

A message from the Construction Occupations Registrar

Construction Note: 2022/13

Wet Areas

The Registrar is aware of, and concerned by, an increase in the incorrect application of waterproofing and water-resistant systems in wet areas within Class 1 buildings. In many cases, wet area waterproofing and water-resistance details are not being included in building approval documentation.

The correct design and application of waterproofing and water-resistant systems in residential wet areas are essential to maintaining occupant health and amenity, as well as preserving the structural integrity and long-term performance of the building.

The following requirements must be met when a wet area is constructed

Building Act 2004 Section 28A & Section 151 - Minimum Documentation requirements for building lodgement Class 1 & 10 – Residential Construction

Wet areas construction details including waterproofing and water resistance details are required to be submitted as part of the building approval specific to:

- materials and system
- wet areas specification (extent and system e.g. -membrane, manufacturer, and type)
- location and design of wet areas

Note: for clarity of compliance, wet area details should be specific to each individual project and not a generic specification.

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Objectives H4O1

The Objective is to safeguard the occupants from illness or injury and protect the building from damage caused by the accumulation of internal moisture arising from the use of wet areas in a building.

Functional Statement H4F1

A building is to be constructed to avoid the likelihood of— the creation of any unhealthy or dangerous conditions; or (a) damage to building elements, (b) caused by dampness or water overflow from bathrooms, laundries and the like.

Performance Requirement H4P1

To protect the structure of the building and to maintain the amenity of the occupants, water must be prevented from penetrating— behind fittings and linings; or (a) into concealed spaces, (b) of sanitary facilities, bathrooms, laundries and the like.

Deemed to Satisfy Provision H4D2

Compliance with AS 3740 or Part 10.2 of the ABCB Housing Provisions satisfies Performance Requirement H4P1 for wet areas provided the wet areas are protected in accordance with the appropriate requirements of 10.2.1 to 10.2.6 and 10.2.12 of the ABCB Housing Provisions.

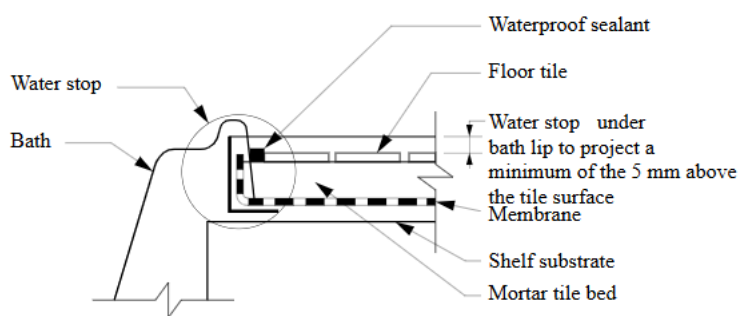
Access Canberra building inspectors have found continuing non-compliance relating to the below identified issues

10.2.4 Areas adjacent to baths and spas without showers

(3) For inserted baths and spas, the following applies:

(a) For floors and horizontal surfaces:

- (i) Any shelf area adjoining the bath or spa must be waterproof and include a waterstop under the vessel lip.



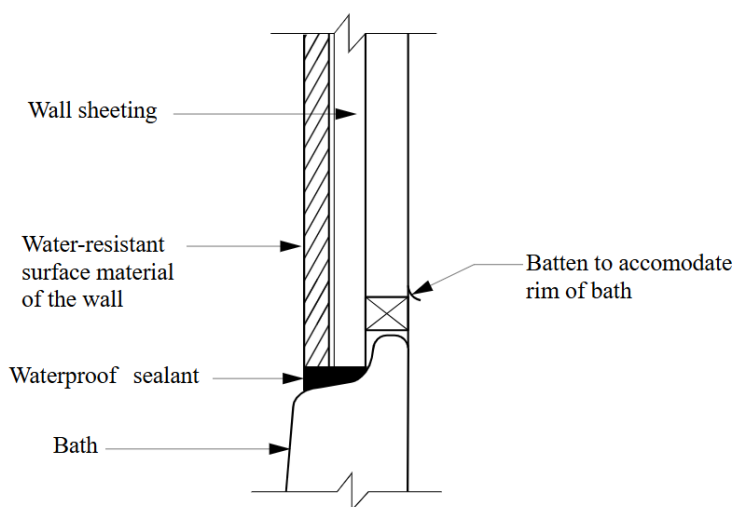
(c) Bath/shelf junction

- Building inspectors are finding reoccurring instances where bathtubs installed on hobs are not being waterproofed correctly, with the required waterstop under the lip not being installed.

