

Better Apartments in Neighbourhoods

Community Fact Sheet



Creating Better Apartments in Neighbourhoods

The government is updating the Better Apartments Design Standards

What are we doing?

More Victorians are choosing apartments to be their homes. This is not only because of affordability, but also because of convenience and access to jobs and services.

To look after our city's liveability, the Victorian Government committed to updating the planning rules to create better apartments in our neighbourhoods.

In 2018, the Victorian Government made an election commitment to improve the external amenity of apartment buildings.

The updated standards focus on the external amenity impacts of apartment buildings and aim to create better apartment buildings in our neighbourhoods.

The benefits of the updated design standards will be that:

- More apartment buildings will need to provide green open space for residents and contribute to neighbourhood amenity;
- Apartment buildings will better respond to changing population trends, including more families choosing to live in apartments;
- Apartment buildings will be built using high-quality building facades made from durable materials;
- Buildings will have attractive and engaging street frontages that are safe and useable for pedestrians and cyclists; and
- Tall buildings will be designed so they do not cause excessive wind for pedestrians and users of nearby public spaces.

The updated Standards can be viewed in full at <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/better-apartments>

Consultation

Public consultation on the external amenity standards was undertaken in August 2019 which revealed broad support for the updated standards from the community.

The consultation report can be viewed here: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/building-better-apartments-in-neighbourhoods>

The Better Apartments Design Standards address four main policy aims:

- Provision of communal green space and improved landscaping;
- Use of high-quality building facades;
- Protection of streets from wind impacts; and
- Creation of attractive and engaging street frontages.

Addressing the issues

Communal open space should be provided in common areas of buildings of 10 dwellings or more to improve residents' health and wellbeing and provide urban cooling. It should be accessible, functional and easy to maintain. The current standard for communal open space applies to buildings of 40 dwellings or more.

Landscaping should not be an afterthought in building design and planning but incorporated from the beginning of the process. Canopy trees should have enough space so that they thrive.

Building façades should be of a high quality, incorporating materials that are durable and making a positive contribution to the existing streetscape.

Publicly accessible outdoor space within an apartment development or on surrounding streets should not have unacceptable wind impacts, as they create unpleasant spaces to walk and congregate.

Street frontages should avoid blank walls or high fences. Car parking entrances and waste collection areas should not be visible from the street.

Why are the external amenity standards being introduced?

More than ever, 2020 showed us that all homes need to have access to air, nature, sunlight, and personal spaces.

Our cities are growing at an astounding pace, and people still want to live near services and transport for convenience. Apartments that are well designed with natural light and greenery will provide more housing choices close to services and transport and respond to changing housing needs.

Apartment buildings can last for 50-100 years and the changes will help to create quality homes that are an asset to the neighbourhood.

Updates to balcony requirements

North and south facing balconies can excessively overshadow living rooms and bedrooms in apartments below. Balconies on tall apartment buildings can also have poor levels of amenity due to wind conditions.

The government is updating the planning rules so that in places where balconies tend to be windy or overshadow living spaces, there will be the option to reduce balcony overhangs to improve the energy performance of apartments while retaining their functionality.

On tall buildings, balconies may alternatively be provided as additional space in a living room and/or bedroom. The extra space might provide a place to work from home, space for children's play, or a concealed laundry and drying space.

When will the standards come into effect?

The Victorian Government is releasing a preview of the standards now and will commence the new planning rules later in 2021. The updated standards will not apply to applications lodged before the updated standards come into operation.

To learn more

Visit <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/better-apartments>

To discuss further

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