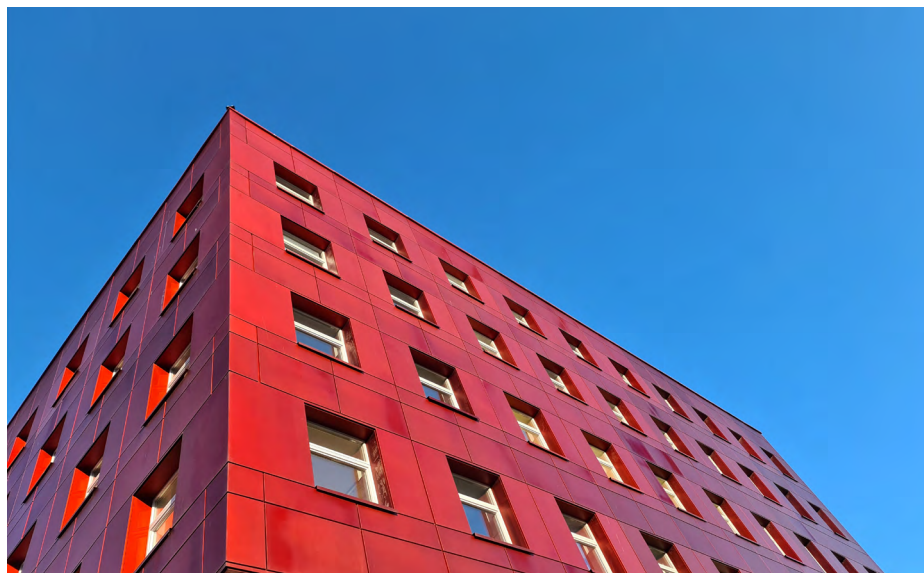




The Australian, state and territory Education Ministers agreed to changes to the National Quality Framework (NQF) in relation to services in multi-storey buildings.

New requirements apply to services in multi-storey buildings shared with other occupants and do not have direct egress.

MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS: EVACUATIONS AND APPROVALS



WHEN DO THE CHANGES START?

These will take effect from 1 October 2023.

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

Visit [nqfreview.com.au](https://www.nqfreview.com.au)

Contact your [regulatory authority](#)

WHY ARE THE REQUIREMENTS CHANGING?

Multi-storey buildings shared with other occupants present additional evacuation risks for children, particularly when services are located above ground level. The evacuation of children, infants and non-ambulatory children takes longer than the evacuation of adults, and extra planning and care is required to ensure the safe exit of children during emergencies.

Regulatory Authorities have identified an increase in the number of applications for service approvals related to premises in multi-storey buildings with three or more storeys (including the ground floor). There is also an increasing number of family day care residences in apartment blocks.

The 2019 National Quality Framework Review found that additional safeguards are required in education and care services in multi-storey buildings with other occupants in the building to keep children safe during emergency evacuations.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES?

Service approval applications – FDC services and centre-based services

A service approval application for a centre-based service or a family day care service (that includes a request for approval of a venue) where the education and care service premises is proposed to be located in a multi-storey building shared with other occupants, must include the following information:

- the storey(s) on which the premises will be located;
- if the service premises will be located on more than one storey, the ages of the children to be educated and cared for on each storey;
- the total number of storeys in the building.

For an application for an amendment to a service approval for a family day care service that includes a request for approval of a family day care venue, the application must include whether the venue is proposed to be located within a multi-storey building shared with other occupants. If so, the information above must also be included.

In determining the service approval application, the Regulatory Authority must consider, for each storey on which the service is located, whether there is direct egress to an assembly area that allows the safe evacuation of children, including infants and non-ambulatory children.

Risk assessments for family day care residences and venues

When assessing a family day care residence or venue located in a multi-storey building shared with other occupants, the approved provider must consider for each storey on which the residence or venue is located, whether there is direct egress to an assembly area that allows the safe evacuation of all children, including non-ambulatory children.

Emergency and evacuation policies and procedures – centre based services only

A centre-based service located in a multi-storey building shared with other occupants and on a floor that does not have direct egress to an assembly area must ensure that its emergency and evacuation procedures include the following information:

- all possible evacuation routes from each storey on which the premises is located;
- the evacuation routes that are proposed to be used in an evacuation;
- how all children, including non-ambulatory children, will be safely evacuated. Policies and procedures should also address how young children and infants will be safely evacuated;
- the stages in which an evacuation will be carried out;
- the identity of the person-in-charge of an evacuation;
- staff roles and responsibilities during an evacuation; and
- arrangements made with other occupants of the building in relation to evacuation.

These procedures should be developed with reference to the emergency and evacuation procedures for the whole building.

The approved provider must review the risk assessment required under regulation 97(2) at least once every 12 months, or as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the safe evacuation of children. A review should assess whether all children can be safely evacuated from the building, including infants and non-ambulatory children.

As soon as practicable after reviewing the risk assessment, the approved provider must make any necessary updates to the emergency and evacuation procedures.

Failing to review the risk assessment carries a penalty of \$2,200 and may attract a compliance direction. Failing to update the emergency and evacuation procedures attracts a penalty of \$2,200.

KEY TERMS

‘Multi-storey building’ refers to a building with more than two storeys, including the ground floor. Each level of a split level storey (or a mezzanine) is counted as one storey. For these purposes, the ground floor is the first storey, the first floor is the second storey, and so forth.

‘Direct egress’ means the ability to move and directly exit to an assembly area that is at the same level as the education and care service and is outside the premises and away from the building. This does not include travelling through sets of stairs (including fire isolated stairwells), busy occupied areas, traffic or other hazards, or obstructions.

For example, a centre-based service, family day care residence or venue is located on the second storey of a multi-storey building. The building is on sloping land, which means that the service, residence or venue has direct access to the outdoors at ground level (without the need to travel up or down any stairs) which leads to the assembly area(s) outside the education and care premises and building.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- ACECQA [The Guide to the NQF](#) – Sections [2.2](#), [2.4](#), [2.10](#) and [3.16](#)
- For information contact your [regulatory authority](#)

Acknowledgment: The information in this publication is accurate pending the Australian, state and territory education ministers’ agreement of the amended law and regulations.