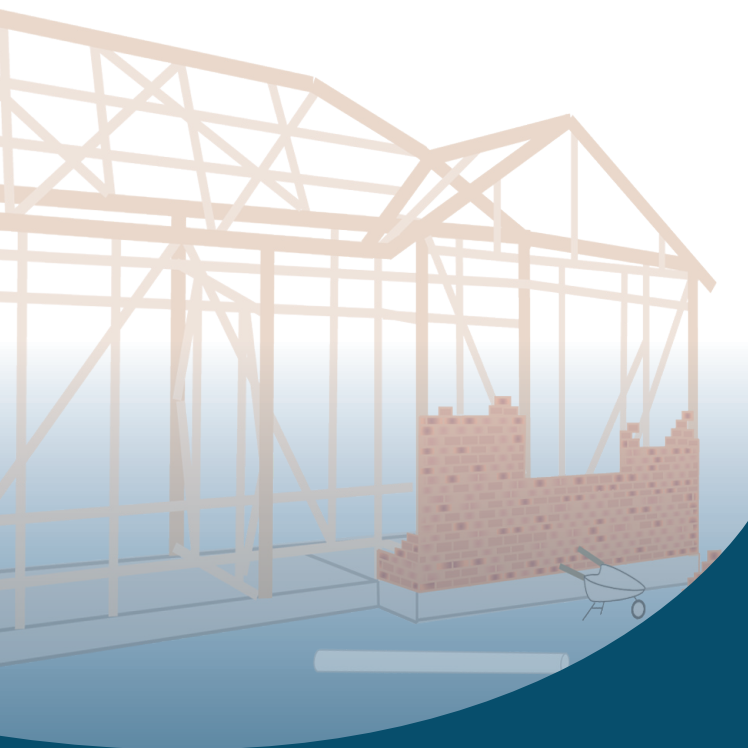


Building Approvals and Certifiers



ACT Planning &
Land Authority

When you are building, renovating, demolishing or landscaping you may need to get building approval as well as development approval.

What is the difference between development approval and building approval?

Development approval ensures the development is suitable for an area and conforms with any regulations or rules that may apply to a piece of land and with planning requirements for the development.

Building approval ensures the proposed building will be safe and structurally sound and will provide the required levels of fire resistance, durability, amenity, access for people with disabilities and energy efficiency.

What is building approval?

Most new buildings and renovations have to get building approval. Buildings have to conform to building laws and the Building Code of Australia unless exempted.

Building certifiers, who are licensed building surveyors, issue building approvals. You need to get this approval before construction begins.

How to get building approval

1. Appoint a licensed building surveyor as your certifier. You can find a certifier on ACTPLA's website under hiring and licensing.
2. Apply for building approval and pay the relevant fees (your certifier will tell you what these are). You will find the form (C3 - Appointment of a certifier and application for building approval and building approval certificate) on the ACTPLA website under forms.

3. Employ an appropriately licensed builder or become licensed as an owner-builder yourself. If you employ a builder, use a written contract that you are completely happy with. Remember to check that your builder is licensed on ACTPLA's website under hiring and licensing.

4. Either your builder, or you as owner-builder, must apply to your certifier for a building commencement notice by filling in the building commencement notice application form (C1).

5. The certifier will then issue a Building Commencement Notice if he or she is satisfied the licence authorises the building work.

6. The building work can now start.

All the forms you need are in the building approval information pack on the ACTPLA website. You need to give the certifier properly prepared plans showing the work to be done.

Certifiers

Certifiers must be licensed. There are three different classes of licence:

- a principal building surveyor may certify any building work
- a general building surveyor may certify a building up to three storeys and with a floor area up to 2000 square metres
- a plumbing plan certifier may certify plumbing or drainage plans for commercial work.

You can find a certifier who has the right licence from the ACTPLA list of licensed certifiers under hiring and licensing.

You must make sure your certifier:

- is independent and does not have any financial, legal or other interest in the work
- does not have any personal, professional, commercial or financial relationship with you or your builder
- is not involved in the design or construction of the work being done.

Certifiers have to inspect construction work at various stages, including at the end.

What fees do I have to pay?

The fees paid to the ACT Government for work requiring building approval are:

- a building levy—for all plans that your certifier certifies (see ACTPLA's Fees and Charges booklet)
- a training levy—if the work has a value greater than \$10,000. The training levy is 0.2 per cent of the value of the building work, including the first \$10,000. This means \$200 per \$100,000. Your certifier will calculate the training levy using the Building Cost Guide
- a Workcover workplace safety fee—for all commercial construction and sometimes for residential construction.

You can pay these fees at the Customer Service Centres in Dickson or Mitchell, by calling Canberra Connect on 13 33 81 or online via Canberra Connect at www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au

Plumbing approval

During construction, you may have plumbing work completed. For some plumbing work on commercial buildings you will need to employ a licensed plumbing plan certifier to approve the plumbing plan.

Conditions of building

You and your builder must bear in mind:

- any conditions included in the development approval
- any lease conditions
- any requirements of the building approval.

These conditions govern everything you can build or do on your land. For example, some residential leases in new suburbs require construction to start within 12 months of the date of commencement of the lease and require it to be completed within 24 months.

During construction

Your building certifier has to inspect the completion of various stages of the work, such as after placing certain formwork and reinforcement or the completion of the structural framework. This helps to make sure the work is carried out to the required standards.

An extra inspection will be made during construction for two-storey homes before the second-storey slab is poured, in the case of a reinforced concrete slab poured onsite.

Your builder must tell the certifier when the work requires inspection.

Completion of work

On satisfactory completion of the building work, your certifier will issue a Certificate of Completion. You will then need to apply to ACTPLA for a Certificate of Occupancy and Use before you can occupy or use the building. You can find the application for Certificate of Occupancy and Use on the website under forms.

More information:

Visit the ACTPLA shopfront: Dame Pattie Menzies House, 16 Challis Street, Dickson.

Phone: (02) 6207 1923

www.actpla.act.gov.au