10.2.20 Baths and Spas

Baths and spas, except freestanding baths and spas, must—

- (a) Have an upturn lip(see figure below); and
- (b) Be recessed into the wall (see figure below); and
- (c) Have the water resistant substrate materials of the wall pass down the inside lip (see figure below)



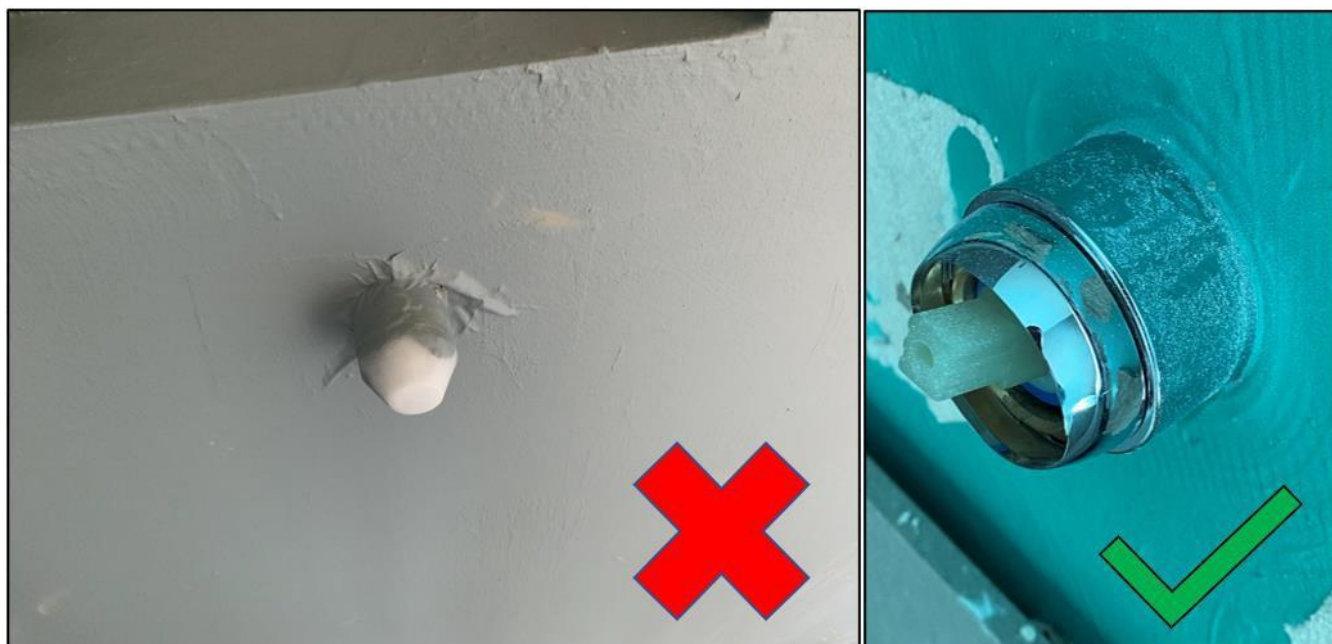
(b) Bath/wall junction - battened

- Building inspectors are finding non-compliances, mostly relating to steel framed houses, where the frame is not battened as required to allow the water resistant substrate to pass down inside the upturn lip.

10.2.23 Penetrations

Penetrations within shower areas must comply with the following:

- (a) for taps, shower nozzles and the like must be waterproofed by sealing with—
 - (i) Sealants; or
 - (ii) proprietary flange systems; or
 - (iii) a combination of (i) and (ii).
- (b) The spindle housing of the tap body must be able to be removed to enable replacement of the washer without damaging the seal.
- (c) The following must be waterproofed:
 - (i) All penetrations due to mechanical fixings or fastenings of substrate materials.
 - (ii) Any penetration of the surface materials due to mechanical fixings or fastenings.
 - (iii) Recessed soap holders (niches) and the like.
- (d) Tap and spout penetrations on horizontal surfaces surrounding baths and spas must be waterproofed by—
 - (i) Sealing the tap body to the substrate with sealants; or
 - (ii) proprietary flange systems.



