



# Set backs of cooktops in domestic kitchen assemblies

**This technical note responds to industry concern regarding the minimum clearance required at the back of a cooktop to a non-combustible surface. Changes in design of appliances as well as the specified carcass and worktop dimensions detailed in AS/NZS 4386.1:1996 are having an effect on rear clearances meeting the minimum requirements of fitted kitchen assemblies for use in domestic applications.**

## Background

The Building Commission has been advised that base cabinets are generally constructed having a depth of 580mm, including the thickness of the doors, and cooktops commonly require a cut out size of around 500mm +/- 20mm. Once the splashback material is installed, the required 50mm clearance at the rear of the unit cannot be achieved, which is contrary to the recommendation provided in Appendix C of AS/NZS 4386, Part 1.

Figure C5 Cooktops of Appendix C stipulates that, “clearances at the back of the cooktop to a non-combustible surface [should be a] Minimum 50mm from the back edge of the cooktop to a non-combustible wall surface or splashback”.

## Compliance standards

Kitchen assemblies designed for use in domestic applications should be manufactured in accordance with the requirements of AS/NZS 4386.1:1996 *Domestic kitchen assemblies*, Part 1: *Kitchen units* and installed in accordance with AS/NZS 4386.2:1996 *Domestic kitchen assemblies*, Part 2: *Installation*, unless specific dimensions are detailed in contract documents.

These two standards provide guiding principles for the construction, durability, safety, ergonomics, strength, coordination of components and installation of fitted kitchen assemblies for use in domestic applications.

Both of these standards are used by the Building Commission to determine whether or not components of the kitchen assembly, when not specified, have been constructed or installed in a proper and proficient manner.

Cooktop appliances are powered by either gas or electricity and each is regulated by a different Australian Standard.

The relevant Australian Standard for gas appliances is AS/NZS 5601.1-2013 *Gas installations*. AS/NZS 5601.1 specifies that the minimum clearance between a gas cooktop element or burner component is 200mm of horizontal distance to a vertical combustible surface. If this measurement cannot be met, the surface in question must be protected with a non-combustible material in accordance with Table C1 of Appendix C in AS/NZS 5601.1.

The relevant Australian Standard for electrical appliances is AS/NZS 3000 *Electrical installations* (known as the Australian/New Zealand Wiring Rules). This standard does not detail any requirements in regards to clearances around cooktops and therefore manufacturer's specifications, AS/NZS 4386 or contract dimensions would apply.

When designing kitchen cabinets, the cooktop size and location needs to be considered to ensure appliances are installed in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and relevant Australian Standards. Additionally, sufficient clearance around the back and sides of the appliance needs to be provided so that the worktop can be cleaned and maintained.

### **Is the 50mm clearance at the rear of the cooktop as specified in AS/NZS 4386 mandatory?**

No. The 50mm clearance dimension stipulated in Appendix C of AS/NZS 4386 Part 1 and Appendix A of Part 2 is referred to as a guideline only. The applicable section from each standard is detailed below:

These service zones are a guideline only. They refer to general information about each type of appliance. The overriding principle is to ensure easy access to any appliance connection without having to remove the appliance from its fitted position. In all cases it is recommended that the manufacturer's installation instructions are consulted for exact installation details. At the time of publication of this Standard the dimensions given in this Appendix were in accordance with the relevant gas and electric authorities. Reference should be made to the relevant electrical or gas authority to ensure compliance with their regulations.

### **Conclusions**

When assessing the compliance of a cooktop installed into a worktop relating to clearances, the Building Commission is of the opinion that the 50mm clearance specified in AS4386 can be reduced as long as the appliance is installed in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions. Should the cooktop be powered by gas, then AS/NZS 5601.1-2013 *Gas installations* requirements would override the manufacturer's installation instructions where there is any difference.

#### **Disclaimer**

The information contained in this bulletin is provided as general information only and should not be relied upon as legal advice or as an accurate statement of the relevant legislation provisions. If you are uncertain as to your legal obligations you should obtain independent legal advice.

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