

9.6. Statewide Community Participation Plan

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ATTACHMENTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion Paper - Draft Statewide Community Participation Plan [9.6.1 - 17 pages] 2. Draft Statewide Community Participation Plan [9.6.2 - 31 pages] 3. Reforming the NSW planning system [9.6.3 - 28 pages] 4. DRAFT Submission on Statewide CPP [9.6.4 - 8 pages]
CSP LINK	<p>Outcome 8 – An effective, accountable and sustainable Council that serves the community</p> <p>G2. Put community needs at the core of everything we do and deliver excellent customer service</p> <p>G3. Make it easy for our community to engage and participate in decision-making</p> <p>G4. Manage risks and maintain independent oversight in business operations and decision-making</p>

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Draft Statewide Community Participation Plan exhibited by the Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure, and seek the endorsement of a Council submission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The Draft Statewide Community Participation Plan (CPP) is a proposal to standardise the notification requirements for planning related matters across NSW. It is being publicly exhibited between 8 April until 3 June 2026. It proposes a single statewide framework to replace over 100 Local Community Participation Plans, including Council’s existing provisions within its Community Engagement Strategy.
- The intent to improve consistency, proportionality, and efficiency in community participation across NSW is broadly supported, however, significant concerns with the draft CPP are identified in this report.
- The draft CPP adopts a largely standardised approach that does not adequately reflect differences between high density metropolitan, suburban, and regional environments.
- Key concerns span statutory planning, strategic planning, and community engagement, particularly the proposal to reduce notification requirements.
- The draft CPP shifts significant responsibility to Council’s statutory functions at lodgement stage of applications to determine compliance with planning controls without corresponding system/legislative reform.

- There is insufficient detail regarding transitional arrangements, implementation pathways, and integration with existing statutory process.
- A detailed submission has been prepared and attached to this report outlining specific technical issues and recommended amendments.

- It is recommended that Council endorse the submission which seeks to raise issues and to influence a more workable, context-sensitive framework that maintains community confidence in the planning system.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council note the exhibition of the Draft Statewide Community Participation Plan by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

2. THAT Council endorse the submission (Attachment 4 to this report), raising key technical issues across statutory, strategic planning, and community engagement, and advocate for amendments to address identified shortcomings.

Background

On 8 April 2026, the Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure (DPHI) placed the Draft Statewide Community Participation Plan (CPP) on public exhibition, with submissions invited until 3 June 2026.

The Draft CPP forms part of a broader suite of reforms arising from the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reform) Act 2025, ([Planning reforms](#)) which are being progressively implemented through staged proclamations during 2025-2026 (Figures 1-2). These reforms represent a significant transformation of the NSW Planning System, with a stated focus on improving efficiency, consistency, transparency, and delivery outcomes.

The 2026 reform program includes changes across the planning framework (see Figure 1 on the next page), including:

- introduction of new assessment pathways and consent authorities;
- streamlining of development assessment processes and timeframes;
- increased use of the NSW Planning Portal and digital processes;
- reforms to community participation and notification requirements; and
- alignment of statutory processes with performance-based benchmarks.

The Draft CPP is a key component of this reform package, seeking to standardise community participation requirements across NSW by replacing local Council-based Community Participation Plans with a single statewide framework.

The North Sydney Council CPP is embedded within its Community Engagement Strategy, which reflects over half a century of continuous refinement to ensure best practice and meaningful community engagement.

Once finalised, the State Government's Draft CPP will supersede planning-related notification and exhibition requirements within Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

4. Planning reforms at a glance



Figure 1: Overview of the planning reforms

The Road Map of NSW Government planning reforms is provided below (Figure 2).

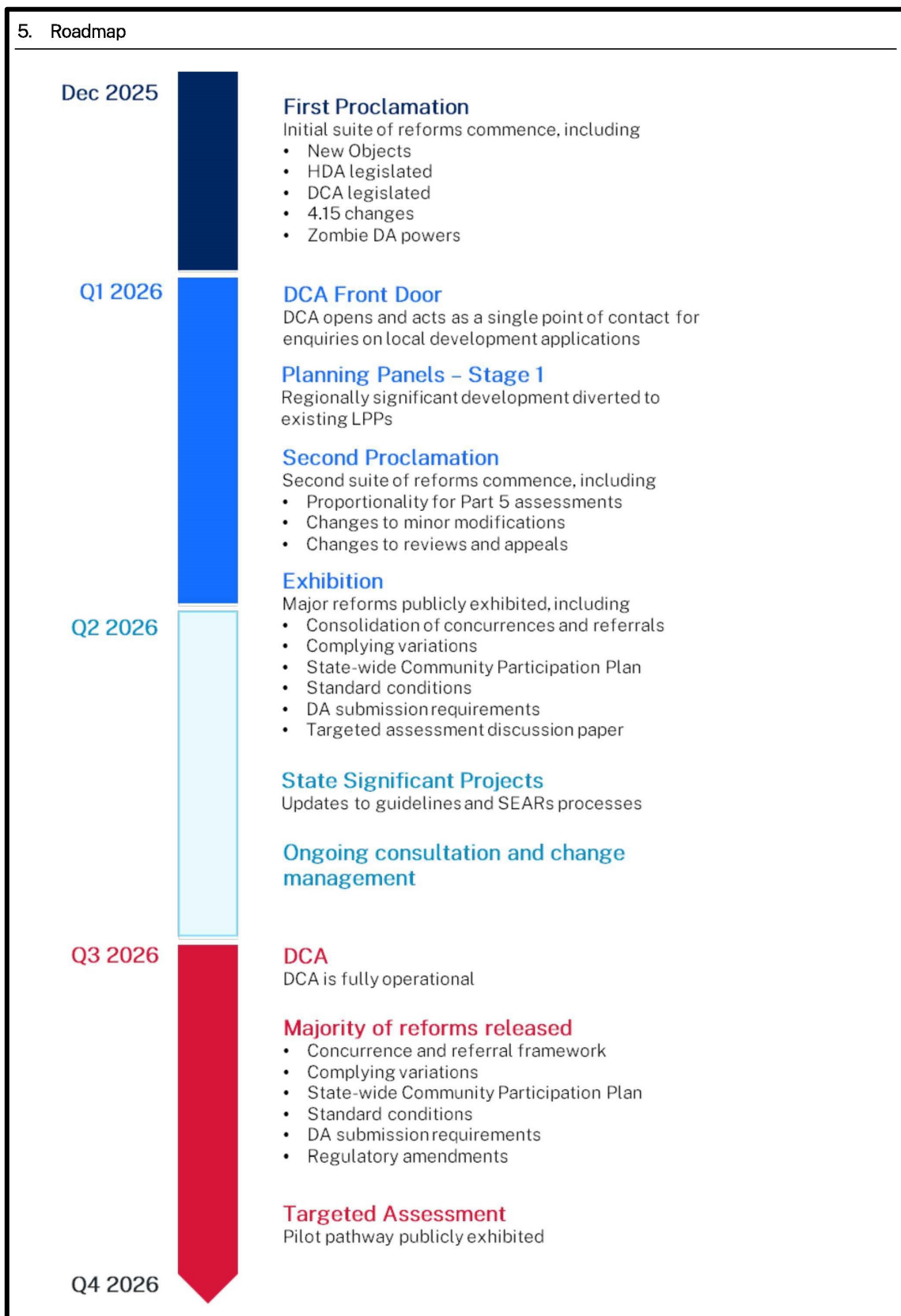


Figure 2: Roadmap of Planning System Reforms (Source: [Reforming the NSW Planning System](#))

Note: DCA refers to the Development Coordination Authority. HDA refers to the Housing Delivery Authority

Report

The NSW Government's draft CPP represents a significant change to the NSW Planning System. It seeks to introduce a standardised approach to community participation across Council's development assessment, strategic land use planning, and broader community engagement functions, arising from the broader transformation of the NSW Planning system.

These reforms will continue to systematically introduce changes across the planning framework including new assessment pathways, streamlined processes, increased digitisation, and revised community participation requirements. The latter of these is the subject of this latest reform.

The objective of improving consistency and efficiency is supported, however, the proposed CPP framework introduces several overarching issues of concern, as discussed in detail within the submission.

This report highlights concerns that the draft CPP does not have sufficient regard to local context, built form complexity, and long-established community expectations. The report and draft submission also identify several operational and statutory risks that require consideration to ensure that the framework functions effectively and does not create unintended impacts on Consent Authorities.

While the draft plan promotes consistency and proportionality, the proposed framework fails to appropriately account for high density, highly constrained urban environments like North Sydney's which present a unique set of development assessment challenges which should be reflected in how proposals are publicly notified.

1. Local context not reflected

The draft CPP identifies development types that are exempt from the need to be publicly notified if they meet certain tests. These uses are identified on pages 25 and 26 of attachment 2 and are summarised in Figure 3 on the next page. For the development types identified in Figure 3 to be exempt from notification, they must:

- be permissible in the relevant zone, and,
- meet the relevant planning controls in a local environmental plan, development control plan and/or state environmental planning policy, and,
- not include a 4.6 variation.

Residential and related uses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alterations – Internal alterations • Alterations and additions existing dwellings • Ancillary development (such as pools, sheds, farm buildings) • Boundary adjustment • Demolition (excluding heritage items) • Exhibition Homes and Villages • Group homes • Heritage item – minor works that does not impact item and is located behind the front façade • Residential flat buildings* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moveable dwellings • New single and two storey dwellings, dual occupancies and attached dwellings • Temporary structures • Rural workers dwellings • Secondary dwellings • Strata and Stratum subdivision • Tree removal where they are not heritage items • Home business and/or home occupation • Shop top housing*
Commercial development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alterations and additions • Change of use • Take away food and drink premises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiosks • Roadside stalls • Signage
Industrial development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial retail outlets
Community, health, education, recreational and other infrastructure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alterations – internal and external • Environmental facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental protections works
Tourist and Visitor accommodation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bed and Breakfast accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm stay accommodation
Other	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications involving minimal environmental impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications made under section 4.55(1) of the EP&A Act. • Applications made under section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act. • Applications made under section 4.56 of the EP&A Act with minimal environmental impact. • Reviews where the application has not been amended pursuant to section 8.3(3) of the EP&A Act.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for the review of a determination or decision of a consent authority (Division 8.2 Reviews) 	

Figure 3 – Residential and Related Uses Exempt from notification and exhibition

Figure 3 includes potentially large scale and significant residential development types that, almost without exception, will be of significant public interest in North Sydney. In the absence of notification, adjoining neighbours to this type of development are to be notified seven days before works commence, similar to current Complying Development requirements.

In North Sydney as well as other inner metropolitan areas, site constraints (topography, existing built form, lot configuration, views, drainage etc) mean that even minor works can generate material impacts.

Council has continued to articulate to the Department that the application of terms such as ‘minor’ or ‘low impact’ catch-all descriptors are not appropriate, noting their inherently subjective nature limits their effectiveness, particularly in dense urban environments like North Sydney’s.

Whilst this standardised approach to notification may be quite appropriate in some parts of NSW, the density and characteristics of North Sydney will make this approach to notification highly challenging.

2. Reduced participation opportunities

The majority of development applications (DA’s) in North Sydney (including modifications and reviews) are notified. For example, between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025, Council notified almost 90% of all applications that it received.

The types of development proposed to be exempt from notification (see Figure 3 on the previous page) includes residential flat buildings, shop-top housing, new single and two-storey houses, dual occupancies, and attached dwellings, as well as alterations and additions to existing houses. The experience in North Sydney, given its density and topographical characteristics, is that notification of such proposals generally attracts significant interest, and sometimes leads to positive refinements in the development being proposed.

3. Risk and burden on Council resources

The proposal to rely on ‘Council discretion’ to determine whether a proposal is fully compliant, as described in section 1 above, in order to be exempt from notification requirements, is operationally burdensome. This requires significant upfront assessment of matters, which potentially introduces inefficiencies that are not relative to real world assessment conditions. It also shifts a disproportionate level of risk onto Council staff, who are effectively required to identify and nominate all relevant considerations at the lodgement stage of the assessment process, which creates potential for errors to be made where application documentation is incomplete or inaccurate.

DCP controls, in particular, are numerous and take time to accurately assess for compliance. The proposed approach makes it particularly difficult to assess compliance with qualitative, non-numerical controls.

This is in the context of a very narrow and defined window to accept or return a proposal, as introduced by Ministerial Order in July 2024.

4. Lack of Clarity and Consistency

There are various matters addressed in the draft submission which lack clarity.

