

[Received by email from Andrew Montgomery, Director of Australian Asset Management Pty Ltd, Engineers and Building Surveyors]

Comments on the Building Code of Australia (BCA)

Current BCA purchasing and subscription arrangements are through Standards Australia and or Canprint communications Pty Ltd.

Cost:

Standards Australia charge for the BCA plus Referenced Standards \$800.00 - \$1100.00.

Canprint charge for the BCA only + access on line \$220.00

The issues that Architects, Building Surveyors, Builders, Engineers, Lawyers etc working in the Building Construction Industry have with the above is that the ABCB has instructed their selling agents to insert a “drop dead” date, which prevents the user from accessing the CD after the set date.

Building professionals are required to access this information beyond the “drop dead” date for the following reasons:

- Building projects run for more than one year. Their Building Approval locks the project to the applicable BCA amendment and the referenced standards. During the construction phase and at the completion of the project the finished product has to be checked for compliance with the BCA.
- Architects are required to design their projects so that they are compliant with BCA, but as the section relevant to their profession do not change greatly from one year to the next they do not need to renew their subscriptions annually to be compliant.
- As engineers of all disciplines are required to access referenced standards during the design stage of the project, which can last more than the one-year. Many smaller practices cannot afford the luxury of renewing their subscriptions annually, as standards are not amended on such a regular basis.
- Building Surveyors on the other hand must be across all of the amendments and changes. Building Surveyors issue building approvals, conduct mandatory inspections and issue final Certificates. They therefore need to be able to access the relevant BCA amendment for the duration of the project.
- Builders are in a similar category as Architects and Engineers and do not need to update the BCA on a regular basis.
- The legal practitioners and expert witness professionals are in need to access the BCA and the referenced standards from 1998 and even earlier.

A further argument for not having a “drop dead” on the CD is that this is not made known in the literature provide to customers. The literature that is provided by Standards Australia is, BCA Installation and Getting Started Guide, a letter which states the serial number and an invoice, none of these documents have any information which advise a purchaser that the product will only last one year.

Licence Agreement contained in the Installation guide Paragraph 6 states:

This licence is effective until terminated. The Licence will terminate automatically without notice if the Licensee fails to comply with any provisions of this licence.

There is no other term or implied term that the licence will automatically expire at the end of a 12month period.

Other products, such as accounting packages, computer programs etc do not have a twelve-month life.

A further issue is with the Guide to the BCA, which is almost verbatim to the text in the BCA. The support given is not generally helpful as it does not provide adequate examples or definitions of words.

In conclusion I wish to express my disappointment that after paying for the electronic version of the BCA that it can only be use for a twelve-month period. I am also amazed with the response that one encounters when trying to contact the ABCB by phone, in that one cannot be put through to a technical officer directly but is advised that the first available officer will contact you within 24hrs.