POLICY REGISTER

RESIDENTIAL SLABS AND FOOTINGS

Amended:	22.5.2025
Policy adopted:	27.8.98 – Minute No 286.8.98
File Ref:	B4-1

Issue	Prepared/Revised By and Date	Action/Amendment Description	Approved By and Date
1.0		First Edition	Council Minute No. (286.8.98)
1.1	Maryanne Stephens May 2025	Amended	Council Minute No. (

OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure that building sites are appropriately classified in accordance with AS 2870 – Residential Slabs and Footings – Construction.

   The stability and long-term performance of a residential building's foundation depend heavily on the type of soil and ground conditions at the building site. The Australian Standard AS 2870 provides a nationally recognised method for classifying sites based on the soil's reactivity, drainage capacity, and likelihood of movement.

   This objective ensures that every new dwelling or extension is based on accurate, site-specific information, reducing the risk of structural failure due to ground movement, such as cracking or subsidence. Proper site classification is the essential first step in ensuring a safe and durable footing or slab design.

2. To ensure that there is an appropriate standard of footings/slab design and construction in all residential buildings.

   Slabs and footings are critical structural components that support the entire building. Poorly designed or constructed footings can lead to uneven settling, wall cracking, or even structural collapse over time.

   This objective reinforces the requirement that footings and slabs must be designed to a professional engineering standard, based on the site's classification, and constructed to match that design. It aims to ensure that all residential developments within the Warren Shire Council are structurally sound, safe for occupancy, and compliant with national construction standards.

3. To define Council's role as an approving body rather than a designing body with respect to residential slabs and footings.

   Council's responsibility lies in assessing and approving development and construction applications, not in providing engineering design or structural advice. This objective sets clear expectations about the division of responsibilities:

   - The property owner and their engaged professionals (engineers, certifiers, builders) are responsible for designing appropriate foundations and verifying site conditions.
   - The Council ensures that submitted plans and documentation meet statutory requirements and align with relevant standards (such as AS 2870) but does not take on liability for the technical adequacy of the design.

   This clear delineation helps protect both Council and property owners by ensuring that qualified professionals are accountable for technical decisions, while Council focuses on regulatory oversight.

II **STATEMENT**

New Dwellings

To ensure structural integrity and long-term performance of residential buildings, it is the Policy of Warren Shire Council that all slab and footing systems for new dwellings must be individually designed by a qualified Structural Engineer. Before design, the soil conditions of the site must be classified in accordance with the Australian Standard AS 2870 – Residential Slabs and Footings – Construction. This classification must be carried out by either the designing Structural Engineer or another suitably qualified professional.

AS 2870 provides a framework for assessing site reactivity (e.g., how much the soil will shrink or swell with changes in moisture), which directly influences the type and depth of footings required. Adherence to this standard reduces the risk of structural damage due to ground movement, moisture variation, or other environmental factors.

Council's role in this process is limited to reviewing approved ~~approving the~~ documentation submitted (such as site classification reports and engineering plans). Council does not provide design advice or take responsibility for engineering calculations, as this is outside its statutory responsibility and professional expertise. The responsibility for the adequacy of the design remains with the engaged professional engineer.

Design for Extensions to Existing Dwellings

Where an addition or extension is proposed to an existing residential dwelling, the design of new footings may replicate those used in the existing house, provided that:

- The existing footings have shown no signs of structural distress, such as cracking or subsidence.
- A reasonable assessment confirms that the existing dwelling has performed satisfactorily over time.
- There are no unusual conditions present that may affect performance, such as:
    - Reactive or expansive clay soils;
    - High water tables;
    - Areas subject to flooding or poor drainage;
    - Any changes to the site that may impact moisture levels, such as new landscaping or nearby infrastructure works.

This approach recognises that, in many cases, the existing footing system may be adequate for similar future loads. However, in all cases, compliance with the performance intent of AS 2870 must still be demonstrated, either through evidence of existing performance or formal engineering assessment.

REVIEW

This Policy should be reviewed every 4 years or within 12 months following an election of Council. The Policy may be reviewed and amended at any time at Council's discretion (or if legislative changes occur).