New “targeted” assessment has not been defined, nor exhibited, the CPP lacks savings and transitional arrangements, the meaning of a “masterplan” has not been defined, and there is confusion in minimum timeframes for Local Strategic Planning Statements, Draft Regional, or

District Plans. There is also a lack of clarity in instances where a State Significant Development and rezoning proposal are being exhibited concurrently, in terms of which timeframe should apply.

The Draft CPP represents a significant reform, and its overarching objectives are broadly supported. However, refinement is required to ensure that the framework is practical, responsive to local conditions, and maintains an appropriate level of community participation.

Council's draft submission forms Attachment 4 to this report. The draft submission includes a greater level of technical detail for Council's consideration.

Consultation requirements

Community engagement is not required for this report.

Internal consultation has been undertaken across Council's various planning and community engagement functions with detailed input reflected in the attached submission.

Financial/Resource Implications

The preparation of the submission has been accommodated within existing staff resources.

The resource implications associated with the implementation of the Draft CPP are currently unclear due to limited detail regarding transitional arrangements and future reforms yet to be exhibited.

If community participation is reduced as proposed, there is potential for increased downstream impacts including:

- increased customer enquiries and complaints due to reduced awareness of development proposals;
- reputational impacts where the community perceives a lack of opportunity to participate; and
- increased risk of legal challenge or procedural disputes where issues are identified later in the assessment process.

These impacts may result in additional resourcing pressures across development assessment, customer service, and governance functions.

Notwithstanding the above, reduced notification requirements may result in some operational efficiencies (which are currently unable to be quantified), including:

- reduced reliance on external mail house services, with a lower volume of notifications resulting in the potential opportunity for this function to be managed internally; and
- potential reductions in assessment timeframes due to fewer submissions being received and considered.

Legislation

- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2021
- Environmental Planning and Assessment (Planning System Reforms) Act 202

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Community Participation Plan

Discussion Paper

April 2026





Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Published by NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

dphi.nsw.gov.au

Community Participation Plan

First published: April 2026

Department reference number: IRF26/3696

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Introduction

The NSW Government is implementing legislative reforms to make the planning system faster, fairer and more outcomes focused. As part of these reforms, a single Community Participation Plan is proposed to apply across the State, standardising public exhibition and notification requirements and, providing certainty for all stakeholders who interact with the planning system.

There are currently over 120 different Community Participation Plans and community engagement strategies implemented across NSW, leading to inconsistent consultation practices and timeframes for public exhibition of draft proposals. These inconsistencies mean that similar developments proposals can require different processes depending on location.

A new statewide Community Participation Plan will reduce unnecessary consultation for low-risk or strategically assessed projects while preserving meaningful community input on significant developments. The new plan encourages community participation during the consultation process, highlights ways that you can stay informed on strategic plans or developments in your local area and provides guidance on how to respond to developments or plans that affect you.

Purpose of this discussion paper

This discussion paper outlines the key changes proposed to community participation for local development applications, complying development certificates, and strategic planning and other planning matters.

This paper should be read alongside the draft statewide Community Participation Plan that is currently available for public feedback and the broader reforms to the NSW planning system introduced by the NSW Government.

Feedback on this discussion paper will be used to inform the final version of the statewide plan and possible further changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* (EP&A Regulation) required to implement any final changes.

Have your say

The NSW Government invites feedback on the information outlined in this discussion paper including proposed consultation timeframes for development applications, changes to complying development certificates, strategic planning, and other planning matters.

Public exhibition period details are included in the draft statewide Community Participation Plan on the NSW Planning Portal. To give your feedback, you can:

- upload a submission via the NSW Planning Portal
- participate in the online survey on the NSW Planning Portal
- email questions about the discussion paper and draft statewide plan to the project team at CPP@dphi.nsw.gov.au

Background

Role of the Community Participation Plan

The plan provides detail on how planning authorities will engage with the community and other stakeholders in the decision-making process for planning decisions. The draft plan sets an expectation that public exhibition and engagement is proportionate to the impact and type of development proposed, and the scale of a strategic plan or planning instrument. The draft plan will provide a consistent approach across the state, making it easier for stakeholders and communities to understand the minimum and typical public exhibition timeframes.

The draft plan highlights the importance of using engagement strategies to outline specific mechanisms and tools for how councils and other planning authorities engage with communities and stakeholders on planning matters. This will ensure all audiences, including young people, people living with disabilities, the elderly, those living in rural areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and culturally and linguistically diverse people, can engage effectively.

Currently there are large differences in how councils notify the community and stakeholders of different development types.

Some councils rely on default public exhibition timeframes of 14 days for all development types, while other councils specify different public exhibition timeframes for different types of development, ranging from zero to 28 days.

This has created confusion and adds unnecessary time to the assessment of development application between different local government areas.

To encourage greater participation in the early stages of the planning process such as regional and district strategic plans, longer public exhibition timeframes are proposed. Community knowledge is critical in creating a shared vision for an area at this stage, and this approach will ensure more meaningful upfront engagement, accessibility and inclusion early in the decision-making process.

The draft plan brings together the strengths of current Community Participation Plans used by councils and other planning authorities into one applicable statewide document, that is simple to navigate.

Current public exhibition timeframes

A review of councils' existing Community Participation Plans found that they can vary significantly between councils, even adjoining councils. Differences include the information provided in the plan, timeframes for public exhibition of the same development types, and default public exhibition timeframes.

Table 1 highlights the current differences in public exhibition timeframes for the same development type found from a selection of metropolitan and regional council public exhibition timeframes for the same development type.

Councils should be applying consistent minimum public exhibition timeframes for low impact development types in the first instance and only increasing public exhibition timeframes to 14 days where development will result in higher impacts. Where a proposed development already meets the

agreed development controls which were informed by upfront strategic planning and community and stakeholder engagement, notification may not be necessary.

Key

Exempt from exhibition

Table 1: Public exhibition timeframes across a sample of 14 different councils

Council	Development Type								Notes
	Internal building (residential)	Demolition	Dwelling - one storey	Alts / adds - one storey	Ancillary residential	Secondary dwellings	Boundary adjustments	Signage	
Blacktown	7	7	7	7	7	7*		-	*up to two storeys
Canterbury-Bankstown						14		-	
Inner West		*	14	14	14	14	14		*ancillary structures
Fairfield		14	14	14	14	14	14		
Liverpool		14				14	14		
Parramatta			14	14	14	14		-	
Wollondilly			*	*	7^	7^		14*	*criteria applies for exemption (i.e setbacks, heritage) ^only exempt when in residential zones
Woollahra	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	exemptions only apply for emergency works
Kempsey		14							
Narrabri	14	14	14	14	14	14		-	
Shellharbour		-				14			In greenfield release area
Shoalhaven									
Dubbo		14				14		14	
Wollongong						14	*	^	*minor adjustments ^ business zones

Proposed changes to notification and public exhibition of strategic planning

Public exhibition of strategic planning

As part of the suite of planning system reforms passed by the NSW Parliament in November 2025, the objects of the Act have been updated to better reflect today's planning priorities. The new objects embed proportionality into planning processes and decision-making, ensuring that assessment efforts respond to the scale and impact of development proposals.

Early engagement builds community confidence in the planning system, provides greater transparency about how decisions are made and ensures that potential concerns and priorities are explored proactively rather than reactively.

Strategic land use plans set out a clear framework for areas of growth, infrastructure needs, environmental challenges and economic opportunities. It is the single most important stage in the planning process as individuals and communities can have a say on where they think development should occur and where infrastructure is needed most.

For example, public exhibition of the draft Sydney Plan was recently open for 58 days (Christmas period excluded) due to the significance of this strategic document.

The draft Community Participation Plan aligns with this intent by encouraging and strengthening meaningful upfront community consultation at the strategic planning stage, ensuring the focus is on engaging earlier in the process with individuals and communities so that issues and priorities are identified and addressed prior to development assessment.

The Department is proposing to commit to a longer exhibition timeframe beyond the legislated minimum 45-day public exhibition timeframe in the plan to provide more time for the community and stakeholders to respond to strategic planning documents and proposals.

Extension to minimum public exhibition timeframes for regional strategic plans

In the draft plan, it is proposed to introduce:

- a minimum non-legislated 60-day public exhibition timeframe for draft regional or district strategic plans
- a minimum non-legislated 60-day public exhibition timeframe for local strategic planning statements

These changes will provide a greater opportunity to undertake targeted engagement with communities and allow additional time for stakeholders and the community to consider and provide meaningful submissions when it is most valuable. To facilitate the proposed changes, amendments to legislation will be considered.

Proposed changes to notification and exhibition of land-use planning

Public exhibition of planning proposals

Public exhibition period of a planning proposal

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 specifies that unless a public exhibition period for a planning proposal is specified in the gateway determination, a minimum public exhibition period of 28-days should apply.

The appropriate public exhibition period is guided by the *LEP Making Guideline – August 2023*, which includes recommendations based on the categorisation or perceived impact of the proposal. The current legislation allows for gateway determination to specify a shorter period, or no-exhibition if so specified. The planning proposal may be varied by a Planning Proposal Authority at any time and re-exhibition of the proposal may be required if the minister (or delegate) determines further consultation is required.

Local environmental plans are tools to implement the strategic planning priorities of the state and local government area, through changes to local zoning and development controls.

Planning proposals are the first step in the process of amending a local environmental plan which describe how statutory changes will link with strategic plans.

Planning proposals can be site-specific, apply to a precinct or make changes across a local government area.

Pre-rezoning: precinct plans, master plans, and structure plans

When councils or the Department propose changes to a precinct through rezoning, they prepare a master plan (or equivalent) which precedes the local environmental plan making process.

Precinct and master plans take a place-based approach to guiding growth, and detailing actions and objectives for specific areas based on broader strategic plans. They outline the future vision for development, infrastructure, land use and public spaces at a high-level.

Before adopting a master plan, councils or the Department undertake community engagement to seek feedback on the proposed framework. While public exhibition periods for master plans are not legislated, the draft statewide plan proposes:

- a standard 42-day public exhibition period for masterplans as best-practice (unless adjusted due to urgency, scale or the nature of the project).

Removing the requirement to re-exhibit master plans at the planning proposal stage

The draft plan proposes to:

- shorten or remove public exhibition requirements at the planning proposal stage, where consultation has already occurred as part of a recent masterplan or related strategic planning update. This would involve a change to the LEP making guidelines to outline that the

recommended period of public exhibition for a planning proposal where consultation has occurred and is consistent with an exhibited masterplan stage is zero to 14 days.

This approach avoids duplication, promotes early engagement at the strategic planning stage and shortens planning proposal timeframes so homes and infrastructure can be delivered faster.

Further updates to the *LEP Making Guideline – August 2023* will outline the process moving forward.

Proposed changes to notification and public exhibition of development applications and complying development certificates

Notification of a complying development certificate

Complying development does not require public exhibition like a development application, so public input is not considered by the certifier or council in determining a complying development certificate.

The certifier's role is to assess proposed development occurring on land where complying development is permitted and to determine whether it meets the relevant development standards of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Code) 2008*.

There are currently inconsistencies in how CDCs are notified across NSW:

- in 34 metropolitan local government areas – certifiers cannot determine a complying development certificate for 14 days after notice is given for certain forms of complying development. 7-days' notice is also given to neighbours before works commence for certain new additions and demolition of existing buildings
- other local government areas – There is no requirement to notify neighbours before determining complying development certificates and two days' notice is also given to neighbours before works commence for certain new additions and demolition of existing buildings

This results in different complying development certificate determination timeframes and notice requirements across NSW, from 20 days for the 34 select metropolitan local government areas, 10 days for the other local government areas, and, 10 days for Pattern Book related development.

Standard 7-day pre-commencement notice for complying development certificates

To provide consistency across NSW, the following changes to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* are proposed:

- removal of the 7 and 14 day written notice requirements before a complying development certificate is determined.
- retention of the notice to council advising the CDC determination.
- a 7-day pre-commencement of work notification for new buildings, additions and demolition in all local government areas.

These changes are proposed given submissions and objections cannot be made and the certifier or council's role is to determine whether the development is compliant with the existing relevant environmental planning instrument. Increasing and providing consistency for the pre-commencement of work notification across NSW will give greater notice to adjoining neighbours of proposed works before they commence.

Public exhibition of local development applications

Under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, councils have discretion on how local development applications are notified. This has resulted in inconsistent public exhibition timeframes that currently range from zero to 28 days.

Currently, councils can specify shorter or longer public exhibition periods than the standard 14 days in their Community Participation Plans. Higher impact proposals – such as environmentally sensitive, designated, or nominated integrated development – require extended public exhibition periods of 28 days.

