

## 9.10. Development Assessment Performance - 2025/26 Quarter 2

<b>AUTHOR</b>	Stephen Beattie Manager Development Services
<b>ENDORSED BY</b>	Marcelo Occhiuzzi, Director Planning and Environment
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	Nil
<b>CSP LINK</b>	<b>Outcome 8 – An effective, accountable and sustainable Council that serves the community</b> G1. Develop clear goals, create a plan to achieve them, and track progress with transparency and honesty G2. Put community needs at the core of everything we do and deliver excellent customer service G5. Exercise regulatory compliance responsibilities diligently to protect the environment and support our community G6. Commit to efficiency and value for money in service delivery

### PURPOSE:

This report provides an overview and analysis of Council's development assessment performance to end quarter 2 of the 2025/26 financial year, as measured by the NSW Government's Planning League Table.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- In July 2024, the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces issued a Ministerial Order of Expectations requiring all NSW Councils to meet certain development assessment targets.
- For North Sydney Council, this included an expectation that in 2024/25, development applications be determined, on average, within 115 days, with the target timeframe to be systematically reduced in subsequent years.
- Council's development assessment performance since January 2025 has improved significantly and now exceeds the 105-day target set by the Minister for Planning to the end of Q2 of the 2025/26 financial year, at 80 days.
- Lodgement times for Development Assessments (Das) are also subject to a performance target which, this financial year, is seven days (down from 14 in 2024/25). Council is currently tracking at six days, thus also in compliance with this component of the Minister's expectations.

### RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** this report be noted.

## **Background**

In July 2024, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces issued a Statement of Expectations Order requiring all NSW Councils to meet certain development assessment targets.

For North Sydney Council, this included an expectation that Development Applications (DAs) would be determined, on average, within 115 days after lodgement. This is tracked via the NSW Planning League Table and updated on a monthly basis. The Order sequentially reduces this target as follows:

- 105 days from 1 July 2025;
- 95 days from 1 July 2026; and
- 85 days from 1 July 2027.

As previously reported, Council staff have actively embarked on various initiatives to reduce DA determination times. Whilst this remains a work-in-progress, Council has achieved significant improvements over the last eighteen months as illustrated in Diagram 1 on the next page. Importantly, this performance is being maintained.

This report details Council's League Table performance to the end of Quarter 2 of the 2025/26 year.

## **Report**

Council considered a report at its meeting of 10 March 2025 which outlined Council's performance for the first two quarters of 2024/25, as well as proactive initiatives to improve this performance.

Following the completion of this report, a letter was received on 6 March 2025 from the Minister for Planning, stating that North Sydney Council was not meeting these targets and that a Council-endorsed 'action plan along with an associated program to swiftly improve performance' was to be prepared and submitted within 28 days of that letter.

An action plan, which was being developed and rolled out before the Minister's letter, was reported and formally endorsed by Council on 21 March 2025.

A response dated 14 May 2025 was received from the Minister, acknowledging and thanking Council for the preparation of the action plan and indicating a further review of performance would occur in three months. At the date of writing, no further correspondence from the Minister or the Department of Planning has been received regarding Council's assessment performance.

North Sydney was one of six metropolitan Councils to receive a performance improvement letter, with four of those being unable to satisfy the Minister's requirements. Those four are now being "managed" by the Department of Planning.

## DA Determination Times

Council’s performance since January 2025 has been characterised by consistent month on month improvement as measured by the League Table (see Diagram 1, below).

