and inspector.

Probably the most common problem is the failure of the client to appreciate the significance of the difference between individual and common property.

Sometimes, pre-purchase inspections are not requested because of an assumption that an examination of the strata records alone will adequately inform the purchaser of potential defects. Body corporate records will only disclose those defects that have been brought formally to the attention of the body corporate. The records will not necessarily reveal all the defects.

B2 SCOPE OF INSPECTION

With strata and company title properties, the inspection is limited to the interior and the immediate exterior of the particular residence to be inspected, as that is the extent of the individual property, and does not include review of body corporate or similar records.

An inspection of all strata and company title common property, including the interior of every unit, would need to be carried out to determine the extent of any defects in the whole of the common property. Where clear evidence of major defect is apparent during the inspection in accordance of this Standard, the inspector should advise the client to obtain an inspection of common areas.

B3 LIABILITY FOR MAINTENANCE COST

A prospective purchaser should be aware that their liability for the cost of repairing building defects is not restricted to the particular unit which they are proposing to purchase, but may include contribution to the whole of the common property. Thus, an inspection of the particular unit and its immediate surrounds may be of limited assistance to the prospective purchaser as an indicator of the total extent of their overall liability to contribute to the cost of repairs.

APPENDIX C

BUILDING ELEMENTS AND SERVICES TO BE INSPECTED

(Normative)

The inspector shall inspect all building elements. The building elements typically present in residential buildings are listed in Tables C1 to C6. Each item shall be visually inspected and limited testing of operation shall be undertaken as indicated.

NOTE: The list of items in Tables C1 to C6 is not exhaustive.

TABLE C1
INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
Ceilings	Sagging Nails popping Defective lining Lath and plaster key damage Fibrous plaster scrimming/grouting/strapping Cracking Dampness and damp damage	
Walls	Bulging Nails popping Defective lining Cracking Dampness and damp damage Distortion, verticality Drummy plaster and render	
Timber floors	Damage Decay Out of level Dampness and damp damage Floor movement such as spring and bounce	
Concrete floors	Cracking Surface damage Out of level Dampness and damp damage	
Timber windows	Putty Broken or cracked glass Sash operation Sash fittings and hardware Water staining Decaying frames and sashes	
Metal-framed windows	Glazing seals Broken or cracked glass Sash operation Sash fittings and hardware Water staining and corrosion	

(continued)

TABLE C1 (continued)

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
Doors and frames	Binding doors Defective door hardware Corroded or decaying frames Damaged doors Loose or badly fitting doors	
Kitchen	Bench top	Lifting or delamination Damage Water damage
	Cupboards	Water damage Operation of doors and drawers
	Sink/taps	Chips, cracks, leaking, etc. Water supply to be turned on, and taps operated
	Tiles	Drummy Cracked Loose, missing Grouting and sealant
Bathroom, WC, ensuite	Cistern and pan	Cracking Leaking Installation and stability Water supply to be turned on and the cistern flushed
	Bidet	Cracking Leaking Installation and stability Water supply to be turned on, and the bidet flushed
	Taps	Leaking Water supply to be turned on and taps operated
	Tiles	Drummy Cracked Loose Grouting and sealant
	Bath	Damage Adequately sealed and properly recessed at the junction with wall
	Shower	Visual signs of leakage Screen Broken glass Water supply to be turned on and the shower operated
	Vanity	Damage Doors and drawers
	Washbasin	Damage Loose Waste/trap Water supply to be turned on and taps operated

(continued)

TABLE C1 (continued)

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
	Ventilation	
	Mirrors	Cracking Edging
Laundry	Taps	Operation Leaking Water hammer (water supply to be turned on and taps operated)
	Tubs/cabinet	Condition
	Tiles	Drummy Cracked Loose Grouting and sealant
	Ventilation	
Stairs	Stringer Handrails/balusters Newel posts Treads and risers	
All	Damp problems	Rising Falling Condensation Horizontally or laterally penetrating damp

TABLE C2
EXTERIOR OF THE BUILDING

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
Walls	Lintels	
	External cladding	Integrity Paint, protective coating Evidence of missing damp-proof course or flashing
	Doors and windows	Flashing Moulding Sills
Timber or steel frames and structures		
Chimneys		Verticality Flashing Brickwork deterioration
Stairs		Structure integrity, looseness Safety issues
Balconies, verandas, patios, decks, suspended concrete floors, balustrades		Structure integrity, looseness Safety issues