Councils also have discretion to choose certain types of low impact development. This typically includes internal residential alterations, new one or two storey dwellings, subdivisions, and ancillary structures such as pools, sheds, and garages.

Development exempt from public exhibition means that adjoining neighbours will not be notified by their council that a development application has been received for a site, allowing councils to complete their assessment of the application.

Development exempt from public exhibition and notification

The draft Community Participation Plan, proposes:

- certain development types will be exempt from public exhibition and notification, listed in Table 2, where the development:
 - is permissible in the relevant zone and,
 - meets the relevant planning controls in a local environmental plan, development control plan and/or state environmental planning policy and,
 - does not include a 4.6 variation

Development types exempt from public exhibition and notification will allow development to be assessed quickly, reducing the administrative burden on councils and supporting their alignment with the Minister’s Statement of Expectations and the NSW Government’s Faster Assessments program.

The proposed development types exempt from public exhibition and notification are identified in Table 2. These development types were informed by public exhibition exemptions from current council Community Participation Plans and development types that can be undertaken as complying development under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008* without public exhibition.

Table 2 Mandatory exhibition requirements - Development types exempt from public exhibition and notification

Residential and related uses	
Alterations - Internal alterations	Moveable dwellings
Alterations and additions to existing dwellings	New single and two storey dwellings, dual occupancies and attached dwellings
Ancillary development (such as pools, sheds, farm buildings)	Temporary structures

Boundary adjustment	Rural workers dwellings
Demolition (excluding heritage items)	Secondary dwellings
Exhibition homes and villages	Strata and Stratum subdivision
Group homes	Tree removal where they are not heritage items
Heritage item – minor works that does not impact item and is located behind the front façade	Home business and/or home occupation
Residential flat buildings*	Shop top housing*

*a pre-commencement of works notification to adjoining neighbours is required 7 days before works commence

Primary production and rural development	
Agritourism	Extensive agriculture
Commercial farm	Farm buildings
Commercial development	
Alterations and additions	Kiosks
Change of use	Roadside stalls
Take away food and drink premises	Signage
Industrial development	
Change of use	Industrial retail outlets
Community, health, education, recreational and other infrastructure	
Alterations – internal and external	Environmental protections works
Environmental facility	
Tourist and Visitor accommodation	
Bed and Breakfast accommodation	Farm stay accommodation
Other	
Modifications involving minimal environmental impact	<p>Applications made under section 4.55(1) of the EP&A Act.</p> <p>Applications made under section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act.</p> <p>Applications made under section 4.56 of the EP&A Act with minimal environmental impact.</p>

Application for the review of a determination or decision of a consent authority (Division 8.2 Reviews)	Reviews where the application has not been amended pursuant to section 8.3(3) of the EP&A Act.
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Public exhibition of division 8.2 reviews

To support the NSW Government's Planning Systems Reforms, and increase the uptake of internal reviews, the draft Community Participation Plan proposes changes to the public exhibition period of certain types of reviews. Currently, review applications are to be exhibited for 14 days unless the Community Participation Plan specifies otherwise.

To resolve unnecessary exhibition, in the draft Community Participation Plan the Department is proposing:

- that an application for review that has not been amended pursuant to section 8.3(3) will be exempt from public exhibition. The consent authority will consider submissions made on the original application in determining the review. Notification to previous submitters may still be made.
- where an application has been amended under section 8.3(3), the public exhibition period is to be the same as the original application.

Residential flat buildings and shop top housing

Residential flat buildings and shop top housing are development types which are proposed to be exempt from standard public exhibition and notification across NSW where:

- residential flat buildings or shop top housing are permissible in the relevant zone, and,
- the development meets the controls under a local environmental plan, development controls plan and/or a state environmental planning policy, and,
- does not include a 4.6 variation.

To ensure communities are still being informed, a new pre-commencement notification that requires written notice to adjoining neighbours 7 days prior to works commencing is proposed.

Targeted assessment

The targeted assessment pathway introduced as part of the planning system reforms allows certain steps in the development assessment process such as public exhibition to be turned off where those matters have already been addressed through earlier planning processes. This would be implemented through the introduction of a state environmental planning policy.

Public exhibition requirements for the targeted assessment pathway are detailed in the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and included in the draft Community Participation Plan.

Higher impact development

The current minimum 28-day public exhibition timeframe for high impact development such as development that requires an environmental impact statement, designated development, and nominated integrated development will remain unchanged to reflect their impact and proportionality in the planning system.

Using engagement strategies to specify how the community can engage on local planning matters

A council's Community Engagement Strategy (CES), required under the *Local Government Act 1993*, sets how council intends to engage the community for plans, policies, programs and key activities including Council's community strategic plan, plans of management, and council's planning and delivery of services and infrastructure.

When incorporating planning activities into their CES, the principles for engagement under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the statewide Community Participation Plan should be considered. Guidance is available to assist in preparing their engagement strategies through the Office of Local Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines and Handbook

Savings and Transitional arrangements

A large number of councils and planning authorities currently have combined community participation plans and Community Engagement Strategies. Transitional arrangements will be in place to confirm that Community Engagement Strategies that are combined with community participation plans remain valid, while any timeframes referenced in community participation plans regarding planning processes have no effect on adoption of the proposed statewide plan.

Determining authorities under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* 1979 and the Independent Planning Commission

Determining authorities

Several determining authorities can carry out development without consent as part of their everyday responsibilities, such as water supply infrastructure being constructed by a water utility provider.

Self- assessment of these activities is undertaken under Part 5 of the EP&A Act, which ensures determining authorities consider environmental issues before they undertake or approve an activity that does not require development consent from a council or the Minister.

These authorities were previously required to prepare their own community participation plan if an environmental impact statement was required.

The consultation requirements for these authorities will now be incorporated in the statewide plan. Agency specific engagement strategies will continue to sit alongside the statewide plan and continue to outline specific mechanisms and tools an agency will use to engage with communities and stakeholders.

Independent Planning Commission

The Independent Planning Commission is the declared consent authority for certain State significant development applications.

Unlike a typical consent authority, some of the ordinary consent authority functions of the Commission are carried out by the Planning Secretary (through the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure) on behalf of the Commission. Among these functions are, at section 4.6(d) of EP&A Act, carrying out the community participation requirements of Division 2.6 (of the EP&A Act).

As part of its commitment to public engagement, the Commission will typically conduct further processes in addition to the formal statutory community participation requirements that are already carried out on its behalf by the Department. Some of these processes are mandatory – the Commission must conduct a public hearing when directed to do so by the minister – while others are discretionary but standard practice. For example, the Commission will always accept written submissions on matters on which it is deliberating, and may, in certain circumstances, also conduct stakeholder meetings, public or local meetings.

The Commission's Engagement Strategy, as updated from time to time, sets out in more detail the public engagement undertaken by the Commission.

Planning system reforms

Planning system reforms

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendments (Planning System Reforms) Act 2025* was passed by both Houses of Parliament on 11 November 2025 and received assent on 24 November 2025. The first stage of the reforms commenced on 15 December 2025, introducing the new objects, establishing the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) and Development Coordination Authority (DCA) in law, changes to the matters for consideration in determining a development application, and commencing initial changes to planning panels.

A second proclamation was made on 25 February 2026 to commence additional provisions including changes to appeals and reviews, a broadening of the scope of minor modifications, and the introduction of targeted assessment and proportionality into Part 5 assessments. These provisions commenced on 21 March 2026.

The remaining provisions will commence as part of a subsequent proclamation at a later date to allow for further consultation, system updates, and alignment with future regulatory changes, including the commencement of the new statewide Community Participation Plan.

Further changes

There are further changes that will need to occur associated with the introduction of the new statewide plan. These include:

- savings and transitional arrangements to confirm existing engagement strategies continue to apply following the making of the draft statewide plan, but the statewide plan prevails to the extent of any inconsistency in terms of any exhibition periods for development applications and modifications
 - savings and transitional arrangements so that existing development applications, strategic plans and planning proposals are not subject to any additional notification requirements.
 - an amendment to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* to deliver the complying development certificate notification changes and review other changes.
-

Monitoring the Community Participation Plan

The Department will monitor and evaluate its engagement activities by reference to the measurable actions outlined in the draft statewide plan.

A review of timeframes may be undertaken within 12 months of the publication of the final statewide plan.

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

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Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Draft Community Participation Plan

April 2026





Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Published by NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

dphi.nsw.gov.au

Draft Community Participation Plan

First published: April 2026

Department reference number: IRF26/3696

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Secretary's foreword



A message from Kiersten Fishburn

We know that planning works best when it reflects what communities need and value. Local knowledge plays a vital role in shaping strategic plans and assessing development proposals.

The *Planning System Reforms Act 2025* lays the foundation for a modern planning system that is faster, fairer and focused on outcomes. One of its key commitments is creating a single statewide Community Participation Plan for all councils and planning authorities.

This plan brings consistency to consultation timeframes across NSW. It ensures communities have a strong voice in the planning system and sets clear expectations that engagement should match the scale and impact of a proposal or strategic plan.

We also understand that the planning system can seem complicated or daunting. That's why this plan aims to make participation easier. It explains the different ways you and your community can get involved at both the local and state level. It also encourages planning authorities to consult widely so decisions reflect your values, priorities and concerns.

Good participation must be accessible to everyone. The plan emphasises the importance of engaging respectfully with Aboriginal communities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Everyone should be able to navigate a planning system that works for them.

Planning authorities will still develop their own engagement strategies. These strategies outline how they will work with their communities and ensure local context guides their approach.

This Community Participation Plan applies to the planning functions of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and its Secretary, as well as all councils and relevant planning authorities across NSW.

Planning should be a partnership with people who know their communities best. The plan sets out how and when you can share your views, alongside the many other factors that inform planning decisions, and the development of plans and projects.

I hope you find this plan a useful and helpful guide to participate in planning in NSW.

A Statewide Community Participation Plan

What is a Community Participation Plan?

A Community Participation Plan (CPP) sets out how and when planning authorities will engage the community and stakeholders in decision-making processes related to planning decisions.

This plan will be used by multiple planning authorities including the Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure (the Department), local councils and other planning authorities. It is designed to clearly outline how and when the community can participate in planning decisions and processes, and when planning authorities exercise their relevant planning functions.

The plan has been prepared by the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to meet the mandatory requirements outlined in Division 2.6 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) for community participation which planning authorities must comply with.

Our commitment to community participation

Consistency and proportionality are key to the success of community participation. The new Community Participation Plan will standardise consultation timeframes across all planning authorities, ensuring that engagement is consistent and tailored to the scale and impact of proposals.

The Plan is intended to be used as a reference tool for people wanting to know how and when they can participate in planning matters. The community is broadly defined as anyone affected by, or interested in, NSW's planning system including individuals, groups, organisations and government bodies.

Public exhibition timeframes

The Community Participation Plan emphasises the importance of upfront consultation during the preparation of strategic plans, which set the direction and establish objectives to deliver a liveable, productive and sustainable planning framework in NSW. Input at the early strategic planning stage results in better community understanding of how their area will change over time. This means that when development is planned and occurs in an area there is less confusion and more consensus about what is changing.

Planning functions have different exhibition requirements depending on the scale and impact of a plan or development. These different functions often include planning framework matters such as amendments to planning legislation and policies, strategic planning matters such as creating or amending regional plans, and local and state development assessment matters. For example, low impact development listed in Table 6 that meets relevant planning controls will not be required to be exhibited.

Requirements in tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 are mandatory requirements for public participation.

Council and Agency Engagement Strategies

Further information on how different planning authorities such as councils and NSW Government agencies will specifically engage with their community and stakeholders on planning matters can be found in the relevant authority's engagement strategy.

This includes engagement strategies for determining authorities which are separate to this Community Participation Plan and can continue to outline specific mechanisms and tools for how that planning authority will engage with communities and stakeholders.

Importantly, this will ensure that harder-to-reach audiences, including young people, people living with disabilities, the elderly, those living in rural areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and culturally and linguistically diverse people, can engage effectively.

An engagement strategy prepared by a planning authority must be consistent with the Community Participation Plan, the community participation objectives and the requirements under any other Act or legislation. An engagement strategy must not specify timeframes for exhibition of planning functions.

Independent Planning Commission

The Independent Planning Commission is the declared consent authority for certain State Significant Development applications.

Unlike a typical consent authority, some of the ordinary consent authority functions of the Commission are carried out by the Planning Secretary (through the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure) on behalf of the Commission. Among these functions are, at section 4.6(d) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, "carrying out the community participation requirements of Division 2.6 [of the EP&A Act]".

