

Retaining walls

A retaining wall is a wall which holds back or supports soil when the natural ground level has been altered.

When a person cuts into the natural ground level the soil on the high side is to be prevented from collapsing with use of a wall.

Alternatively, when a person fills or provides extra soil where the natural ground slopes downwards, (to make it level) then the additional fill needs to be prevented from moving further down the incline. This again is achieved with the use of a wall.

Fences are not to be used as retaining walls unless designed as such by a structural engineer, and where council approval are obtained.

The owner of the land where the natural lie of the land is responsible to provide a retaining wall. However, where both property owner alter the land, they would be jointly responsible.

Altering the land includes cutting into (excavating and taking soil way) or filling (adding and importing soil).

The National Construction Code

The National Construction Code (NCC) is a document utilised in the assessment for building works. It contains objectives, performance requirements and details provisions that will satisfy the performance requirements (called Deemed -to-satisfy provisions).

The objective is to-

1. Safeguard people from injury caused by structural failure; and
2. Safeguard people from loss of amenity caused by structural behaviour; and
3. Protect other property from physical damage caused by structural failure.

A building or structure is to withstand the combination of loads and other actions to which it may be reasonably subjected.

Earthworks need to be carried out safely and avoid potential damage to adjoining structures and property through the soil collapsing or subsiding during building works. Exceptional site conditions (including the effects of torrential rain) may need special consideration. The characteristics of a site are individual and the NCC requirements are general requirements for normal sites conditions. Further advice in relation to the requirements of the NCC and the associated Australian Standards should be sought from certified building surveyor.

For further information on earthworks under the NCC refer to Part 3.1.1 Earthworks.

Director Determinations Tasmania

Director of Building Control Tasmania Section 20(1)(a) of the Building Act 2016 -Director's Determinations Standard Limitations apply to cut or fill requirements.

Standard Limitations

These limitations are mandatory requirements (where applicable).

They must be reviewed and considered before undertaking any Category 1 or Category 2 work.

If the work does not comply with the Standard Limitations the work is not deemed Low Risk.

Cut or fill limits (Low Risk Work)

By Owner or a Competent Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 1.5m from an allotment boundary – maximum cut or fill is 500mm • More than 1.5m from an allotment boundary – maximum cut or fill is 1.2m
By a Licensed Builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 1.5m from an allotment boundary – maximum cut or fill is 500mm • More than 1.5m from an allotment boundary – maximum cut or fill is 1.8m.