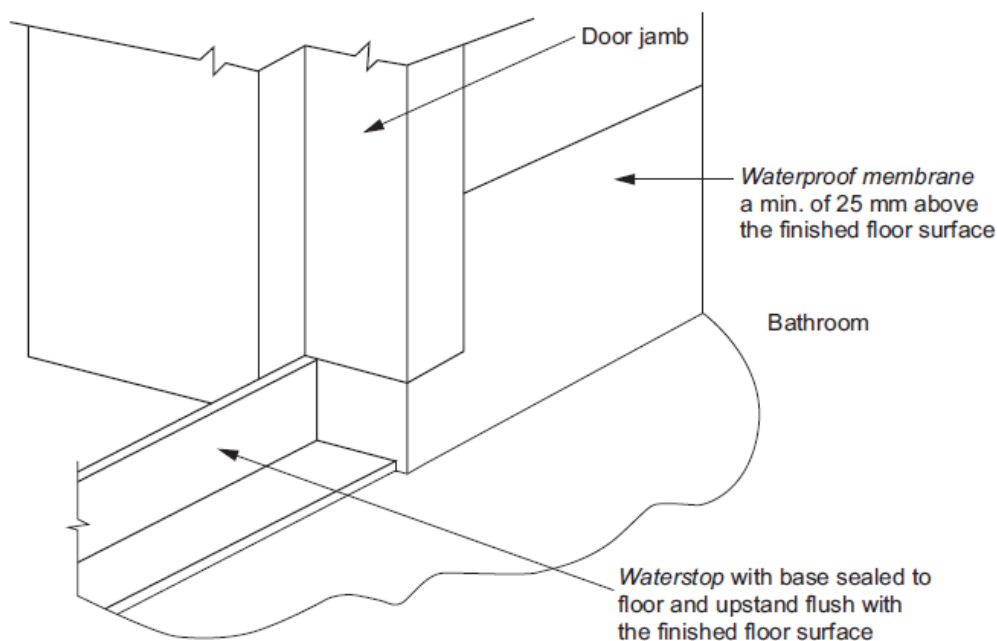
- Building inspectors are continually finding sites where the waterproofing has been sealed to the protective caps of mixer bodies. When the cap is removed, the seal is broken and allows water penetration behind the wall linings.

Protection caps must be removed prior to waterproofing

10.2.24 Flashings/junctions

Flashings must be installed in accordance with 10.2.2 to 10.2.5 and the following (refer to below):

- (c) Perimeter flashings at a floor level opening must comply with the following:
 - (i) Where the whole wet area floor is waterproof, at floor level openings, a waterstop must be installed that has a vertical leg finishing flush with the top of the finished floor level with the floor membrane being terminated to create a waterproof seal to the waterstop and to the perimeter flashing.
 - (ii) In any other case, at a floor level opening a waterstop must be installed that has a vertical leg finishing flush with the top of the finished floor level and waterproofed to the perimeter flashing.



(b) Prior to installation of architrave

- Building inspectors continue to find non-compliance due to the required waterstop angle not being installed across doorways. A tile angle installed as tiles are laid does not satisfy the requirements for a waterstop.

Recommendations

It is recommended building certifiers ensure adequate documentation is submitted with the building approval as required under *Building Act 2004 Section 28A & Section 151* - Minimum Documentation requirements for building lodgement Class 1 & 10 – Residential Construction.

Builders should supervise and inspect waterproofing to ensure compliance prior to proceeding with tiling and fitout.

Enforcement Action

Where identified, insufficient or incorrect waterproofing of wet areas and lack of documentation may result in the issuance of a Stop Work Notice in accordance with section 53 of the *Building Act 2004*, and formal licensing action including issuing of demerit points in accordance with section 55 of the *Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act 2004*.

Construction notes have been developed to raise awareness and educate the building and construction industry about common issues identified on building sites and best practice approaches to address them. The issues outlined in these notes have been identified through compliance assessment by Access Canberra or following a complaint from owners. Importantly, we welcome your input, if you have come across an issue that needs clarification or to provide feedback email us: BBS@act.gov.au or call 02 6205 2244.