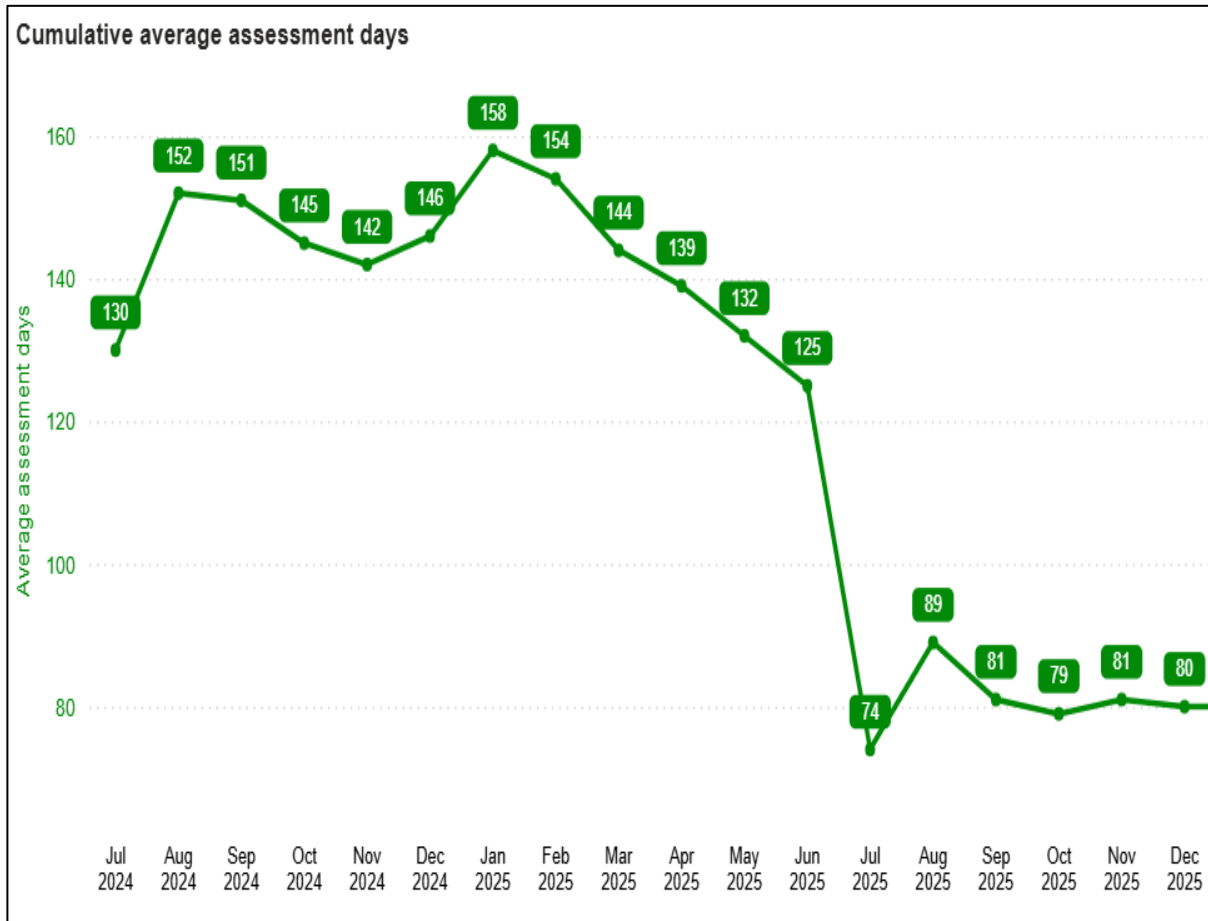


Diagram 1 – Historic and Current DA Average Assessment Days for NSC (Source – NSW Planning League Table)

The significant step between processing times noted for June 2025, and those noted for July 2025 (125 to 74 days) is explained by the cumulative nature of the statistic which is gleaned within the financial year.

Whilst there is still work to be done to maintain current performance and reliably meet future targets, the improvement demonstrated in recent times has been both significant and maintained.

To the end of the second quarter of 2025/26, Council is averaging a 80-day determination time for DAs. This is an excellent result and well under the 105-day timeframe imposed by the Ministerial Order. It represents a 45% improvement compared with the same period last year, and modestly exceeds the target set from 1 July 2027.

Statistics available at the time of writing this report suggest that processing times for the third quarter 2025/26 will be maintained.

## **Lodgement Times**

Lodgement statistics are also captured by the League Table. The lodgement statistic is the number of days between the DA being submitted to the NSW Planning Portal by the applicant, and the time taken by Council to qualitatively assess the completeness of such application prior to accepting it as being formally “lodged”. An application is taken to be lodged on the day on which the applicable fees are paid. In 2024/25, the lodgement target was 14 days.

That target of 14 days has been reduced to seven days for the 2025/26 financial year. The result thus far of six days for Q1 and Q2 reflects the significant work done in this area by Council staff to streamline processes. Much of the improvement has been gained by the revision of systems and procedures that address the “front end”, and a greater understanding of the operation of the NSW planning portal.

## **Further Enhancements/Improvements**

Council staff continue to work on improving efficiency and performance to maintain and enhance compliance with the NSW Government’s League Table, as well as to maintain and, where possible, improve customer service in the assessment and determination of DAs. These initiatives are summarised in the previous reports to Council on 24 March 2025 [Development Assessment Performance - Ministerial Letter](#) and 27 October 2025 [document-11680086](#) .

Recent improvements of systems and processes beyond those reported earlier include:

- moving the commencement of advertising of applications from Fridays to Wednesdays, thus saving two days at the beginning of the process, with the potential to having simple applications determined earlier in the week they come off advertising;
- holding three development assessment triage meetings a week, (a front-end process) to smooth the flow of applications through the reception, administration, and allocation stage; and
- inclusion of QR codes on notification letters linked directly to the DA tracker service and a greater focus on proposal description to better inform our community.

Future improvements will include exploring software which will integrate the two principal internal systems that are utilised to facilitate the DA process with the NSW Planning Portal, with a view to removing duplication that currently occurs where those systems are required to be updated individually. This enhancement is the final outstanding item of significance from the action plan endorsed by Council on 21 March 2025.

## **Consultation requirements**

Community engagement is not required.

**Financial/Resource Implications**

The ongoing improvement initiatives and efficiencies are being driven within existing resources and budgets.

**Legislation**

The requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and associated Ministerial directions and powers are relevant to this matter.