TABLE C3
ROOF EXTERIOR

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
Roof	Tiles Shingles and slates Sheet roofing Gables Roof flashing	Cracked and broken Loose, decay Rusting, nails popping
Skylights, vents and flues		Flashing
Valleys		Rust
Guttering		Rust
Downpipes		Rust
Eaves, fascias and barges		

TABLE C4
ROOF SPACE

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
Roof covering		
Roof framing		Physical damage, deterioration Inappropriate modification
Sarking		Integrity
Party walls		Integrity
Insulation		

TABLE C5
SUBFLOOR SPACE

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
Timber floor	Supports	Deflection of bearers or joists Cracking, spalling, rusting Termite caps
	Floor Ventilation, drainage, damp	Deterioration
Suspended concrete floors		Deterioration

TABLE C6
THE SITE

Inspection items/parts	Inspection areas (fields) of an item	Example and/or inspection consideration
Car accommodation, detached laundry, ablution facilities and garden sheds	Appropriate areas as described above for primary residence	
Retaining walls	Retaining walls supporting other structures. Landscaping retaining walls more than 700 mm high	
Paths and driveways	Subsidence Integrity Trip hazard	
Steps	Subsidence Integrity Trip hazard	
Fencing	General fencing	Inappropriate loading
	Swimming pool fencing	Presence and integrity Self-closing and self-latching gate
Surface water	Drainage effectiveness	Ponding of water against structures

APPENDIX D
EXCLUSION OF ITEMS FROM INSPECTION
(Informative)

The inspector need not inspect or report on the following:

- (a) Footings below ground.
- (b) Concealed damp-proof course.
- (c) Electrical installations, operation of smoke detectors, light switches and fittings, TV, sound and communications and security systems.
- (d) Concealed plumbing.
- (e) Adequacy of roof drainage as installed.
- (f) Gas fittings and fixtures.
- (g) Airconditioning.
- (h) Automatic garage door mechanisms.
- (i) Swimming pools and associated filtration and similar equipment.
- (j) The operation of fireplaces and solid fuel heaters, including chimneys and flues.
- (k) Alarm systems.
- (l) Intercom systems.
- (m) Soft floor coverings.
- (n) Electrical appliances including dishwashers, incinerators, ovens, ducted vacuum systems.
- (o) Paint coatings, except external protective coatings.
- (p) Health hazards (e.g., allergies, soil toxicity, lead content, radon, presence of asbestos or urea formaldehyde).
- (q) Timber and metal framing sizes and adequacy.
- (r) Concealed tie-downs and bracing.
- (s) Timber pest activity.
- (t) Other mechanical or electrical equipment (such as gates, inclinators).
- (u) Soil conditions.
- (v) Control joints.
- (w) Sustainable development provisions.
- (x) Concealed framing-timbers or any areas concealed by wall linings/sidings.
- (y) Landscaping.
- (z) Rubbish.
- (aa) Floor cover.
- (bb) Furniture and accessories.
- (cc) Stored items.
- (dd) Insulation.

- (ee) Environmental matters (e.g., BASIX, water tanks, BCA Environmental Provisions).
- (ff) Energy efficiency.
- (gg) Lighting efficiency.

APPENDIX E
CRACKING OF BUILDING ELEMENTS
(Informative)

E1 GENERAL

Use of cracking of building elements as an indicator of structural performance can be problematic. Where cracking is present in a building element the inspector has to be alert to the possibility that the cracking may be the result of one or more of a range of factors and that the significance of the cracking may vary (see Paragraph E2).

E2 TYPES OF CRACKING DEFECT

E2.1 Determining defect

Cracking in a building element may constitute a defect in a variety of ways. In many cases a particular cracking occurrence may result in more than one type of defect. For example, a particular crack might at the same time be a structural defect, a serviceability defect and an appearance defect.

The inspector should determine whether the cracking constitutes a major or minor defect, based on the expected impact of the cracking.

E2.2 Appearance defect

Cracking of a building element is an appearance defect where in the opinion of the inspector the only present or expected consequence of the cracking is that the appearance of the element is blemished.

