

Executive Summary: AS/NZS 4220:2026 Bunk Beds and Other Elevated Beds Overview

Important Notice! *This executive summary is **not the Australian/New Zealand Standard**. It is an Australian Camps Association interpretation of key safety requirements applicable to camps, outdoor education centres, holiday parks, hostels and other accommodation providers.*

AS/NZS 4220:2026 Bunk beds and other elevated beds is the fourth edition of the Standard and supersedes AS/NZS 4220:2010. The revised Standard significantly strengthens safety, durability, testing and information requirements for bunk beds and elevated beds intended for both domestic and commercial environments. Its overarching objective is to reduce fall, entrapment, structural failure and access-related hazards while reflecting contemporary product designs and usage patterns.

Australian Camps Association (ACA) was proud to represent the interests of the camping and outdoor accommodation sector as a member of the Australian Standards Working Group responsible for the revision of AS/NZS 4220. ACA believes the changes introduced in the 2026 edition will deliver meaningful improvements in bunk bed safety, particularly for camps, schools, hostels, holiday parks and other group accommodation providers. The enhanced structural testing, commercial-use classifications, improved access requirements and strengthened safety information requirements provide greater confidence and peace of mind when purchasing bunk beds from manufacturers claiming compliance with the Standard.

A major shift in the 2026 edition is the introduction of a risk-based approach through two performance levels:

Level 1

- Normal domestic use, occupants up to approximately 75 kg.

Level 2:

- **Severe domestic and commercial use, occupants up to approximately 110 kg.**
- **AFRDI 152 (Rated Load) Commercial are designed for occupants up to approximately 135kg and are also intended for higher-use environments such as camps and hostels.**

Level 2 is particularly relevant for camps and other commercial accommodation settings.

Key Changes from the Previous Standard

Introduction of Level 1 and Level 2 Performance Categories

Previous Approach

- The previous standard applied a single testing regime regardless of intended use.

2026 Change

- Separate performance and testing requirements now apply for:
 1. Residential/domestic applications.
 2. Commercial and heavy-use environments.

Practical Impact

Manufacturers can now specify products suitable for commercial accommodation with substantially increased testing loads and durability requirements.

Expanded Definitions and Clarified Terminology

New definitions have been introduced for:

- Access platforms
- Stairways
- Rung-type ladders
- Step-type ladders
- Safety barriers
- Transition grips
- Storage ventilation
- Automatic locking and latching devices
- Access openings and climbing access openings

This provides greater design certainty and reduces interpretation disputes.

New General Testing Requirements

A dedicated testing section has been added.

The Standard now specifies:

- Test environment conditions
- Force accuracy requirements
- Sample preparation requirements
- Test sequencing
- Reporting requirements

This creates greater consistency between laboratories and certification bodies.

New Storage Ventilation and Locking Requirements

One of the most significant additions.

Beds containing enclosed storage spaces must now:

- Include ventilation openings.
- Prevent entrapment risks.
- Restrict the use of automatic locking devices.
- Limit latching forces to ≤ 45 N unless escape is possible from inside.

The requirements address suffocation and entrapment hazards associated with storage compartments incorporated into modern loft and bunk bed designs.

Increased Maximum Height Allowance

Previous Position

- Maximum elevated bed heights were more restrictive.

2026 Change

Maximum mattress base height now:

- 1500 mm above floor for traditional upper bunks.
- 1600 mm above floor where the area below contains furniture, workstations or usable space.

Impact

Supports modern loft-bed designs without compromising fall protection requirements.

New Mattress Base Ventilation Requirements

Each mattress base must now provide:

- Minimum 70 cm² ventilation area.
- Ventilation distributed across at least four locations.

Benefit

Improves mattress hygiene, airflow and moisture management.

Enhanced Access System Requirements

The Standard now contains much more comprehensive requirements covering:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| - Stairways | - Treads |
| - Ladders | - Handrails |
| - Access platforms | - Gripping surfaces |

Specific requirements now address:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| - Ladder width | - Transition grips |
| - Tread spacing | - Access opening dimensions |
| - Hand-grip dimensions | - Access platform barriers |

Impact

Provides significantly improved safety for climbing and descending.

