The Industry Association of Building and Property Inspectors in WA Inc – Inspect WA	
Position Paper 7.2019 Title: Party/Fire Walls Terraced Town Houses, Semi Detached & WA Strata Units	
Subject	Party/Fire Walls in multi dwelling buildings - Impact on the structural integrity of a residential property when inspected and reported on within the context of a Pre Purchase Building Inspection conducted within the terms of AS 4349.1-2007.
Association Position	The lack of, defects in, or complete absence of a party/fire wall in a residential multi tenancy property is not to be reported as a major structural defect within the context of a Pre-Purchase Building Inspection conducted within the terms of AS 4349.1-2007.
Date Preparation Commenced	November 2019
Date Provisional Approval by Committee for Release to Members for Comment	November 2019
Final Approval by Committee and Release to Members	November 2019
Why was the Paper Released	That incomplete, bridged, or older party/fire walls in residential properties were being reported on occasions by some Building Inspectors as a major structural defects in pre purchase building inspection reports which were being prepared in accordance with AS 4349.1
Key Definitions	Party/Fire Walls Where adjacent homes & units share a common wall (party/fire wall) and potentially a common roof/roof space. The party wall is the dividing partition between the two adjoining buildings that is shared by the occupants of each residence or business. Party walls are for privacy, security, fire & smoke protection by separating each home / unit.
Party/Fire Walls	The party/fire wall should be an effective barrier to stop the transfer of fire from one unit to another for at least 60 minutes. To achieve this requirement the Australian Building Code requires essentially a fire rated wall to:- Commence from the footings or ground slabs and

	extends to the underside of a non-combustible roof covering, or If the building has a combustible roof covering, then the separating wall must extend to not less than 450 mm above the roof covering. A separating wall that extends to the underside of a non-combustible roof covering must not be crossed by timber or other combustible building elements, except for roof battens with dimensions of 75 x 50mm or less; or roof sarking. Any gap between the top of the wall and the underside of the roof covering must be packed with mineral fibre or other suitable fire resisting material. Eaves, verandahs and similar spaces that are open to the roof space and are common to more than one Class 1 dwelling must be separated by a non-combustible lining. Any service openings in a masonry separating wall must have a FRL of not less than -/60/60. FRL or Fire-Resistance Level is denoted with three figures, for example FRL 60/60/60, the first figure denotes a "structural adequacy" period of 60 minutes; the second figure denotes an "integrity" period of 60 minutes; and the third figure denotes an "insulation period of 60minutes. A dash indicates that there is no requirement for that criterion such as -/60/- where the criterion is 60 minutes for integrity only. The fire safety objective of party walls in Class 1 and 10a buildings is addressed in Volume 2 of the National Construction Code (NCC), and generally the requirements are to Safeguard the occupants from illness or injury by alerting them of a fire in the building so that they may safely evacuate, and avoid the spread of fire from one building to another. • For sole occupancy units in construction classes including Class 2 and 3 buildings, the fire safety objective of party walls (otherwise known as inter-tenancy walls) is addressed in Volume 1 of the NCC. The general requirements for these buildings are to safeguard people from illness or injury due to a fire in a building, safeguard occupants from illness or injury while evacuating a building during a fire, facilitate the activities of emergency services personnel, avoid the spread of fire between buildings and protect other property from physical damage caused by structural failure of a building as a result of

	fire. Therefore, a critical element of the party fire wall is that the wall must be constructed all the way up to the underside of the roof cover without any gaps. Under current building code requirements only the roof cover and roof batters can pass across the top of the party fire wall.
Gaps In, Party/Fire Walls	Where gaps are identified in the wall the gaps should be filled by inserting the missing bricks or filling the gaps with a fire rated material or mineral fibre, which provides a minimum of 1 hour protection.
Timbers Passing through Party/Fire Walls	The current requirements in regard Party/Fire walls have essentially existed in WA properties since 1988. However, in older WA properties some councils permitted roof timers (i.e. underpurlins, strutting beams) to pass through the walls. These timbers were generally hard wood and the walls were constructed tightly around the timber. While it would be difficult for fire to burn through the timber within one hour and enter the adjoining unit, timbers are no longer permitted to pass through these fire walls.
1961 Uniform Building Code	The WA Uniform Building By laws 1961 states the following: 264. In Party and Fire Walls.—A party or a fire wall shall be carried up to form a parapet except that a party wall separating residential flats of Class II Occupancy may be finished at the ceiling level of the topmost storey. "flat" means that portion of a building used or intended, adapted or designed for use as a separate tenement in a building containing two or more such tenements; Base on the above from 1961 it was possible to construct multi Lot tenancy dwellings without fire walls, hence the concept of timbers passing through the walls would not have been a significant issue as there was no requirement for these walls.

