



TINY HOUSE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) SHEET

Prepared for: Australian Tiny House Association (ATHA) members

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ATHA defines that a Tiny House is a moveable dwelling suitable for permanent residential use, with self contained amenities and services and the option to be grid connected.

A Tiny House can be:

- ***A Moveable Tiny House – a transportable structure with the ability to be moved.***
- ***A Tiny House On Wheels (THOW) – constructed on a trailer designed to road legal dimensions, which can be moved.***

Purpose of this FAQ:

- This FAQ is designed to answer common questions about tiny houses and tiny house living.
- For use by individuals and or groups in thinking or actioning topics relative to planning, building, moving and dwelling in a Tiny Home in Australia.

TOPIC	QUESTION	ANSWER
Planning	Do I need to get a planning permit for the siting of my Tiny House on Wheels or Skids (THOW or THOS)?	Unless specified by your Local Council the siting of a THOW or THOS on a property would not normally prompt a planning permit application. Where you seek to occupy a THOW or THOS you will need to contact your Local Council to understand planning regulations for this housing type and apply for a development or planning application for the structure and its use.
Trailer dimensions	What is the size of a Tiny Home on Wheels	A tiny home on wheels is dictated by the dimensions of the trailer on which it sits. The trailer dimensions are covered by the Vehicle Standards Bulletin 1 and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No higher than 4.3m from the ground. • No wider than 2.5m • No longer than 12.5m • Aggregated Trailer Mass (ATM) should not be greater than 4.5 tonnes Each state has road regulations that you need to comply with when transporting a tiny home. If you wish to build wider or higher or heavier than the limits above you will need to have adhere to additional requirements and permit.
Transport	What to consider in transporting my Tiny House?	If you plan to transport your THOW or THOS interstate, review regulations PRIOR to your build if possible. Engage with a professional heavy equipment transport company. There have been historical issues in Australia of a build not complying to road regulations of an alternative state to which it was built in. It must have the appropriate brakes and lights as per road compliance. It must be towed behind an appropriately rated vehicle with a competent licensed driver and or transported on a low loader with a compliant tow company.

<p>Siting</p>	<p>Where should I site my Tiny House?</p>	<p>Try to locate the Tiny House under or close to trees that are considered safe, and that can provide shading in summer. You will need to be mindful of the location if you have solar panels on the roof, so consider placing them on the ground.</p> <p>Look at the slope of land and assess whether this is acceptable to your needs. Avoid siting the tiny house in areas subject to overland flow, which may become soft making moving the tiny house difficult.</p> <p>Incorporate building structures that respond to your environment. For example if in a cyclone area secure the tiny house to the ground. If you are intending to site the tiny house in a high bushfire area, look at options to keep as safe as possible such as bushfire shutters on windows, placement of gas bottles and construct with fire retardant materials.</p>
	<p>Will the Tiny House fit on my site?</p>	<p>Measure your trailer and build and go to your site, mark the ground with ground paint. Consider how you will get a vehicle in to its final place, or whether you will need to crane it into place.</p> <p>You will need to consider not only the width of the trailer but also the prospective height and if you have enough clearance from overhanging trees and cables.</p>
	<p>Is it okay to leave my Tiny House sitting on the wheels or should I put blocks under it when it's not in transit?</p>	<p>It is a good idea to stabilise your Tiny House on blocks to remove the pressure spots from your tyres when they remain stationary. This may also assist in levelling the tiny house.</p>
<p>Building</p>	<p>Does the construction of my Tiny House have to comply with the National Construction Code?</p>	<p>Tiny Houses on Wheels are largely considered as caravans as of July 2019, and therefore do not need to be built to housing regulations. However, poor knowledge of building and construction, structural bracing and connection to skids or trailer may lead to an unsafe structure and putting occupants and the public during transport at risk.</p> <p>ATHA has developed a <i>Trial Tiny House Construction Guide</i> and is available for download from the ATHA website https://tinyhouse.org.au/</p>
<p>Trailer/Skid</p>	<p>What do I need to consider when putting my Tiny House on a trailer or a skid?</p>	<p>You will need to consider if you will be moving it and therefore being exposed to extreme wind loads. ATHA encourages tiny house builders to obtain an engineering certificate for the connections between roof/wall and trailer.</p> <p>ATHA and good Tiny Home builders advocate for a secure fastening / bracing of the frame to the trailer or skids.</p>
	<p>Does my trailer need to be registered, and what are the safety considerations when looking at a trailer?</p>	<p>Your trailer needs to be registered and comply with the relevant state legislation for trailers if you are going to travel on public roads. Some states have much more stringent design requirements than others, so always check with the Road Transport Authority in your State.</p> <p>When you register your trailer it will have a compliance plate that states TARE, size etc.</p> <p>You can build on an unregistered trailer and then on the day or period you wish to move it you apply for a special compliance from your road authority.</p>