New Shear and Squeeze Point Requirements

A completely new section addresses injury risks caused by:

- Hinged lids
- Moving panels
- Storage doors
- Drawers
- Mechanisms creating trapping points

Clear dimensional limits are established for hazardous pinch points.

Updated Information and Warning Requirements

New mandatory warnings include:

WARNING – TOP BUNKS AND ELEVATED BEDS ARE DANGEROUS AND ARE NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 9

The Standard also now requires warnings relating to:

Fatal falls

- *Falls from elevated beds can be fatal and deaths have occurred where children have fallen from elevated beds. This is relevant for all ages. The risk is greater for younger children.*

Ceiling fan clearance

- *The upper bunk must be more than 2 m from any ceiling fan (measured from the closest part of the bunk to the outer tip of the ceiling fan blades)*

Mattress height limits

- *The top surface of the upper mattress should always be at least 160 mm below the top edge of the guardrail.*

Periodic maintenance

- *The bunk bed should be checked periodically to ensure that the guardrail, access device and other components are maintained in the correct position and state of repair and that all connectors are tight.*

Appropriate mattress selection

- *Use only mattresses of the size and thickness specified by the bunk bed manufacturer.*

Intended load category (Level 1 or Level 2)

- Intended Use Classification:
This bunk bed is certified to Level 2 of AS/NZS 4220:2026 and is suitable for severe domestic and commercial use by occupants up to approximately 110 kg per sleeping space.

These warnings must be supplied with the bunk bed as part of the instructions or information package provided to the purchaser.

Impact

More comprehensive consumer safety information than previous editions.

New Fatigue Loading Test

A new cyclic loading regime evaluates durability under repeated use conditions.

This better reflects:

- Commercial accommodation
- School camps
- Boarding facilities
- Long-term service environments

New Testing Requirements for Manufactures

- Distributed Load Test
 - o 250 kg distributed load per sleeping space
 - Enhanced Guardrail Testing
 - o Higher static load requirements
 - o Inward, Outward, Upward & Downward loading
 - Stairway and Platform Testing
 - o Stair treads
 - o Ladder steps
 - o Access platforms
 - Static loading
 - Fatigue loading
 - Impact loading
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Key Implications for Camps and Commercial Accommodation Providers

For organisations such as camps, outdoor education centres, and group accommodation facilities:

Positive Outcomes

- Stronger structural verification.
- Higher occupant weight allowance.
- Better durability assurance.
- Enhanced fall protection.
- Improved access safety.

Operators purchasing new bunks should seek evidence that products:

- Are certified to Level 2.
- Meet the revised guardrail requirements.
- Have compliant ladders or stairways.
- Include mandatory warnings and markings.
- Meet new ventilation and storage safety requirements.

Executive Conclusion

The 2026 revision represents the most substantial update to AS/NZS 4220. The Standard moves beyond simple bunk-bed safety and introduces a comprehensive framework covering commercial use, structural durability, access systems, storage hazards, air quality considerations and enhanced consumer information.

The introduction of Level 2 commercial performance requirements is arguably the most significant change, creating a clear distinction between domestic products and beds intended for intensive use environments.

Australian Camps Association (ACA) was proud to represent the interests of the camping and outdoor accommodation sector as a member of the Australian Standards Working Group responsible for the revision of AS/NZS 4220. ACA believes the changes introduced in the 2026 edition will deliver meaningful improvements in bunk bed safety, particularly for camps, schools, hostels, holiday parks and other group accommodation providers. The enhanced structural testing, commercial-use classifications, improved access requirements and strengthened safety information requirements provide greater confidence and peace of mind when purchasing bunk beds from manufacturers claiming compliance with the Standard.

To support implementation of the revised Standard, ACA will also update its **Bunk Bed Safety Checklist**, which forms part of the requirements for **Camps and Adventure Activity Accreditation**. The updated checklist will reflect the new requirements of AS/NZS 4220:2026 and assist accredited sites in assessing bunk bed compliance, managing risk and maintaining safe accommodation facilities for guests and participants.