LIVING IN SHEDS

People often enquire about living in sheds or a temporary home as it is regularly seen as a cost effective & money saving option or an alternative to occupy land while planning or building a dwelling.

More than often this turns out to not be the most cost effective choice and residents can fall into the trap of a shed or temporary home becoming permanent causing further problems down the track.

The idea may start out to live in the shed while a dwelling is being built or for weekend/holiday stays, but circumstances change and the money spent on making the shed comfortable can prevent ever making a start on a new house.

Am I allowed to live in a shed?

No, it is actually illegal to live in a shed, garage or temporary home for residential purposes. Under the building code, residential buildings or a dwelling requires a higher standard of construction than sheds, especially in cyclonic areas.

Council may approve a "Temporary Occupancy Permit" for sheds and garages for limited periods while a dwelling is being built subject to conditions.

Why live in a shed?

While building a shed may seem like a cheaper option in theory it can often turn out to be more expensive in the long run. The cost of setting up a temporary kitchen, laundry, bathroom and toilet facilities can be quite significant, and these are all required when setting up temporary accommodation.

Sheds are not the most comfortable living, they can typically be very hot in summer and quite cold in winter, they are also very difficult to seal against insects and vermin.

It may be a better option to build a small dwelling rather than a 'liveable' shed as the finished value of a dwelling will far exceed the value of a shed set up for occupation.

How do I build a small house on a limited budget?

Keep the design minimal, prevent from making the floor area too big and only put in the necessities required.

The minimum facilities required are a kitchen sink & food preparation area, laundry tub and space for a washing machine, toilet, shower and basin.

A good thing to remember is that a small dwelling can always be converted into a bedroom, studio or shed by removing the kitchen sink and/or laundry tub. This allows options and possibilities to extend on the dwelling later on down the track.
The Queensland Building Act 1975 and Building Code of Australia stipulate the minimum requirements for the construction of all buildings. Changing a shed into a dwelling is never a simple process and involves compliance with mandatory building requirements. Sheds are often not constructed with the same residential standards as houses and it is not always practical or economical to convert a shed into a dwelling.

**Step 1 -**
Contact Council’s Planning Services, Building & Plumbing Section to ensure that no restrictions apply to the siting and construction of a dwelling on your property.

**KEY ISSUES TO KEEP IN MIND**
- Flood Levels - Floor levels to be 300mm above Q100 flood level
- Site setback distances to comply with the Queensland Development Code

**Step 2 -**
Contact a Builder or Building Designer to arrange an on-site assessment of your property.

**KEY ISSUES TO KEEP IN MIND**
- Stormwater needs to be directed away from the building & must not affect neighbouring properties.
- Termite design to comply with Australian Standard 3660.1 (2000).
- A vapour barrier is required to prevent rising damp entering the building through the floor slab.
- Engineers certification including plans required confirming the building is structurally suitable to be changed from a shed into a Dwelling.
- An energy efficiency report required indicating the building will comply with Building Code requirements.
- Compliance with sustainability requirements for water conservation fittings, energy efficient lighting & hot water supply.
- Waterproofing of wet areas to comply with the Building Code of Australia.
- Waterproofing of external walls and roof.
- Owner builder permit or QBCC Insurance for building work – if applicable.
- Proof of payment of Long Service Levy – if applicable

**Step 3 -**
Contact Council’s Planning Services, Building & Plumbing Section to determine any requirements for sewage disposal on your property.

**Step 4 -**
Lodge a Building Application with Council. - IDAS Forms and a checklist outlining documentation required to be submitted with a Building Development Application are available online at [www.cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au](http://www.cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au) or from Council’s Planning Services, Building Section.