		There are many things to consider relating to a trailer of a tiny home. First and always is safety. Has the tiny house been built to the trailer limit? Can the trailer withstand the weight of the build? Consider the weight ratio and where does the weight sit across the trailer and front to back. Is there an overhang at the rear or over the tow bar?
Certificates	Should I use licensed electricians and plumbers and gas fitters and wood heater installers in my tiny house construction?	Yes. You want to be safe and manage risks that could occur with ill-fitting or non-compliant appliances or services. Not all plumbers are gas fitters and wood heater installers so make sure you employ the right qualified trades people. Many insurers will not insure the building unless you have proof of certifications for these installations.
Transport	What are the things to take note of while transporting a THOW?	Some THOWs can be upto 4.3m in total height, so you will need to plan your route such that you do not tow the THOW into areas with low clearance. You may also need to note any overhang from trees in the more rural areas and include bridges and overpasses that may not allow clearance of your THOW. During transport, take note of places where there is a sharp dip along the route, the tail of the THOW may drag on the ground due to the length.
Local Laws	Will my Local Council allow me to live in a THOWs?	THOWs are commonly treated as Caravans by Local Councils and many have Local Laws that restrict living permanently in caravans. You will need to check with your council about how they treat living in a THOW or THOS. If not favourable to Tiny Houses then consider sending the Council an email asking them to review the Local Law and attach ATHA's position paper "Alternative Local Law to Living in a Tiny House", available on our website.
	What is the difference between grey water and black water?	Grey-water comes from our showers, laundry and vanity sinks. Blackwater comes from kitchen sinks and toilets. You will need to discuss wastewater treatment with your Council.
	Can I use a composting toilet?	Composting toilets reduce water use and you can apply to your Local Council for assessment and approval. Some composting toilets are Council approved and some aren't. The seller should have this information available to the purchaser.
Pricing	How much does a Tiny House cost?	Using a builder or tradespeople on average in Australia ranges from \$70 – \$120k. Some with high quality fit out or larger than standard can go upwards of \$160k. As a DIY the average is approx. \$50 – \$80K. Some research advises there is approx.
Design elements	What type of windows should I have for comfort?	Double glazed windows can help to retain the heat in the Tiny House in winter thereby making it comfortable, but this will add weight to your Tiny House build. Eglass is an alternative to better insulation than single glazing but not as heavy as double glazing. Or mix your windows with double glazing and eglass.
Construction	How long will it take to build a Tiny House?	This will depend if you build it yourself or engage a builder. Tiny House builders tell us between 600 to 800 hours.
	Can I put a deck onto my THOW or THOS?	Yes you will be able to construct a deck as long as it is not a permanent structure into the ground. Or it is one that can be removed quickly.
Services	Should I go off grid with my Tiny House?	This is both a personal preference and a budget consideration as off grid requires a large outlay. It will depend on where you site your Tiny House and whether you have access to grid power. If you need to go off grid you need to consider where the batteries will be stored on the trailer and where the panels will be located to maximize solar generation. If you are going off grid consider placing the panels on a frame that is detached from the house so you can wheel it to face the sun.

	Will I be able to collect enough water to be self-sufficient?	It is very unlikely that you will be able to capture and store enough water from the Tiny House roof alone and use in the Tiny House. The roof area is small. Therefore consider installing a rainwater tank that can be filled up by a water cart or connect to a permanent water supply.
Insurance	Can I get my THOW insured?	If your trailer is registered it makes insuring your THOW a lot easier. There is a lot of debate on Tiny House pages in regards to who does and who doesn't insure tiny houses. The insurance companies change their stance regularly so best to ring around and make sure you are happy with what is available.
Asset status	Is my Tiny House considered an asset?	You must check with Centrelink regarding asset and rental assistance if you are living in your Tiny House.
	Will allowing someone to put a Tiny House in my backyard, affect my pension?	It may affect your pension if it is considered an income and exceeds your additional income that is allowed income. Check with Centrelink.
	Will a person living in my Tiny House have an inheritance claim if I were to die?	Whenever someone is renting from you, it is advisable to enter into some sort of contract or agreement. If they are considered renters, then they should not have a claim but if they are considered members of the household then they may have a claim. It is advised in this case to enter into a prenuptial type agreement where the renter forgoes any entitlement to your estate. Use a lawyer to set the rental contract up clearly before entering into it.