E2.3 Serviceability defect

Cracking of a building element is a serviceability defect where in the opinion of the inspector the present or expected consequence of the cracking is that the function of the building element is impaired.

Examples of serviceability defects resulting from cracking are as follows:

- (a) Windows or doors not opening and closing properly.
- (b) Water leakage occurring through a building element, which otherwise should not allow water entry.

E2.4 Structural defect

Cracking of a building element is a structural defect where in the opinion of the inspector the present or expected consequence of the cracking is that the structural performance of the building element is impaired, or where the cracking is the result of the structural behaviour of the building.

The criteria for determining whether cracking is a structural defect are not solely related to crack width. Cracks 0.1 mm wide may be a structural defect while cracks 5.0 mm wide may not be structural defects. Cracking in a structural element does not necessarily indicate a structural defect.

E3 CATEGORIZATION OF CRACKS IN MASONRY WALLS

Reporting of cracking in masonry walls should be in accordance with Table E1.

TABLE E1
CATEGORISATION OF CRACKING IN MASONRY

Description of typical damage and required repair	Width limit	Damage category
Hairline cracks	≤0.1 mm	0
Fine cracks that do not need repair	≤1.0 mm	1
Cracks noticeable but easily filled Doors and windows stick slightly	≤5.0 mm	2
Cracks can be repaired and possibly a small amount of wall will need to be replaced. Door and windows stick service pipes can fracture. Weather-tightness often impaired.	>5.0 mm, ≤15.0 mm (or a number of cracks 3.0 mm or more in one group)	3
Extensive repair work involving breaking out and replacing sections of walls, especially over doors and windows. Doorframes distort. Walls lean or bulge noticeably, some loss of bearing in beams. Service pipes disrupted.	>15.0 mm, ≤25 mm but also depends on number of cracks	4

APPENDIX F
TYPES AND EXAMPLES OF DEFECTS
(Informative)

Table F1 provides information on defects subsets and some examples of each type of defect.

TABLE F1

Type	Defect	Example of subsets	Example of defects
A	Damage	Integrity of the element compromised to the extent that collapse has occurred or is imminent. Damage to the extent that the element is unserviceable or may become so soon. Circumstances where the consequential damage is out of proportion to the initial factor.	Cracked power point in a wet area. Brick wall damaged to the extent that stability is impeded. Damaged support to a ceiling such that collapse is possible.
B	Distortion, warping, twisting	Distortion to the extent that the element is unserviceable or may become so soon. The ability of the property to resist weather has been compromised (e.g., wind). Integrity of the element compromised to the extent that collapse has occurred or is imminent.	Sagging roof to the extent that allows ingress of vermin or rain. Distortion reduces support for structural members. Cavity wall has distorted due to the failure of ties; retaining wall rotated. Deflection of a lintel to such an extent that joinery is jammed; footings sunk. Deflection of elements consistent with significant settlement of footings.
C	Water penetration— Damp related	Water penetration to the extent that the element is unserviceable or may become so soon. Moisture present to the extent that conditions are conducive to structural deterioration or unhealthy environment.	Leaking shower recess. Leaking roof flashings and joinery flashings causing water penetration into the building. Slab edge dampness; rising damp causing salt attack.
D	Material deterioration (rusting, rotting, corrosion, decay)	Material deterioration to the extent that the element is unserviceable or may become so soon. Integrity of the element compromised to the extent that collapse has occurred or is imminent. Material deterioration to the extent that conditions are conducive to structural deterioration or unhealthy environment.	Concrete cancer. Rusting of structural connections and members such that the strength of the member has been reduced. Severe delignification such that the strength of the member has been reduced. Decay in timber members. Generalized spalling of brickwork indicating poor material.
E	Operational	Operational deterioration to the extent that the element is unserviceable or may soon become so. Operational deterioration to the extent that conditions are conducive to structural deterioration or unhealthy or unsafe environment.	Water hammer. Water supply inadequate.
F	Installation (including omissions)	Installation deficiencies to the extent that the element is unserviceable or may soon become so. Installation deficiencies to the extent that conditions are conducive to structural deterioration or unhealthy or unsafe environment.	Absence of bracing in houses supported by poles. Meter boxes missing; handrails not properly connected on a balustrade. Tie-downs and structural connections missing. Fire-rated party walls missing where required. Missing ant caps.

NOTES

NOTES

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