

Solar access requirements in SEPP 65

This technical note provides guidance on the application of the solar access requirements of *State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 - Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development* (SEPP 65) and the Apartment Design Guide.

Solar and daylight access for residential apartment developments

Section 4A Solar and Daylight Access of the Apartment Design Guide sets out a range of objectives, design criteria and design guidance to ensure that habitable rooms and private open spaces achieve sufficient solar access for the enjoyment of residents.

Access to sunlight within apartments and private open spaces is measured at mid winter (21 June) as this is when the sun is lowest in the sky. This represents the 'worst case' scenario for solar access.

Key terms relating to solar and daylight access

Solar access is the ability of a building to receive direct sunlight without obstruction from other buildings or impediments, not including trees.

Sunlight is direct beam radiation from the sun.

Daylight consists of sunlight and diffuse light from the sky. Daylight changes with the time of day, season and weather conditions.

Quantifying solar and daylight access

Direct sunlight into living rooms and private open spaces is a key factor influencing residential amenity for apartments. It is beneficial for residents to experience the light and warmth of the sun in their living environment. It also reduces reliance on artificial lighting and heating, improving energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

Part 4A of the Apartment Design Guide provides three objectives and a range of guidance for solar and daylight access. They deal with optimising sunlight to living rooms and private open space, solar access in circumstances where sunlight is limited and shading and glare control.

The aim of the first - Objective 4A-1 is:

To optimize the number of apartments receiving sunlight to habitable rooms, primary windows and private open space

Three design criteria set out measurable requirements for achieving this objective in apartment developments, as follows:

1. *Living rooms and private open spaces of at least 70% of apartments in a building receive a minimum of 2 hours direct sunlight between 9am and 3pm at mid winter in the Sydney Metropolitan Area and in the Newcastle and Wollongong local government areas*
2. *In all other areas, living rooms and private open spaces of at least 70% of apartments in a building receive a minimum of 3 hours direct sunlight between 9am and 3pm at mid winter*
3. *A maximum of 15% of apartments in a building receive no direct sunlight between 9am and 3pm at mid winter*

Design guidance set out under this objective provide supplementary advice on design responses that can be used to achieve this objective and criteria.

One guidance deals with measuring direct sunlight:

To maximise the benefit to residents of direct sunlight within living rooms and private open spaces, a minimum of 1m² of direct sunlight, measured at 1m above floor level, is achieved for at least 15 minutes

Purpose of the guidance on measuring direct sunlight

This guidance is provided as the amount and location of sunlight will vary during the 2 or 3 hour time period that applies. It quantifies an amount of sunlight that will be useable and provide real benefits to residents within the 2 or 3 hour period. It means that this amount of sunlight will be provided at a point within the 2 or 3 hour period so that a resident can for instance pull up a chair and read a book in the sunlight in their living room/private open space.

How is the guidance applied and measured

It is important to note the guidance does not replace or override the design criteria for 70% of apartments to achieve either 2 or 3 hours of direct sunlight. It is a tool to measure the adequacy of the sunlight provided within this period.

This guidance may be used when the adequacy of sunlight to an apartment within the 2 or 3 hours is in question, or in determining whether living rooms and private open spaces receive no direct sunlight. It is not intended for applications to demonstrate compliance with this design guidance for every apartment, or every application if the adequacy of sunlight is not in question.

The quantity of direct sunlight within the living room or private open space can be demonstrated, where required, on a vertical plane using the view from the sun technique.

Further Information

Additional guidance on the application of the Apartment Design Guide and the intended application of its objectives, design criteria and design guidance, can be found in Introduction to the Guide.

For further information please contact the Department of Planning and Environment's information centre on 1300 305 695 or email sepp65@planning.nsw.gov.au