

## FIRE SEPARATION

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### ISSUE

The Building Services Authority (BSA) is receiving an increasing number of complaints over fire separation walls in town houses and multiple dwellings. Investigations by BSA Inspectors have revealed that the construction of separating walls for fire protection is commonly falling well short of that prescribed by the Building Code of Australia (BSA) and manufacturer's specifications.



### OBSERVATION

Major issues involving fire separation include:

- Binders for trusses being carried through fire separating walls
- Numerous penetrations being made through separating walls with little consideration given to protection
- Separating walls not being carried through to the underside of roof sheeting
- and packed with an appropriate fire resistant material to manufacturer's specifications
- Gaps not being packed between separating walls and masonry veneer walls
- Inadequate protection to roof spaces of eaves, verandahs and similar spaces that are common to more than one unit/dwelling



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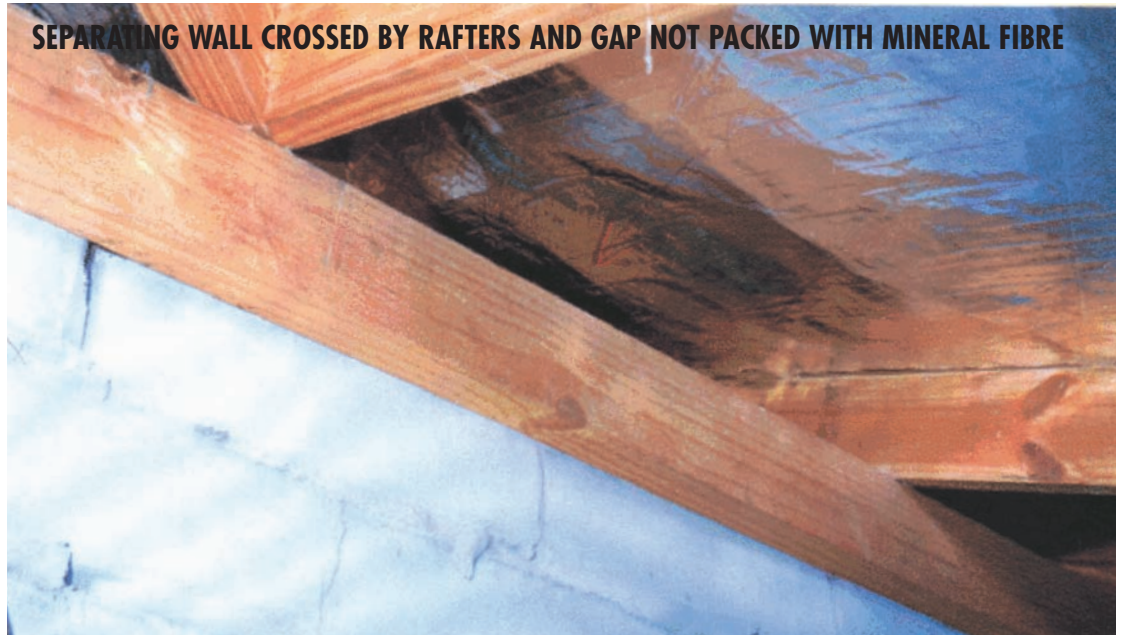
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### SEPARATING WALL CROSSED BY RAFTERS AND GAP NOT PACKED WITH MINERAL FIBRE



### REASON FOR FAILURE

Many building contractors have overlooked the attention to detail of approved building plans, specification and manufacturer's specification when constructing separating walls.

One main reason that appears to be apparent is that contractors do not have an understanding of the requirements of the BCA.

### CORRECTIVE MEASURES

Fire separation must achieve compliance with the Performance Requirement of the BCA:

P2.3.1 Protection from the spread of fire requires:

(a) A Class 1 building must be protected from the spread of fire from-

(i) Another building other than an associated Class 10 building; and

(ii) The allotment boundary, other than a boundary adjoining a road or public space

One method of construction to meet this Performance Requirement is the Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions of the BCA 3.7.1.8, which states that separating walls between

Class 1 dwellings must have a fire-resistant level (FRL) of not less than 60/60/60 and commence at the footings and extend to the underside of a non-combustible roof covering.

This separating wall must not be crossed by timber or other combustible building elements except for roof battens with dimensions of 75 x 50 mm. Any gaps between the top of the wall and the underside of the roof covering packed with mineral fibre or other suitable fire-resistant material.

### PREVENTION

Strict compliance with the Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions of the BCA and adequate supervision and attendance of sub-trades performing this form of construction will assist in preventing unnecessary building defects and expensive callbacks from disgruntled clients.

### REFERENCES

The Building Code of Australia – Volume Two