As part of its commitment to public engagement, the Commission will typically conduct further processes in addition to the formal statutory community participation requirements that are already carried out on its behalf by the Department. Some of these processes are mandatory – the Commission must conduct a public hearing when directed to do so by the Minister – while others are discretionary but standard practice. For example, the Commission will always accept written submissions on matters on which it is deliberating, and may, in certain circumstances, also conduct stakeholder meetings, public meeting or local meetings.

The Commission's Engagement Strategy sets out in more detail the public engagement undertaken by the Commission.

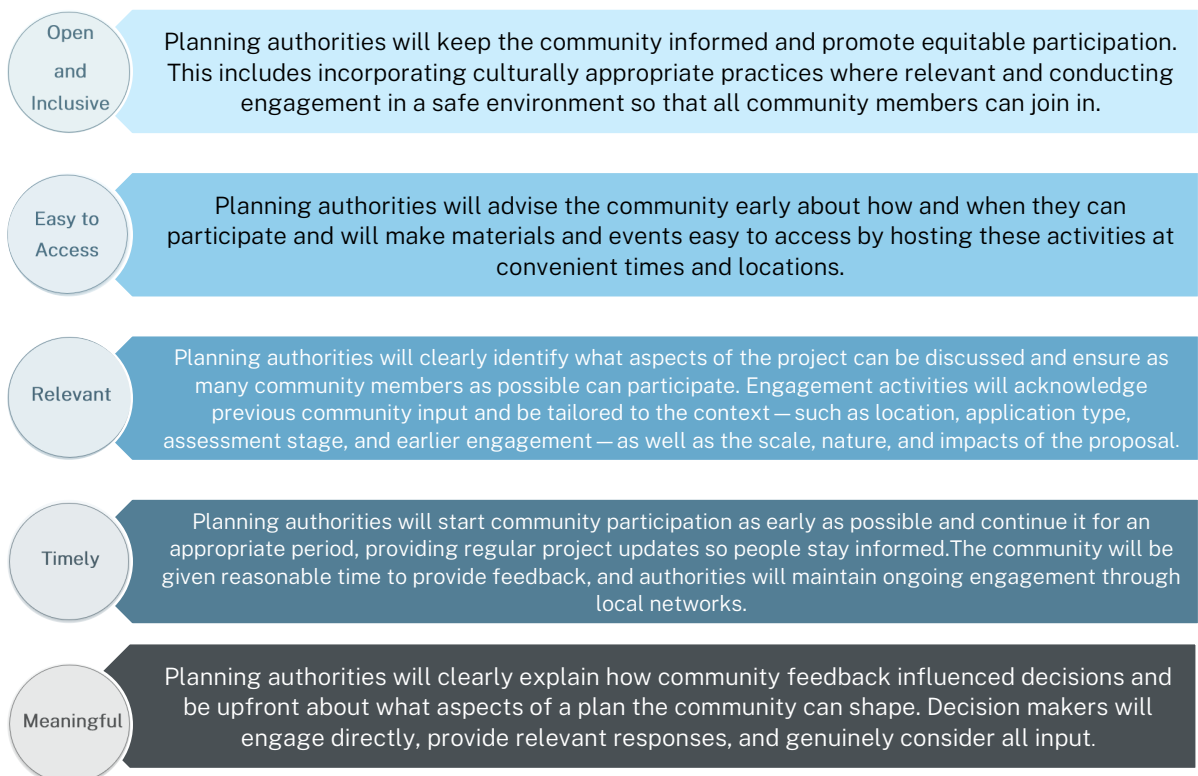
Community participation objectives

Community participation is an essential part in the planning process and is integral to improving the design of projects, promoting built and cultural heritage including Aboriginal cultural heritage, informing decision-making and building confidence in the planning system.

This can be achieved by:

- Facilitating discussion between stakeholders so they can hear each other's concerns and ideas
- Creating opportunities for upfront discussions that can reduce potential disputes
- Assisting decision makers identify community concerns
- Utilising local knowledge and expertise
- Empowering local communities in the planning process

Community participation principles in section 2.23(2) of the EP&A Act have been considered when developing the community participation objectives in this CPP. These objectives are included below and are used when engaging with the community and stakeholders on planning matters.



Participating in planning functions

Planning functions

Planning authorities use several participation methods to ensure communities are informed of planning functions and can have their say on planning matters that are relevant to them.

The planning functions are:

State Planning Framework

Setting the rules and regulations

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
 Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021
 State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs)

Strategic Planning

How my region and community will change over time

Regional or District strategic plans
 Local strategic planning statements (LSPSs)
 Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and Planning Proposals to amend or create a new LEP
 Masterplans for urban renewal areas
 Development Controls Plans (DCPs)
 Contribution Plans
 The Community Participation Plan

Development Assessment

Development that may impact where I live and work

State significant projects
 Regionally significant development
 Local development
 Designated development
 Nominated integrated development
 Threatened species development
 Division 5.1 Environmental impact assessment
 Complying development

Further detail on how to participate for each planning function and the relevant exhibition timeframes are provided below.

State planning framework – setting the rules and regulations

Acts, regulations and policies set the structure for the NSW planning system, providing a regulatory framework for planning decisions, including the assessment of development applications, making planning instruments and strategic planning.

You may be asked to provide feedback on the following:








- the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021*, and
- State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs)





Case study – Providing feedback on a housing policy change

- Yao was reading the morning news when he came across an announcement from the NSW Government that it would soon be easier to build more types of housing in places with access to good infrastructure.
- Within the article was a link to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's website, which had further information on how different types of development would now be supported around well-established town centres and infrastructure.
- Yao was supportive of these changes, and happy he would get a chance to give his feedback on the policy, as he currently found himself living further from the parts of the city with services and jobs.
- He was worried that since he didn't understand technical planning language, that he would not be able to contribute to the discussion, but he found helpful infographics, videos and plain-English guides on the webpage.
- The Department had prepared an Explanation of Intended Effect (EIE). This document outlined the proposed changes to what was now permissible, and indication of where the changes would apply across NSW.
- Yao submitted feedback through a guided form and subscribed to updates on the policy.
- When the policy was finalised, he was able to go back on the website and read a 'What we heard' document and see how everyone responded, and that he had the chance to contribute to an important change.

Participating in State planning framework changes

Table 1: Legislative amendments that you may be asked to provide feedback on

 Stay informed	 Have your say	 Implementation
<p>NSW Government will undertake targeted stakeholder engagement in the development of framework changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the NSW Government about how and when you can provide feedback. 	<p>NSW Government may release draft policy and planning changes for public feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the NSW Planning Portal to access and read the draft changes. Prepare your submission and lodge it via the NSW Planning Portal during the public exhibition period. 	<p>NSW Government considers feedback and releases final changes following approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final policy is adopted and posted on the NSW Legislation website.
 The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)		
<p>The EP&A Act sets the structure for the NSW planning system. It is the principal legislation regulating land use in NSW and allows plans to be made to guide the process of development and regulate competing land uses.</p>	<p>The Department develops legislative changes as needed.</p> <p>The NSW Government determines if public exhibition is required and sets a timeframe. </p>	<p>Changes to the Act are enacted through a bill in Parliament.</p> <p>These changes are notified on the NSW Legislation website.</p> <p>Visit the NSW Planning website for supporting information.</p>
 The Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 (EP&A Regulation)		
<p>The EP&A Regulation sets out how the procedural matters and requirements of the EP&A Act are carried out, including the provisions planning authorities must follow when assessing development applications.</p>	<p>The Department develops regulation changes as needed.</p> <p>The Minister determines if public exhibition is required and sets a timeframe. </p>	<p>Once finalised, the changes are made to the regulations</p> <p>These changes are notified on the NSW Legislation website.</p> <p>Visit the NSW Planning website for supporting information.</p>

 <p>Stay informed</p>	 <p>Have your say</p>	 <p>Implementation</p>
 State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs)		
<p>Environmental planning policies for state significant or statewide planning matters. They inform how land can be developed and how natural resources can be used, managed and conserved in NSW.</p> <p>SEPPs are also the mechanism the NSW Government uses when undertaking state-led rezoning.</p>	<p>The Department will make SEPP changes as needed.</p> <p>A draft Explanation of Intended Effects may be exhibited unless decided otherwise due to the urgency, scale or nature of the proposal.</p>	<p>Once finalised a SEPP is made to give effect to the changes,</p> <p>These changes are notified on the NSW Legislation website.</p> <p>Visit the NSW Planning website to view supporting information and guidance.</p>

Strategic planning - how my region and community will change over time

Strategic planning helps guide how places grow, change and are protected. It is the foundation for how governments influence the shape of communities, determine where homes are built, where jobs are located, and how services and infrastructure connect across the State and how the environment is conserved.

Early engagement builds community confidence in the planning system, provides greater transparency about how decisions are made and ensures that potential concerns and priorities are explored proactively.








The Community Participation Plan aligns with the object of proportionality by encouraging and strengthening early, meaningful community consultation at the strategic planning stage. This ensures the focus of engagement is targeted on identifying issues and priorities that can be addressed prior to development assessment.










Case study: Providing feedback on the Sydney Region Plan








- Myriam sees a post pop up on her social media account about a new plan called the Sydney Region Plan.
- The post says that the Government is looking for the community to have their say on how Sydney will grow and transform over the next 20 years.
- The post has a link to the NSW Planning website which has copies of the draft Sydney Region Plan as well as some simple survey questions to fill out.
- Myriam responds to the survey questions and then uses the statewide CPP linked on the website, to help her provide planning focused feedback about the draft Sydney Region Plan.
- Myriam would like to see more housing near the local train station as she has been renting but wants more opportunities to buy a home.

Participating in strategic planning

Table 2: Strategic plans that you may be asked to provide feedback on

 Stay informed	 Have your say	 Implementation
<p>A planning authority will undertake targeted stakeholder engagement in the development of each plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community participation may begin before exhibition. Sign up for mailing lists to stay informed once a draft plan is released, and project plan updates. 	<p>A planning authority will exhibit a draft plan for feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the planning authority's website to access and read the draft plan. Prepare your submission and lodge it during the public exhibition period. 	<p>A planning authority will consider feedback and releases a final plan following approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final approved plan is posted on the planning authority's website.
 Draft regional and district strategic plans		
<p>Plans developed to support future community needs in regions and districts across NSW. These include plans for homes, jobs, community infrastructure and a healthy environment.</p>	<p>These plans are developed by the NSW Government and updated every 5 years.</p> <p>A draft plan will be exhibited for a minimum of 60 days. </p>	<p>The Minister will make a final plan for publication on the NSW Planning website.</p>
 Draft local strategic planning statements (LSPS)		
<p>Plans that detail the vision for land-use in a local area, special character values, and how change will be managed into the future.</p>	<p>These statements are developed by councils and updated every 7 years.</p> <p>A draft plan will be exhibited for a minimum of 60 days. </p>	<p>The Planning Secretary endorses an LSPS for publication on the NSW Planning website and the relevant council's website.</p>

 <p>Stay informed</p>	 <p>Have your say</p>	 <p>Implementation</p>
 <p>Masterplans for urban renewal areas</p>		
<p>Plans that set a future direction for areas by creating new communities that build on local character and provide updated housing, work, recreation and business opportunities.</p>	<p>A planning authority develops a masterplan for a precinct, in response to strategic direction.</p> <p>A draft plan may be exhibited for 42 days, unless decided otherwise due to the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal. </p>	<p>A planning authority adopts the masterplan for publication on their website.</p>
 <p>Planning Proposals to amend or create a new Local Environmental Plan (LEP)</p>		
<p>Planning proposals create and amend LEPs which guide planning decisions for local government areas.</p> <p>They do this through zoning and development controls, which informs how land can be used.</p>	<p>A planning authority or proponent can instigate changes to an LEP.</p> <p>A planning proposal will be exhibited for a minimum of 28 days or as specified by the gateway determination which may determine, due to the minor nature of the proposal, that no public exhibition is required </p>	<p>The local plan-making authority undertakes assessment of the planning proposal.</p> <p>Once finalised, an LEP is made to give effect to the proposal.</p>
 <p>Draft development control plans (DCP)</p>		
<p>Plans that provide detailed planning and design guidelines to support the planning controls in a LEP.</p>	<p>A council may draft or require a DCP to be prepared.</p> <p>A draft plan will be exhibited for a minimum of 28 days. </p>	<p>A planning authority finalises the plan for publication on the NSW Planning website and the relevant council's website.</p>

 <p>Stay informed</p>	 <p>Have your say</p>	 <p>Implementation</p>
 <p>Draft contributions plans</p>		
<p>These plans enable consent authorities to levy contributions for public amenities and services required to support development.</p>	<p>A council prepares a draft contributions plan as needed.</p> <p>A draft plan will be typically exhibited for a minimum of 28 days. </p>	<p>Council approves and adopts the plan. They can be accessed on the NSW Planning website and the relevant council's website.</p>
 <p>Draft Community Participation Plan (CPP)</p>		
<p>The plan outlines how and when community participation is undertaken when relevant planning authorities exercise their planning functions.</p>	<p>The Planning Secretary prepares a draft CPP as needed.</p> <p>A draft plan will be exhibited for a minimum of 28 days. </p>	<p>The Planning Secretary publishes the plan on the NSW Planning website.</p>

Development assessment – development that may impact where I live and work

Development assessment functions are undertaken by several planning authorities who make decisions on proposals in accordance with the relevant development standards and controls. This includes both state significant development applications and development applications assessed by councils (local development).

