

## 9.7. Development assessment performance to end Quarter 3 FY2025/26

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<b>ENDORSED BY</b>	Marcelo Occhiuzzi, Director Planning and Environment
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	1. Ministerial Letter to NSC 6 May 2026 [9.7.1 - 2 pages]
<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 the end of quarter 3 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. The target for 2025/26 is 105 days and this will reduce to 95 days in 2026/27.
- Council's performance exceeds the current 105-day target to the end of Q3 of the 2025/26 financial year, being 82 days.
- Lodgement times for Development Assessments (DAs) are also subject to a performance target which, this financial year, is seven days. Council is currently tracking at five days, thus also well 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 publicly available 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 below. Importantly, this performance is being maintained.

## **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.

## **DA Determination Times**

Council's performance since January 2025 has been characterised by consistent month on month improvement as measured by the League Table (Diagram 1 on the next page).

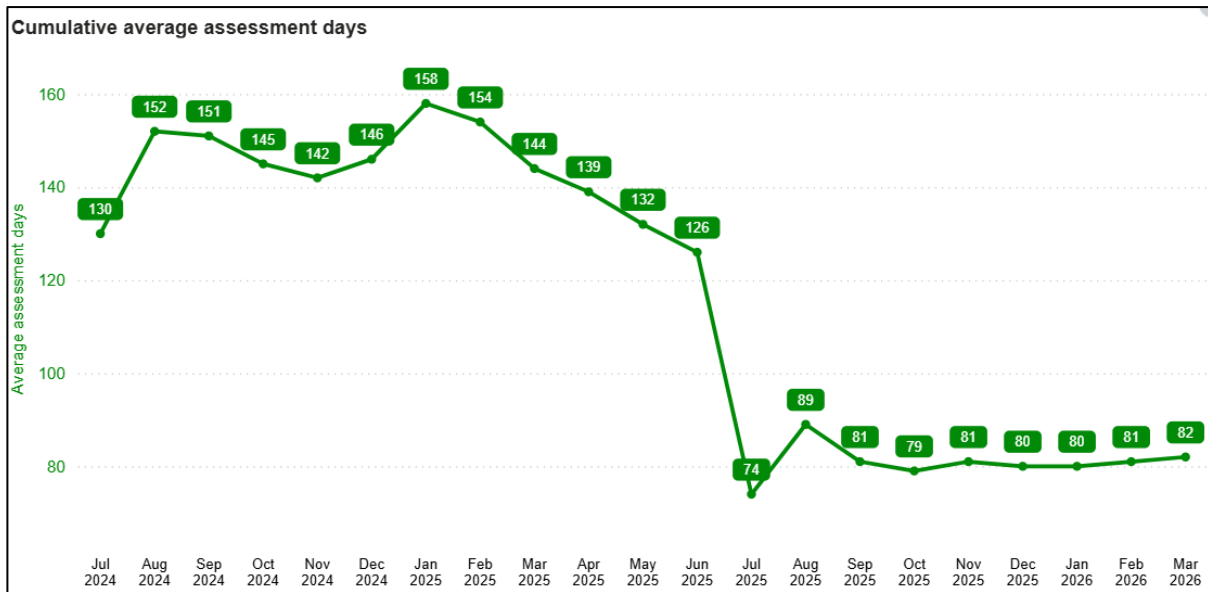


Diagram 1 – Historic and Current DA Average Assessment Days for NSC (Source – NSW Planning League Table)

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 over a 12-month period within the financial year. The statistic measurement period recommences at the beginning of each financial year which explains sudden “jumps” in the table above. The notable decline in assessment days noted between January 2025 and June 2025 is a direct result of performance improvements made during that period.

Maintaining current performance and reliably meeting future targets will require maintained focus and management. The improvement demonstrated over the last year has been both significant and more importantly, sustained. This is a credit to the many staff involved both within the Department and Division but also across the Council without whom the current level of performance could not be achieved.

To the end of the third quarter of 2025/26, Council is averaging an 82-day determination time for Development Applications (DAs). This is an excellent result and well under the 105-day timeframe imposed by the Ministerial Order. It represents a 43% improvement compared with the same period last year and modestly exceeds the target set from 1 July 2027.

It is also noted that the 82-day determination time was achieved despite the quarter including the holiday period, with a compulsory advertising suspension between 20 December 2025 and 10 January 2026, and the impact of staff taking leave.

The Minister for Planning has written to Council on 6 May 2026 (Attachment 1), thanking and congratulating North Sydney Council on its efforts and achievements in DA assessment time improvements. That letter includes a request for Council to clear any DAs in the system that are more than 180 days old. Pleasingly, Council now has no DAs being assessed that are over 180 days old.

## **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 culminative result thus far of five days to the end of Q3 with 82% of lodgements reflecting 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.

A lodgement is recorded when the application is accepted for processing and the fees paid. Applications are either being returned to applicants as rejected, or a payment request made within two days of receipt through the portal. Payment requests are made with two-day time frame for payment, with the application being returned as rejected if the fee is not paid. This practice has served Council well in meeting the target set by the Minister.

## **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](#) .

Future improvements include exploring software which will better 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.

## **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.

**The Hon Paul Scully MP**  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces



Ref: IRF25/1636

Cr Zoe Baker  
Mayor  
North Sydney Council  
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North Sydney NSW 2059  
[mayor@northsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mayor@northsydney.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mayor *Zoe*

I write in relation to North Sydney Council's development assessment processes and Council's performance.

I'd like to extend my thanks to North Sydney Council for working with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to continue implementing its action plan to reduce the average end to end development assessment timeframes. These actions will help streamline approvals, delivering additional homes and jobs more quickly for the community.

The Department has briefed me on Council's action plan and its implementation. I congratulate Council on its efforts in both reviewing its processes and in clearing its legacy development applications (DA). This is evident in the number of legacy DAs (those over 180 days) being significantly reduced, and its current DA average end to end assessment days being 82. This provides a solid foundation for Council to continue this important program.

A key part of maintaining this momentum is the continual work to clear the remaining legacy DAs and making sure this number does not increase. Given the low volume of legacy DAs, I am asking Council to clear these within the next month while also assessing its current DAs (those under 180 days) within the 105-day expectation.

I also note that the Department has recently developed a program to provide tailored support for councils to assist with clearing their legacy applications. The Department will work with individual councils who opt into the program to identify their specific needs and seek to support these through the program.

The Department will continue to work closely with Council and will be monitoring progress monthly while the identified actions are implemented. I note the Department will also continue to brief me on Council's performance and progress in implementing these actions.

I hope that the NSW Government and North Sydney Council can continue to work together to improve development assessment timeframes and approvals, to deliver additional homes and jobs for the local community as quickly and efficiently as possible.

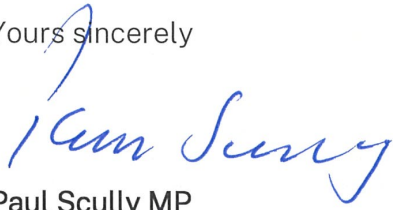
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I look forward to seeing the continued benefits of this work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Scully". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Scully MP  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

6/5/16