



HB 393—2011  
**Bunk beds for the short-term  
rental accommodation industry**

handbook

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# Handbook

## **Bunk beds for the short-term rental accommodation industry**

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# PREFACE

This Handbook was prepared on behalf of Standards Australia Committee CS-003, Safety Requirements For Children's Furniture to improve safety associated with bunks within short-term commercial accommodation facilities. The project management of this Standard has been carried out by Stancert Pty Ltd, an internationally recognized provider of Standards development strategies. The primary authors of this document were Mark Bezzina, Managing Director, Stancert and Tim Wain, Project manager, Stancert.

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# INTRODUCTION

This Handbook aims to provide guidance to the short-term rental accommodation industry to reduce the risk of patrons being injured by the use of unsafe bunk beds in the short-term rental accommodation industry.

This issue was highlighted as a result of an inquest in September 2008 into the 2002 death of a child in Queensland. The child died as a result of head injuries sustained when she fell from an upper bunk in a holiday rental unit, which was in place well before mandatory regulations were introduced.

The bunk bed in question did not comply with the then voluntary Australian and New Zealand Standard for bunk beds (AS/NZS 4220:1994, *Bunk beds and other elevated beds*), as it did not have a guard rail around the top bunk. AS/NZS 4220:1994, prescribed that upper bunks were to have guard rails on all four sides of the top bunk to prevent persons and especially children, from rolling out.

The National Coronial Information System reported that there were eight reported child fatalities (excluding suicides) associated with bunk beds nationwide from July 2000 to August 2007. Of these, four cases were the result of strangulation.

The Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit collected data from Queensland hospital emergency departments for the period 1999 to 2007 and, as a result of this study, estimates that in Queensland there are 450 bunk bed injury presentations each year. This collection methodology only captures data from selected hospitals and is thought to represent around 25% of the total number of injuries. As such, a more accurate estimate of injuries in Queensland could be in the vicinity of 1800 presentations a year.

Data collection throughout Australia is limited but, based on QISU estimates, the true level of incidents may well be under-reported.

In November 2002, a mandatory safety Standard was introduced in Queensland under the *Fair Trading Act 1989*. The mandatory safety Standard, required that all new bunk beds supplied in trade or commerce must comply with key safety features contained in the 1994 edition of the Australian and New Zealand Standard for bunk beds. The mandatory safety Standard was also made compatible with the then proposed new version of the Australian and New Zealand Standard. The new edition of the AS/NZS 4220 was published in November 2003.

At a Commonwealth level, the issue of bunk beds was addressed by Consumer Protection Notice No.1 of 2003, under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*, which also referred to certain aspects of AS/NZS 4220:1994. This regulation only applied to all bunks purchased new and did not strictly apply to existing bunk beds in commercial settings or bunks that have been in situ for many years. The suppliers of accommodation services are not covered by the mandatory regulation as the regulation only applies to the providers of bunk beds.

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