Exhibition requirements for development assessment are proportionate to the level of impact a project will produce. Development specified in Table 6 will be exempt from exhibition requirements if the development complies with the controls set out in the relevant council's LEP and DCP. These set out the rules for a local area and have been consulted on with communities.

Case study: My neighbour is doing works under a complying development pathway

- Matt receives a letter in the mailbox from the next-door neighbour who is building a deck at the back of their house.
- The letter states that construction of the deck extension will begin in 7 days' time.
- Matt is concerned about noise at night during construction, so he contacted the local Council who showed him the conditions that required construction to be carried out during the day. This is a relief for Matt as he enjoys reading at night and cannot focus if there is noise.
- 7 days later Matt notices that construction has started, however by the time he comes home from work he does not hear any construction noise and is able to read peacefully without any distractions.



Case study: Learning about a solar farm in my local area

- There has been a post on a community social media group that a solar farm is proposed near Anne's local town, with many comments objecting to the idea.
- This is the first time she's heard of the project and is curious, so goes online to check if there are any project documents available for her review.
- Anne discovers that the energy company is intending to host webinars next week to introduce locals to their proposal. This is suitable for Anne as she has two young children and is glad, she can join in from home.
- Upon joining the webinar, she discovers that the project is still in early development and a formal application is yet to be lodged. This puts her mind at ease.
- It is also explained that for larger scale projects, such as renewable energy, the State Government assesses their environmental impact, as they are important to the State.
- The community is being engaged as part of preparing the application, and Anne is encouraged to sign up for project updates to find out when the project moves through different stages of the planning process.
- Anne will also be able to submit formal feedback when an environmental impact statement is lodged, and the formal exhibition process opens. It is important to be able to do this, as the submissions will be considered by the NSW Government as part of its assessment of the project.

Participating in development assessment

Table 3: Development types that you may be asked to provide feedback on

 Say informed	 Have your say	 Implementation
<p>An applicant submits an application to the relevant planning authority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community participation may begin before exhibition. Sign up for mailing lists to stay informed when an application is submitted, and project plan updates. 	<p>A planning authority may exhibit an application for feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the planning authority's website to access and read the proposal. Prepare your submission and lodge it during the public exhibition period. 	<p>A planning authority will consider feedback and determine the application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The decision, final approved plans and supporting documents are published on the planning authority's website.
 State Significant Projects		
<p>Development of a large scale and economic value, environmental sensitivity, or deemed significant by the Planning Minister.</p> <p>This includes state significant developments and state significant infrastructure.</p>	<p>Application is lodged with the NSW Government. Early engagement may occur before the formal exhibition period.</p> <p>Development will be exhibited for a minimum of 14 or 28 days (depending on the type of development). </p>	<p>The Planning Minister or the Independent Planning Commission will determine the application and publish a decision and assessment report on the NSW Planning Portal</p>
 Regionally Significant Development		
<p>Certain development applications of a large economic value, scale and/or complexity. Regional planning panels are made up of independent experts that decide whether to approve a development.</p>	<p>Application is lodged with Council who refers the application to the NSW Government.</p> <p>Development will be exhibited for a minimum of 14 days. </p>	<p>The Council prepares a recommendation and assessment report for the Panel.</p> <p>The Panel determines the application and publishes the decision on the NSW Planning Portal.</p>

 <p>Say informed</p>	 <p>Have your say</p>	 <p>Implementation</p>
 Development exempt from notification and public exhibition		
<p>Certain development in a locality that meets relevant planning controls.</p> <p><i>Table 6 lists these development types</i></p>	<p>Council undertakes a preliminary review to determine if the proposal is in this category.</p> <p>Application is exempt from exhibition. </p>	<p>The Council assesses and determines the application. The final decision is published on the Council website.</p>
 Local Development		
<p>The most common type of development applications in NSW. Projects range from home extensions to medium sized commercial, retail, and industrial developments.</p>	<p>Application is lodged with Council.</p> <p>Development will be exhibited for a minimum of 14 days. </p>	<p>The Council assess and determines the application and publishes the decision on the Council website.</p> <p>Where the application is contentious or exceeds variations, the application may be determined by the local planning panel.</p>
 Council-related Development Applications where council is the consent authority		
<p>Councils regularly lodge development applications as an applicant to complete their own projects and achieve outcomes for the community. This includes development such as parks, affordable housing and toilet blocks, as well as commercial proposals.</p>	<p>Council lodges the application and declares how the conflict will be managed.</p> <p>Development will be exhibited for a minimum of 28 days. </p>	<p>The Council assesses and determines the application and publishes the decision on the Council website.</p>

 <p>Say informed</p>	 <p>Have your say</p>	 <p>Implementation</p>
 <p>Development Applications with additional environmental considerations</p>		
<p>Designated development is a category of development that involves a higher level of assessment and scrutiny due to the potential risk it poses to the environment.</p> <p>Nominated integrated development is development that requires certain approvals (such as a permit or license) from a NSW Government agency before it can be carried out.</p> <p>Threatened species development is a category of development that affects threatened species and requires a species impact statement.</p> <p>An Environmental Impact Statement is required if an activity will have a significant impact on the environment. The EIS assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of a project.</p>		<p>Development will be exhibited for a minimum of 28 days. </p>
 <p>Complying Development</p>		
<p>Complying development is a fast-tracked application process that combines planning and construction approval for straight forward residential, commercial and industrial development.</p> <p>These developments are assessed and determined by a council or a registered certifier without the need for a development application.</p>		<p>Development is exempt from exhibition. </p> <p>Adjoining neighbours are notified 7 days prior to commencement of works being carried out.</p>
 <p>Exempt Development</p>		
<p>Some minor building renovations or works don't need any planning or building approval. This is called exempt development. Exempt development is very low impact development that can be done for certain residential, commercial and industrial properties.</p> <p>Examples of exempt development include decks, garden sheds, carports, fences, repairing a window or painting a house.</p>		<p>Development is exempt from exhibition. </p>

Getting involved

Guidance on getting involved

Getting involved in the development of strategic plans or providing feedback on proposed developments is a great way for the community to have a meaningful say in how their local area changes over time.

It ensures future development reflects community needs, creates well designed neighbourhoods including public open space and raises ideas that may improve projects before they are approved.

Most importantly, it ensures a transparent and fair planning system so that communities across NSW feel heard and reflected in the spaces that they live and work in.

Notification

If you are directly impacted by a proposal, you may receive a notification during the public exhibition period that provides information on how to view a proposal and how to lodge a submission. This notification may include:

- a letter
- an email
- an on-site notice

For broader engagement, the following engagement tools may be used to inform of projects happening in your area including:

- drop in sessions
 - public meetings
 - reference groups
 - website content or, social media notification
 - community newsletters and emails
 - updates to subscribers via the NSW Planning Portal.
-

What is an exhibition period?

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* sets out minimum community participation requirements for the public exhibition of certain planning matters.

During a public exhibition period all relevant documentation is made publicly available, and the community is invited to make a submission outlining their views on the draft policy, plan or project.

Why should I make a submission?

When making a final decision, consideration is given to the points raised during the public exhibition period, which may result in changes to the project to protect amenity or environmental impacts. In some cases, the number of submissions on a development application determines who the final consent authority is.

The community will be informed about how submissions were considered in decision-making. A report will summarise issues raised during the public exhibition period and describe how community views influence decision making.

How to write a submission

To have your say on a project you must lodge a submission before the close of the exhibition period. Submissions may be made online through the relevant planning authority's website, or in some instances a letter may be accepted. When making a submission you will be required to include:

- your full name and address
- the name of the application and the application number
- whether you 'support', 'object to' the project, or if you are simply providing comment on the project
- the reasons why you support or object to the project

Ideally a submission should be specific to the type of project or development that is being publicly exhibited. The contents of a submission may be a general response to the project, and not technically detailed. You do not need to be a specialist to have your say. Table 4 provides guidance on how you may write an effective submission.

All persons who lodge a submission are required to declare any relevant political donations and/or gifts in accordance with Section 10.4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act 1979*.

A submission will only be accepted if it is made directly to council or the relevant planning authority. Submissions will not be accepted or acknowledged if received through third party websites.

Table 4: Guidance on writing an effective submission

The consent authority will consider impacts, including:	An effective submission is:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency with planning controls • Any overshadowing Impacts • Obstruction of views • Privacy • Visual impacts • Traffic and access • Stormwater and runoff • Odour, noise and light pollution • Environmental impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique • Clear and concise • Captures local perspectives • Relevant, • Evidence based • Not disrespectful, and does not use abusive language.

Staying up to date

There are many ways to subscribe to news and announcements about development in your local area. You can sign up for alerts on specific projects such as planning proposals or new major projects and state significant development in your local government area.

Draft plans and policies are included on the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's Have Your Say website. On this website you can filter the status of projects on exhibition and provide your feedback on these plans.

The Independent Planning Commission website provides details of any projects lodged with them and more information on how you can participate in any public meetings or hearing processes.

Councils provide details of development applications and planning proposals that have been lodged in their local government area via the applications trackers on their websites.

Planning alerts on the NSW Planning Portal

You can subscribe to receive email alerts and stay up to date about the progress of applications.

Planning Proposals – amendments to local environmental plans or large proposals

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/news-alerts>

Major Projects – State significant projects

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/services/subscribe-notifications>

Exhibition timeframes

Mandatory minimum public exhibition timeframes in the EP&A Act

Requirements in tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 are mandatory requirements for public participation.

Table 5: Mandatory minimum public exhibition timeframes in the EP&A Act

Strategic planning	
Planning function	Exhibition timeframe
Draft Community Participation Plan	28 days
Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination*	28 days or as specified by the gateway determination which may determine, due to the minor nature of the proposal, that no public exhibition is required
Draft development control plan	28 days
Draft contribution plans	28 days
Draft local strategic planning statements	28 days
Draft regional or district strategic plans	45 days
Development assessment	
Planning function	Exhibition timeframe**
Application for development consent (other than for complying development certificate, for designated development, State significant development or a development type listed in Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8	14 days
Application for development consent for certain residential State significant development *** including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing development carried out by certain public authorities (Planning Systems SEPP Schedule 1, Section 26) In-fill affordable housing (Planning Systems SEPP Schedule 1, Section 26A) Build-to-rent housing (Planning Systems SEPP Schedule 1, Section 27) 	14 days

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors housing (Planning Systems SEPP Schedule 1, Section 28) Development in accelerated TOD precincts (Planning Systems SEPP Schedule 2, Section 19) Development declared SSD under Section 4.36(3) of the EP&A Act that includes residential accommodation 	
Application for development consent for targeted assessment development, including any amended application under the pathway	14 days, unless a different period is specified in a state environmental planning policy
Application for modification of development consent required to be publicly exhibited by the regulations	14 days
Application for the review of a determination or decision of a consent authority (Division 8.2 review) where the application has been amended pursuant to section 8.3(3) of the EP&A Act	Exhibition timeframe is the same as the original application
Application for development consent for all other State significant development****	28 days
Application for development consent for designated development	28 days
Environmental impact statement for State significant infrastructure under Division 5.2	28 days
Application for development consent for nominated integrated development or threatened species development	28 days
Application for development consent for category 1 remediation work under Chapter 4 of SEPP (Resilience and Hazards) 2021	28 days
Environmental impact statement obtained under Division 5.1	28 days
Council related development	28 days

*exhibition of planning proposals must be carried out in accordance with the Departments Local Environmental Plan Making Guideline

** minimum exhibition timeframes can be extended on a case-by-case basis.

*** for applications that rely on a rezoning exhibited by the Department, the details of the proposed amendments to the relevant planning instrument(s) will be publicly exhibited concurrently with the application.

