

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
-

This Standard was issued in draft form for comment as DR 06729.

Standards Australia wishes to acknowledge the participation of the expert individuals that contributed to the development of this Standard through their representation on the Committee and through the public comment period.

Keeping Standards up-to-date

Australian Standards® are living documents that reflect progress in science, technology and systems. To maintain their currency, all Standards are periodically reviewed, and new editions are published. Between editions, amendments may be issued.

Standards may also be withdrawn. It is important that readers assure themselves they are using a current Standard, which should include any amendments that may have been published since the Standard was published.

Detailed information about Australian Standards, drafts, amendments and new projects can be found by visiting **www.standards.org.au**

Standards Australia welcomes suggestions for improvements, and encourages readers to notify us immediately of any apparent inaccuracies or ambiguities. Contact us via email at **mail@standards.org.au**, or write to Standards Australia, GPO Box 476, Sydney, NSW 2001.

Australian Standard[®]

Inspection of buildings

Part 1: Pre-purchase inspections— Residential buildings

Originated as AS 4349.1—1995.
Second edition 2007.

COPYRIGHT

© Standards Australia

All rights are reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by Standards Australia GPO Box 476, Sydney, NSW 2001, Australia

ISBN 0 7337 8504 2

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.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
FOREWORD.....	5
SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL	
1.1 SCOPE	6
1.2 LIMITATIONS OF STANDARD	7
1.3 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS	7
1.4 DEFINITIONS	7
SECTION 2 INSPECTION AGREEMENT	
2.1 GENERAL	9
2.2 PURPOSE OF INSPECTION	9
2.3 SCOPE OF INSPECTION	9
SECTION 3 INSPECTION	
3.1 GENERAL	12
3.2 AREAS TO BE INSPECTED	12
3.3 DEFECTS	13
3.4 INSPECTION RECORDS	14
SECTION 4 THE REPORT	
4.1 GENERAL	15
4.2 REPORT CONTENT	15
APPENDICES	
A PRE-PURCHASE STRUCTURAL INSPECTION	18
B STRATA AND COMPANY TITLE PROPERTY INSPECTION	19
C BUILDING ELEMENTS AND SERVICES TO BE INSPECTED	20
D EXCLUSION OF ITEMS FROM INSPECTION	25
E CRACKING OF BUILDING ELEMENTS	27
F TYPES AND EXAMPLES OF DEFECTS	29

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.