Major Defect AS 4391.1	A defect of sufficient magnitude where rectification has to be carried out in order to avoid unsafe conditions, loss of utility or further deterioration of the property.
Structural element AS 4349.1	Physically distinguishable part of a structure. NOTE: For example wall, columns, beam, connection
Structural defect AS 4349.1	Fault or deviation from the intended structural performance of a building element.
Safety Hazard AS 4349.1	The report shall identify any observed item that may constitute a present or imminent serious safety hazard
Structural Defect as defined by REIWA Australian Standard pre-purchase structural inspection condition	"Structural Defects" means a fault or deviation from the intended structural performance of a building element and is a major defect to the building structure of sufficient magnitude where rectification has to be carried out in order to avoid unsafe conditions, loss of utility, or further deterioration of the building structure. Structural defects do not include any non-structural element, e.g., roof plumbing and roof covering, general gas, water and sanitary plumbing, electrical wiring, partition walls, cabinetry, windows, doors, trims, fencing, minor structures, non-structural damp issues, ceiling linings, floor coverings, decorative finishes such as plastering, painting, tiling etc, general maintenance, or spalling of masonry, fretting or mortar rusting.
Scope of Inspection AS 4349.1 Appendix A Pere Purchase Structural Inspection	A3 SCOPE OF INSPECTION The inspection shall comprise visual assessment of accessible areas of the property to identify major defects to the building structure and to form an opinion regarding the general condition of the structure of the property NOTE: The structural report should not contain any assessment or an opinion regarding the following: (a) **Any non-structural element**, e.g., roof plumbing and roof covering, general gas, water and sanitary plumbing, electrical wiring, partition walls, cabinetry, windows, doors, trims, fencing, minor structures, non-structural damp issues, ceiling linings, floor coverings, decorative finishes such as plastering, painting, tiling, etc.

Key Conclusions	1)Where gaps are identified in the party/fire wall the gaps should be filled by inserting the missing bricks or filling the gaps with a fire rated material or mineral fibre, which provides a minimum of 1 hour protection. 2)This should not be classified as a Structural Defect however, where there are issues with the walls they may need to be remediated. In some case's significant issues with party/fire walls should be classified as a major non-structural defect and/or a safety issue.
Additional Observations	It is possible that during a pre purchase building inspection, issues with Party/Fire Walls may be identified. Where there are issues with the walls they may need to be remediated. In some case's significant issues with party/fire walls might be classified as a major non-structural defect indicating and/or a safety issue. Where a property is being purchased in accordance with the REIWA Australian Standard Pre-Purchase Structural Inspection Condition Annexure which is based on AS 4349.1 major structural defect will generally relate to the structural elements. Where issues with party/fire walls are identified in a home during a pre purchase building inspection, this should be nominated as a Major Non Structural defect and / or a Safety issue.

Signed Chairman
The Industry Association of Building and Property Inspectors in WA – Inspect WA

1. Public Release Template

Public Release – Position Paper 7.2019 – November 2019

The Industry Association of Building and Property Inspectors in WA Inc – Inspect WA is pleased to announce the release of its Position Paper on:-
Residential Party/Fire Walls

Background

The following key issue that contributed to the release of this Position Paper:

That Incomplete, Bridged, or Older Party/Fire Walls in residential properties were being reported on occasions by some Building Inspectors as a Major Structural defect in pre purchase building inspection reports which were being prepared in accordance with AS 4349.1

The Associations position is:

1) The lack of, defects in or complete absence of a party/fire wall in a residential multi tenancy property is not to be reported as a major structural defect within the context of a Pre-Purchase Building Inspection conducted within the terms of AS 4349.1-2007.

2) Where lack of, defects in or complete absence of a party/fire wall gaps are identified the report should recommend remediation. Remediation would generally involve by inserting the missing bricks and or filling the gaps with a fire rated material or mineral fibre, which provides a minimum of 1 hour protection.

3) The Association recommends that it's Building Inspector Members do not report absent, incomplete or, bridged party/fire Walls as a major structural defect when producing a report in accordance with AS 4349.1.

Committee