**** exhibition of State significant development applications must be carried out in accordance with the Departments State Significant Development Guidelines

Development types exempt from notification and public exhibition

Exemptions apply for certain development types, listed in Table 6, where the development:

- is permissible in the relevant zone, and,
- meets the relevant planning controls in a local environmental plan, development control plan and/or state environmental planning policy and,
- does not include a 4.6 variation

A minimum 14-day exhibition period applies if the development type is not listed in Table 6, 7 or 8 and does not meet the criteria above.

Table 6: Development exempt from public exhibition and notification

Residential and related uses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alterations – Internal alterations • Alterations and additions existing dwellings • Ancillary development (such as pools, sheds, farm buildings) • Boundary adjustment • Demolition (excluding heritage items) • Exhibition Homes and Villages • Group homes • Heritage item – minor works that does not impact item and is located behind the front façade • Residential flat buildings* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moveable dwellings • New single and two storey dwellings, dual occupancies and attached dwellings • Temporary structures • Rural workers dwellings • Secondary dwellings • Strata and Stratum subdivision • Tree removal where they are not heritage items • Home business and/or home occupation • Shop top housing*

*a pre-commencement of works notification to adjoining neighbours is required 7 days before works commence.

Primary production and rural development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agritourism • Commercial farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive agriculture • Farm buildings
Commercial development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alterations and additions • Change of use • Take away food and drink premises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiosks • Roadside stalls • Signage

Industrial development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial retail outlets
Community, health, education, recreational and other infrastructure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alterations – internal and external • Environmental facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental protections works
Tourist and Visitor accommodation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bed and Breakfast accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm stay accommodation
Other	
Modifications involving minimal environmental impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications made under section 4.55(1) of the EP&A Act. • Applications made under section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act. • Applications made under section 4.56 of the EP&A Act with minimal environmental impact.
Application for the review of a determination or decision of a consent authority (Division 8.2 Reviews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews where the application has not been amended pursuant to section 8.3(3) of the EP&A Act.

Development in the Activation Precincts and Alpine Region

Table 7 below lists the types of development that the Department are not likely to require to be publicly exhibited across the Activation Precincts and Alpine Region.

Table 7: Development in the activation precincts and alpine region

Generally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modification applications (excluding those required to be publicly exhibited by the EP&A Regulation) • Internal and external building alterations and additions (including development applications requiring approval from the NSW Rural Fire Service under section 100B of the Rural Fires Act in accordance with Section 4.46 of the EP&A Act) • Change of use of an existing building from a lawful use to another lawful use • Signage • Subdivision • Demolition

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and servicing
Activation Precincts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development demonstrating consistency with the Master Plan and Delivery Plan of the relevant Activation Precinct • Development accompanied by a current Activation Precinct certificate issued under the Precincts-Regional SEPP, Chapter 3 that applies to the development (excluding those required to be publicly exhibited by the EP&A Regulation) • Industrial building works
Alpine Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair, maintenance, or replacement of recreation infrastructure, lifting facility, or snow-making infrastructure (excluding development impacting a biodiversity-mapped area) • Development that is consistent with the planning framework, comprising the Snowy Mountains Activation Precinct Master Plan; Precincts-Regional SEPP and Alpine Region DCP.

Non-legislative public exhibition timeframes

For several planning functions there is no legislative requirement for public exhibition. Consistent with community participation objectives, consent authorities typically publicly exhibit documents related to the exercise of these functions and proposals for the timeframes outlined in Table 8.

Table 8: Non-legislative public exhibition timeframes

State planning framework	
Planning function	Recommended exhibition timeframe
Draft legislation, regulation, policies and guidelines (Department)	Discretionary based on the urgency, scale or nature of the proposal
Policies and guidelines	28 days unless decided otherwise due to the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal
Strategic planning	
Planning function	Recommended exhibition timeframe
Draft regional or district strategic plans	60 days*
Draft LSPS	60 days*
Masterplan for urban renewal areas (Department and council)	42 days unless decided otherwise due to the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal

Development assessment	
Planning function	Recommended exhibition timeframe
Re-exhibition of any amended application or matter (Department and council)	Discretionary based on the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal

**There is a statutory public exhibition timeframe of 45 days and 28 days as per the EP&A Act, however the Department will exhibit draft strategic plans for 60 days.*

Additionally, the Department may exhibit other proposals consistent with community participation objectives. For these functions, there may also be occasions where a government priority or administrative requirement demands immediate action, and the usual community participation process may be truncated.

Key points to note about public exhibition

- Timeframes are measured in calendar days and include weekends.
- As outlined in Schedule 1 to the EP&A Act, the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive of each year) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition period.
- In certain circumstances there may be merit appeal rights for a person who makes a submission to object during the public exhibition of a development application for designated development and some state significant development projects.
- Public authorities are not required to make available for inspection any part of an environmental impact statement where this publication would, in the opinion of the public authority, be contrary to the public interest due to its confidential nature or for other reasons defined in relevant legislation, such as the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.
- As outlined in sections 287 and 287A of the EP&A Regulation, submissions on state significant projects and other development applications where the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Planning Secretary or Independent Planning Commission is the consent authority, must be made through the NSW Planning Portal.
- When receiving submissions, a planning authority will adhere to its Privacy Policy and ensure defamation and discrimination laws are not breached.
- The safety of community members, other stakeholders and staff must be considered. Everyone has the right to participate in a respectful environment and are expected to behave in a manner that supports everyone's right to present their point of view.

Glossary

Planning terms and definitions	
Alpine region	means the Alpine Region identified on the <u>State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Regional) 2021, Kosciuszko Alpine Region Land Application Map</u>
Activation precinct	A dedicated area within regional New South Wales which has been identified by the NSW Government to drive regional economic development and declared to be an Activation Precinct in a Schedule made under Chapter 3 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Regional) 2021
Community participation plan	The community participation plan prepared and published under Division 2.6 of the EP&A Act
Contribution plans	A plan developed by councils for the purposes of imposing conditions requiring local infrastructure contributions to fund new and upgraded public amenities and/or services required to accommodate development
Delivery plan	for an Activation Precinct means a delivery plan for the Precinct that is approved by the Planning Secretary under section 3.7 of Chapter 3 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Regional) 2021
Designated development	Designated development refers to high-impact developments (e.g. likely to generate pollution) or those located in or near an environmentally sensitive area
Development control plans (DCP)	A plan providing detailed planning and design guidelines to support LEP planning controls
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	An EIS provides information on the economic, environmental, and social impacts of the project. It helps the community; government agencies and the consent authority make informed submissions or decisions on the project.
Gateway determination	A gateway determination is issued following an assessment of the strategic merit of a proposal to amend or create an LEP and allows for the proposal to proceed to public exhibition
Local environmental plan (LEP)	An environmental planning instrument developed by a planning proposal authority, generally a council. An LEP sets the planning framework for a Local Government Area

Regional strategic plan	20-year plans addressing community needs for housing, jobs, infrastructure and a healthy environment for a region
State environmental planning policy (SEPP)	An environmental planning instrument developed by the Department, relating to state significant or statewide planning matters
State significant development (SSD)	Developments may be declared to have State significance due to their size, location, economic value or potential impacts, for example new schools, hospitals and energy generating facilities
State significant infrastructure (SSI)	SSI includes major transport and services developments with significance and impact beyond the local area, for example rail infrastructure, road infrastructure and water storage or treatment facilities
Masterplan for urban renewal areas (Department and council)	<p>Growth centres: Land identified in SEPP (Precincts – Central River City) 2021 and SEPP (Precincts – Western Parkland City) 2021, earmarked for the establishment of vibrant, sustainable and liveable neighbourhoods that provide for community well-being and high-quality local amenity</p> <p>Areas identified as having good access to existing or planned public transport connections, suitable for rejuvenation with new homes and jobs</p> <p>State significant precincts which are large areas of predominantly State-owned land within Greater Sydney, identified by the NSW Government as areas for growth because of their social, economic or environmental characteristics</p>

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Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure



Reforming the NSW planning system

Creating a future-ready framework

December 2025





Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Published by NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

dphi.nsw.gov.au

Reforming the NSW planning system

First published: December 2025

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1

Minister's foreword





The passage of the Planning System Reforms Act 2025 marks a defining moment in the evolution of the planning framework. It lays the foundation for a modern planning system that is faster, fairer, and outcomes focused.

For more than four decades, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979) (EP&A Act) has guided planning in NSW. However, it has not kept pace with the State's contemporary needs. Growing complexity has slowed the delivery of new homes, hindered investment, and added unnecessary costs. This reform changes that. It streamlines approvals, cuts red tape, and provides greater certainty for communities, councils, and industry.

The Planning System Reforms Act 2025 is part of the Minns Labor Government's broader housing and planning agenda – the most ambitious in our state's history. Alongside initiatives such as the Transport-Oriented Development Program, the Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy, the Infill Affordable Housing Bonus, and the

Investment Delivery Authority, we are reshaping how NSW grows and thrives.

Our goal is clear: to make it easier to build the homes and create the jobs our State needs, while supporting young people, families, and key workers to live in the communities they love – all while protecting and enhancing our environment for future generations.

With the legislative foundations now set, attention can turn to simplifying and consolidating the extensive suite of policies, guidelines and instruments.

Together with cultural and practice change across the system, these reforms will help build a planning system that is easier to navigate, more proportionate, better aligned to contemporary needs and more capable of delivering resilient communities for generations to come.

Reform of the Act was overdue. But this is just the beginning. The real work starts now, and we will be working closely with industry, local government, and professional bodies to ensure the reforms are implemented and embedded in how we operate.

By doing so, we will make sure the reforms translate into real outcomes and a planning system that better supports housing delivery, encourages investment, and benefits communities across NSW.

The Hon. Paul Scully MP

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

2

Planning reforms at a glance



4. Planning reforms at a glance



Figure 1: Overview of the planning reforms

3

Our blueprint for reform



4. Our blueprint for reform

Legislative reforms

The NSW Government is implementing legislative reforms to make the planning system faster, clearer and outcomes focused. These changes respond to long-standing concerns about complexity and delays.

A more flexible complying development system, streamlined assessment pathways, and concurrent rezonings will speed up housing delivery, and clearer rules and standardised processes will give applicants greater certainty and refocus the system on what matters most.

The reforms also modernise how the system works, with a new Development Coordination Authority, restructured planning panels, and updated statutory objects to reduce red tape, improve decision-making, and address contemporary challenges such as housing supply and climate change.

Objects of the EP&A Act

The objects of the EP&A Act have been modernised to reflect the evolving priorities of planning in NSW. The previous framework no longer reflected the scale and urgency of challenges such as housing supply, climate resilience and economic productivity. The reforms bring the EP&A Act into alignment with modern policy

objectives, ensuring it remains an effective framework for achieving sustainable, long-term planning outcomes.

Key changes include broadening the housing object to focus on delivery across all housing types, not just affordable housing, and introducing new objectives around climate adaptation, natural disaster resilience, and land use productivity. These additions reflect the growing need for planning to support sustainable, inclusive, and economically viable communities.

A new object promotes a proportionate and risk-based approach to environmental assessment and planning. This change embeds proportionality into planning processes and decision-making, ensuring that assessment efforts are commensurate with the scale and impact of development proposals.

Housing Delivery Authority

The Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) has been legislated to formalise the NSW Government's role in assessing major housing proposals. By creating a state-led pathway, the HDA offers an alternative to local assessment, ensuring that large-scale developments are evaluated consistently and strategically.

The reforms embed the HDA's structure and function within the EP&A Act, securing its long-term role in supporting housing delivery across Greater Sydney and regional NSW. Eligible projects will continue to benefit from this optional

4. Our blueprint for reform

streamlined assessment and concurrent rezoning processes, with proposed amendments to environmental planning instruments (EPIs) considered as part of a single merit-based evaluation. These changes will accelerate approvals, reduce duplication, and ensure the planning system is better equipped to meet the state's housing targets.

