

Balustrades



WELLINGTON
SHIRE COUNCIL
The Heart of Gippsland

Regular Maintenance is a Must

Balconies, if not suitably maintained and constantly monitored, can fail in spectacular fashion especially when a large number of people have gathered on the structure.

Agents, and anybody buying a property, would be well advised to ask vendors for the details of any building permits issued for the building of the balcony or deck to ensure that it was legally approved. Timber and concrete balconies which are exposed to the elements, require constant checking and where necessary maintenance to be carried out. This is particularly so in coastal areas due to the high content of salt laden air.

Anyone who has a home with a balcony that is in disrepair and which collapses injuring people or themselves could find themselves in no mans' land with insurance claims. This could leave them exposed to self funding any damage claims for injuries sustained to themselves or others.

If you are undertaking minor repairs to your existing handrail using the same material and sizes, a Building Permit will generally not be required. If you intend to reconstruct the handrails and the structural members of the deck or the design changes you must obtain a Building Permit before the work commences.

To help protect home owners and prospective home buyers Archicentre as part of the campaign have released a special free balcony checklist. Click here to view that list www.archicentre.com.au/Balconytips.pdf

Technical Details

The Building Code of Australia details the deemed-to-satisfy provisions when constructing balustrades and requires that a continuous balustrade or other barrier be provided along the side of any roof to which public access is provided, any stairway or ramp, any floor, corridor, hallway, balcony, verandah, mezzanine, access bridge or the like and along the side of any path of access to a building if:

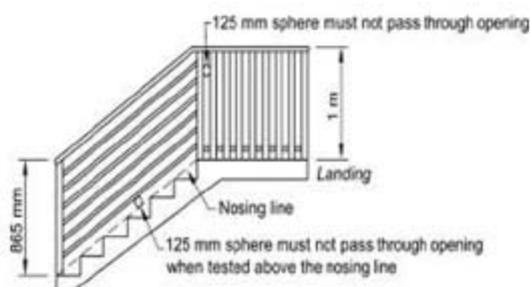
- it is not bounded by a wall; and
- any level is more than 1 m above the surface beneath

The height of a balustrade or other barrier must be in accordance with the following:

The height must not be less than 865 mm above the nosings of the stair treads or the floor of a ramp. For balconies and verandahs the height must not be less than 1 m above the finished floor surface.

Openings in balustrades (including decorative balustrades) or other barriers must be constructed so that any opening does not permit a 125 mm sphere to pass through it and for stairs, the space is tested above the nosing line.

A balustrade or other barrier must be designed to take loading forces in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards.



For floors more than 4 m above the surface beneath, any horizontal elements within the balustrade or other barrier between 150 mm and 760 mm above the floor must not facilitate climbing.

Use of Wire Balustrades

The change to make balustrades an architectural feature of buildings within the Shire has seen a shift from the traditional horizontal or vertical timber rails to either glazed panels or to the more popular wire.

The Building Code of Australia which stipulates most technical construction details for buildings has recently been amended to give a comprehensive guide to the tensions, spacings and wire type for this type of construction.

Remember, check at regular intervals the structural adequacy of your handrails and load bearing members of your verandah or deck. If you intend to rebuild any portion of them, ensure that you have obtained a building permit before you, your handyman or builder starts the work.

If you require any further information about anything included in this fact file, please contact the Statutory Building Team of the Wellington Shire Council on Ph. 03 5142 3414 or 1300 366 244.