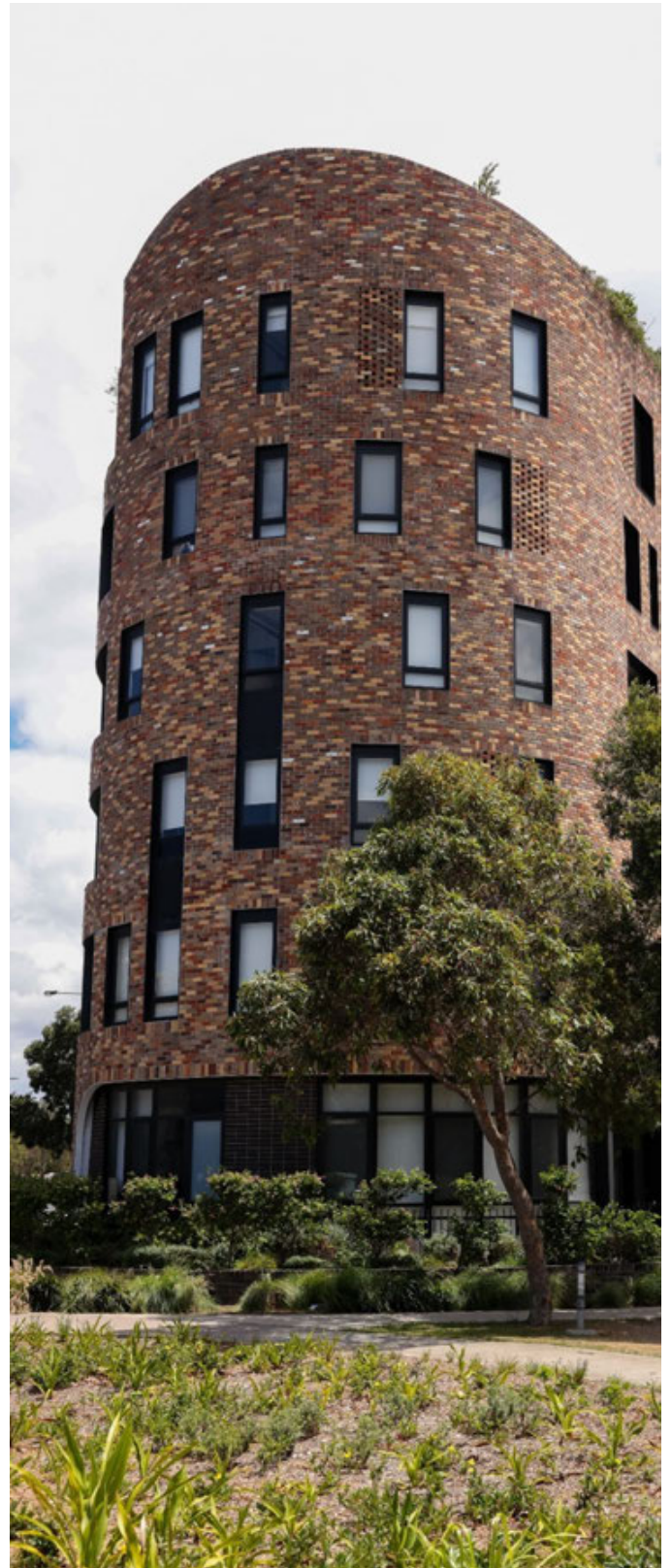
So that the system is transparent, the HDA will be subject to regular reviews by a Joint Select Committee of Parliament to make sure it achieves its objectives.

Development Coordination Authority

The Development Coordination Authority (DCA) will be established to streamline and centralise the State's role in planning approvals. The DCA will address long-standing inefficiencies caused by fragmented referral processes across multiple agencies.

Development applications can require input from up to 22 different State agencies and entities, resulting in significant delays, with each additional referral adding up to 100 days to assessment timeframes.

The responsibility for providing State agency advice on development applications and planning proposals will be consolidated into a single authority, being the DCA.



4. Our blueprint for reform

It will provide one coordinated response on concurrences and referrals (see Figure 2 below), integrate technical advice directly into the assessment of State significant projects and planning proposals, and serve as a single point of contact for councils, applicants, and other stakeholders.

The DCA will not diminish environmental protections. It will continue to operate within existing legislative frameworks and collaborate with agencies where specialised expertise is required.

By resolving conflicts quickly and improving customer service, the DCA will reduce red tape, accelerate project delivery, and ensure the planning system is more responsive, consistent, and transparent.

The reforms will enable the DCA to assume responsibilities currently spread across government and deliver a more efficient pathway from application to construction.

The DCA will be rolled out in stages, with full statutory powers commencing in July 2026.

Determination functions will be unchanged, and councils, panels and the Department will continue to make decisions on development applications.

The operations of the DCA will be detailed each year in the Department's annual report.

Current system



After DCA established

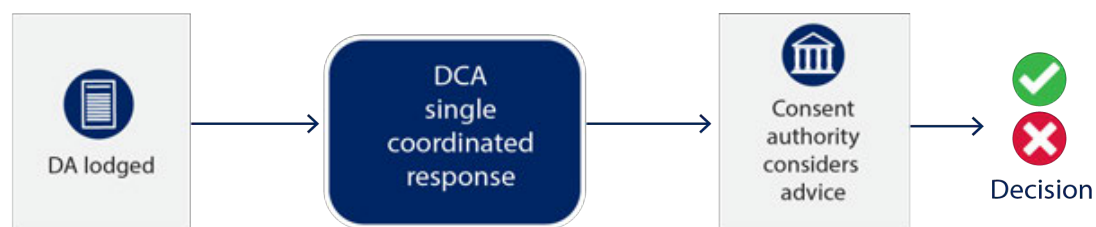


Figure 2: DA system before and after establishment of the DCA

4. Our blueprint for reform

Consent authorities

The roles and functions of consent authorities will be consolidated to simplify decision-making and reduce duplication across the planning system. These changes aim to streamline the structure of planning panels and return more development applications to council staff for determination.

A key reform is the removal of the Regionally Significant Development pathway and the associated Sydney District and Regional Planning Panels. Their responsibilities will be transferred to Local Planning Panels or councils. This change will return about 350 development applications per year to local determination, improving efficiency and reducing delays.

These changes will be rolled out in stages. Initially, some existing and new Regionally Significant DAs will be determined by Local Planning Panels, where they already exist. Over time, single or joint Local Planning Panels will be introduced in Local Government Areas (LGAs) where they do not currently exist.

The reform supports a more locally based and responsive planning system, where decisions are made closer to the communities they affect. Importantly, councils already assess these applications, so the change does not increase their

workload. It simply shifts decision-making authority back to local panels or council staff.

Revised referral criteria will be prepared to ensure expert panel input is focused on larger, more complex projects. Applications that fall outside these criteria will be determined by council staff.

Local Planning Panels generally determine applications more quickly than regional panels, meaning this reform is expected to reduce delays in the assessment of regionally significant development.

By consolidating panel functions and clarifying referral pathways, the NSW Government is improving the efficiency, transparency and responsiveness of the planning system.



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Consultation

Currently, over 100 different Community Participation Plans (CPPs) operate across NSW, leading to fragmented consultation practices and inconsistent timeframes.

These inconsistencies mean that similar developments can be subject to vastly different levels of community input depending on location. The reforms will repeal individual CPPs and introduce a single, State-wide approach.

The new CPP will standardise consultation timeframes across all planning authorities, ensuring that engagement is tailored to the scale and impact of proposals.

It will reduce unnecessary consultation for low-risk or strategically assessed projects while preserving meaningful input on significant developments. Councils will retain the ability to consult on non-planning

matters through separate engagement plans. The new framework will be exhibited for public comment, allowing communities to help shape how participation is carried out across NSW.

Planning Pathways

A key objective of the reforms is to ensure that development proposals are directed into the most appropriate planning pathway. The changes aim to better align the level of assessment with the scale and impact, creating a system in which minor developments are assessed more efficiently while projects with greater complexity or potential impacts receive the scrutiny they require.

The current system is overly rigid, forcing development into two main pathways: either complying development or a development application (see Figure 3). This means that most development must go through the same application process, creating inefficiencies and delays.

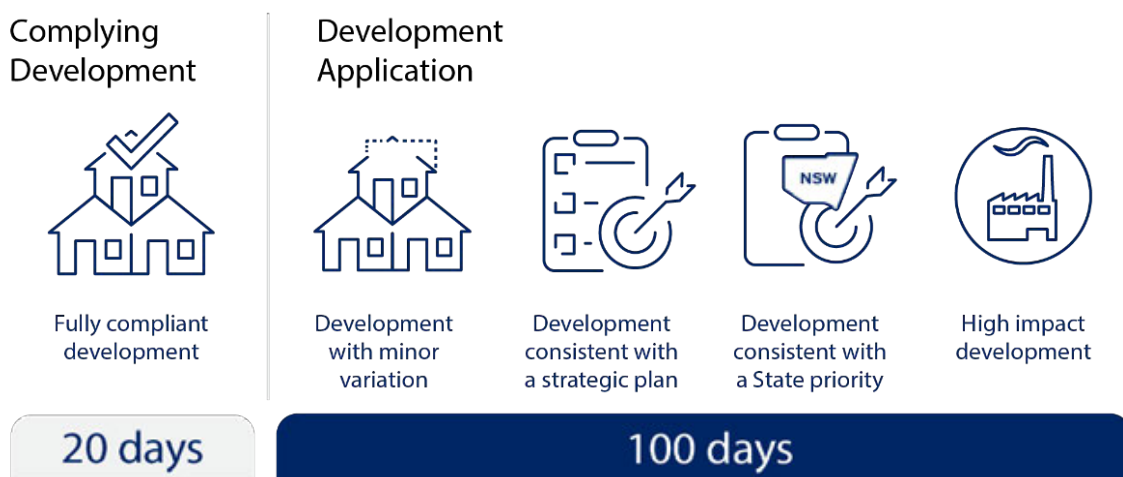


Figure 3: Current planning pathways and timeframes

4. Our blueprint for reform

Complying Development

The complying development pathway will be expanded to accelerate approvals for low-risk, low impact development by introducing greater flexibility into the current framework. At present, even minor design variations – such as a 20 millimetre setback discrepancy – can push otherwise code-compliant proposals into the full development application pathway. These minor variations clog the planning system and divert council resources away from complex or strategic developments.

The changes will allow councils to approve minor variations to development standards, such as setbacks and landscaping, without triggering a full DA.

If a council does not respond within a set timeframe, the variation will be deemed approved. The period is 10 days, or 20 days if council is also assessing the complying development certificate.

These changes aim to increase the share of applications handled through complying development while maintaining safeguards to ensure quality outcomes. Certifiers and councils will continue to assess applications against complying development standards, whilst councils will be responsible for approving any variations.

These reforms aim to reduce red tape, support infill housing, provide greater certainty for homeowners and builders, and free up council resources to focus on higher-impact planning decisions.



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Targeted Assessment Pathway

A new planning pathway is being introduced to help deliver development more efficiently.

The targeted assessment pathway will allow certain types of development that have undergone strategic planning or meet specific codes and controls to access a fast-track approval.

Under this pathway, certain steps in the development assessment process – such as public exhibition or agency referrals – can be turned off where those matters have already been addressed through earlier planning processes.

The pathway also turns off the need to consider all environmental impacts, the suitability of the site and the public interest, on the basis that this work is done

more strategically. By frontloading more of this work, the pathway is expected to reduce assessment timeframes for eligible projects by up to 50% (see Figure 4).

Development or a class of development can be declared to be targeted assessment in a State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP). There will be clear eligibility criteria, procedural steps, and safeguards to ensure the process remains fair, consistent and environmentally responsible.

Before any development is declared, the Department will publicly exhibit an explanation of the intended effect for a minimum of 28 days and invite submissions.

The pathway will help fill the gap between complying development and a full merit assessed development application. It could apply to low-to-mid-rise housing where

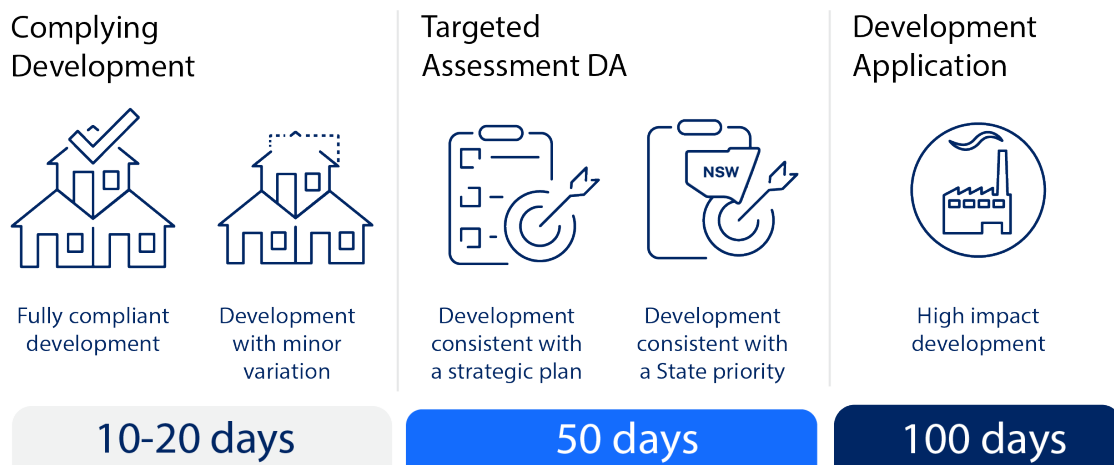


Figure 4: Estimated approval periods for different developments

4. Our blueprint for reform

validated design standards, such as those in the NSW Housing Pattern Book, are already in place, the roll-out of community batteries or upgrades to community sporting facilities.

It will not apply to complex projects with significant environmental impacts. Designated development and development that would have been designated were it not State significant development, will not be eligible.

The new pathway will ensure that assessment pathways are proportionate to the level of risk and complexity, while still maintaining transparency and accountability. By streamlining approvals for well-planned, low-risk development, it will help accelerate the delivery of housing supply across NSW

Development applications

The reforms also improve how all other development applications are assessed.

Matters for consideration

Section 4.15 of the EP&A Act has been updated to embed a more proportionate, risk-based approach, ensuring that assessment effort is directed to the issues that matter most.

Consent authorities are now required to focus on significant likely impacts, rather than minor or negligible ones. Importantly, authorities still retain the ability to condition less than significant impacts.

The reforms also clarify that impacts from certain other development not included in the application do not need to be considered. This addresses past legal uncertainty and ensures assessments remain focused on the proposal at hand. A detailed Practice Note explaining how the new section 4.15 operates is available [here](#).



Minor modifications

The reforms are also making it easier to approve minor modification applications that do not impact the environment. The category of administrative modifications under section 4.55(1) will be expanded to include any modifications that do not have an environmental impact.

Consent authorities will have 14 days to determine a 4.55(1) application. If not determined within this timeframe, the application cannot be refused, and any conditions imposed must reflect the modification sought. This means lower fees and a simpler, faster approval process. This approach provides greater certainty for

4. Our blueprint for reform

applicants and helps avoid construction delays.

Consequential changes will be made to section 4.55(1A). These ensure that minor, non-environmental changes are streamlined under section 4.55(1), while 4.55(1A) is reserved for cases where environmental impacts need closer consideration.

Conditions of consent

Standard and model conditions of consent will be introduced to make development approvals more consistent, transparent, and easier to understand.

These conditions will be set out in a SEPP and will include mandatory conditions that automatically apply to certain developments and model conditions that must be used when relevant.

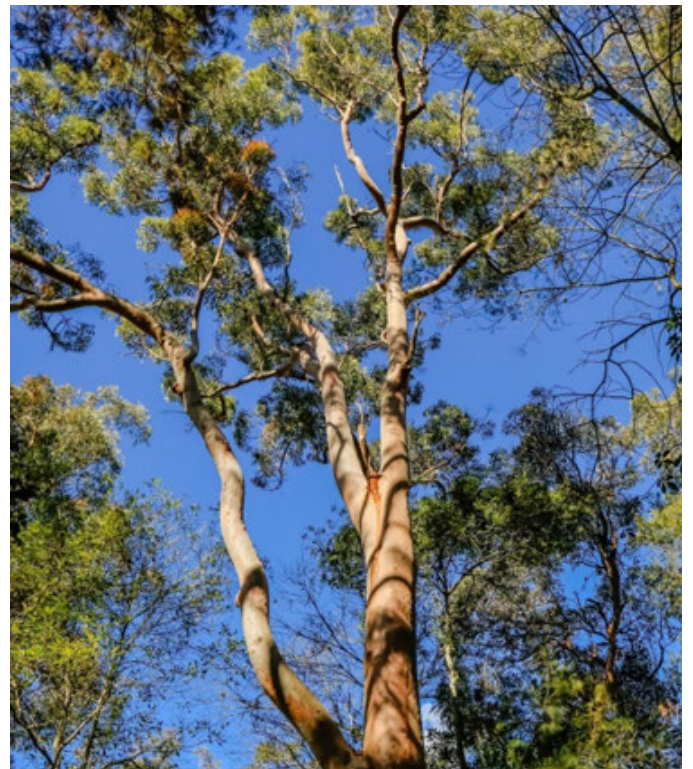
This change will help consent authorities apply conditions in a structured and consistent way, speeding up decisions and improving outcomes. For applicants, it means less confusion, making it easier to understand and comply with development consents.

For certain developments, consent authorities will be required to consult with applicants on draft conditions before issuing consent. This proactive step will help identify and avoid minor errors that often lead to costly delays and unnecessary modifications.

By improving the quality and consistency of conditions, the NSW Government aims to speed up approvals and reduce barriers to construction – helping deliver homes and other supporting infrastructure faster.

Bush fire referrals and mapping

Bush fire risk assessments will consider the rigorous standards set by the Rural Fire Services' Planning for Bush Fire Protection, which will be maintained as a statutory document for certain development on bush fire prone land. Bush fire consultation requirements will be moved to a new SEPP, allowing for more frequent revisions based on contemporary science and best practice. The Department will publicly exhibit an explanation of the intended effect for a minimum of 28 days and invite submissions on the proposed new SEPP.



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Changes to Part 5 assessment

Part 5 of the EP&A Act, which sets out how public authorities must assess the environmental impacts of activities that do not require development consent, is also being updated. Examples include infrastructure works carried out by councils, utilities, or state agencies. These assessments ensure that environmental considerations are factored into decision-making for routine or essential public works.

Currently, public authorities are required to consider environmental impacts “to the fullest extent possible”.

This will be replaced with a more proportionate and risk-based approach, meaning the level of assessment will better reflect the scale and potential environmental impact of the activity.

This change is designed to maintain strong environmental safeguards while reducing unnecessary detail for low-impact proposals, helping public authorities deliver infrastructure and services more efficiently.



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Reviews and appeals

The internal review process will be improved to give applicants a more practical and accessible alternatives to court proceedings.

Applicants will now have 6 months to request a review of a development application decision, with no set timeframe for councils to make a determination. The merit appeal period to the Land and Environment Court will also be paused while a review is underway, ensuring applicants do not lose their right to appeal if they choose to pursue a review first. Additionally, applicants will have more

flexibility in how reviews are handled, including the option to have their review determined by a Local Planning Panel instead of council staff.

Changes are also being made to deemed refusal appeals, which apply when a consent authority does not make a decision within the required timeframe. Currently, applicants only have 6 months to lodge an appeal after the assessment period ends. The new rules will allow appeals to be lodged any time after the end of the assessment period up until when a decision is made. These changes will provide applicants with greater certainty and access to recourse when delays occur.

The changes are outlined in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: Changes to review and appeal timeframes

4. Our blueprint for reform

Zombie DAs

Powers to deal with historical development consents – known as “zombie DAs” – have also been expanded. These are consents that were granted many years ago, have legally commenced but have not been fully constructed.

In some cases, these applications are inconsistent with current planning and environmental controls. New provisions provide additional powers to deal with these issues. They allow the Planning Secretary to modify or revoke these consents if they are more than 25 years old and are inconsistent with an existing EPI.

The Minister or Planning Secretary will also be able to issue a complete works order even where they are not the consent authority. This will allow them to require the completion of consents more than 5 years old. These changes offer a targeted interim solution to address historical consents while a broader Parliamentary Inquiry is underway.

Streamline and clarify provisions

A range of housekeeping amendments will improve the interpretation and useability of the EP&A Act.

The definition of ‘development standards’ will be clarified to improve consistency across the planning system and reduce the risk of legal disputes.

This change will make it easier for applicants and councils to identify which standards in EPIs can be varied. A transitional period will be provided to allow time for SEPPs and LEPs to be updated, easing the burden on councils.

Non-discretionary development standards (NDDSs) will also be clarified. NDDSs limit a consent authority’s ability to consider certain impacts of a development if the relevant standard is met. The updated approach makes it clear that the NDDS can still be considered in a merit assessment if it is exceeded.

This will give applicants greater certainty and help councils apply standards that are fit for purpose. It will also confirm that a clause 4.6 variation request is not needed when an NDDS is not met, resolving a common source of confusion.

Housekeeping and miscellaneous amendments

Minor housekeeping amendments will be made to the EP&A Act and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* (EP&A Regulation) to improve clarity, consistency, and useability. These include fixing drafting errors and outdated references, aligning provisions with other regulatory frameworks, and clarifying the application of Part 4 to State Significant Development.

Other changes allow a regulation to impose a compliance levy on complying development certificates, simplify lapsing provisions, remove COVID-related

4. Our blueprint for reform

measures, and update agency notification processes. A new regulation-making power will also allow the Planning Secretary to set clear information requirements for development applications, helping reduce unnecessary and inconsistent requests.

Non-legislative reforms

The NSW planning system has become increasingly complex, with development application requirements dispersed across regulations, environmental planning instruments, and the NSW Planning Portal. Additional requirements imposed by individual councils have led to inconsistency across the State, creating confusion for applicants and contributing to poor DA quality. This, in turn, results in delays and increased costs, as councils and the Department spend significant time correcting or supplementing submitted information.

Regulatory barriers and inconsistent processes have added to the administrative burden and reduced certainty for applicants and consent authorities.

To address these challenges, the NSW Government is progressing a suite of non-legislative reforms aimed at streamlining and simplifying the planning system. The goals for non-legislative reform are shown in Figure 6. Specific actions will include, but are not limited to:

- establishing a consistent set of DA requirements across NSW to improve application quality,
- removing regulatory barriers and clarifying submission, lodgement, assessment and information request processes to enable faster decisions,
- standardising and simplifying planning certificates to ensure land information is accurate and accessible, and
- introducing clear notification protocols for legislative changes affecting planning certificates.

Reforms will also target the environmental assessment framework for State Significant projects. Current Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) are often too broad or generic, leading to lengthy and unfocused Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) that increase costs and delays without improving environmental outcomes. Industry-specific SEARs can add unnecessary requirements, particularly for low-risk proposals, resulting in excessive documentation.



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Figure 6: Goals for non-legislative reform

To address these issues, reforms will focus on applying a more proportionate and risk-based approach, including:

- reforming the SEARs process to ensure scoping exercises are rigorous and requirements are targeted to key environmental risks,
- re-evaluating the need for industry-specific SEARs (ISEARs), with simpler requirements for low-risk proposals,

and removing ISEARs where they do not add value,

- amending SSD and SSI guidelines to reflect the reinvigorated scoping process, the principle of proportionality, and other relevant changes to the EP&A Act.

In addition, the system's broader complexity – driven by hundreds of overlapping and often outdated planning

4. Our blueprint for reform

documents – will be addressed through a targeted review and rationalisation of circulars and guidance materials. Many circulars will be withdrawn or consolidated into concise, subject-specific practice notes, and obsolete documents will be removed from the Department’s website.

Together, these non-legislative reforms aim to create a more consistent, efficient, and user-friendly planning system that is responsive to contemporary development needs. They also ensure assessment processes remain proportionate to the scale and risk of each proposal.

Supporting cultural change

A modernised legislative framework and streamlined policies can only achieve their full impact if they are supported by meaningful cultural change across the planning system. Cultural change is fundamental to creating a system that is outcomes-focused, proportionate and risk-based, and responsive to the needs of a growing and evolving NSW.

For many years, complexity has grown not only through legislation and policy, but also through practice norms, inherited assumptions and long-standing interpretations of the EP&A Act. These patterns can influence how planners, agencies, industry and communities approach decision making, engagement

and assessment. Addressing this will require a deliberate shift in the way consent authorities and users of the system think, collaborate and solve problems.

To support this shift, the NSW Government is committed to a series of targeted actions that will promote cultural change across the planning system.

- Publish clear guidance to define expectations around proportionality, risk, and outcomes-based decision-making, ensuring consistent interpretation and application across consent authorities.
- Engage and communicate with all users of the planning system and work collaboratively to ensure the benefits of practice change are well understood.
- Deliver training programs to build capability and support planners, applicants, and stakeholders in applying the new framework and principles in practice.
- Strengthen accountability by monitoring trends in interpretation and practice, and regularly publishing updated, practical advice to guide decision-making and improve transparency.
- Establish stronger governance and oversight to make sure that new policies are justified against defined criteria, including the need to minimise cumulative complexity and burden on users, ensure alignment with existing instruments (to avoid duplication and

4. Our blueprint for reform

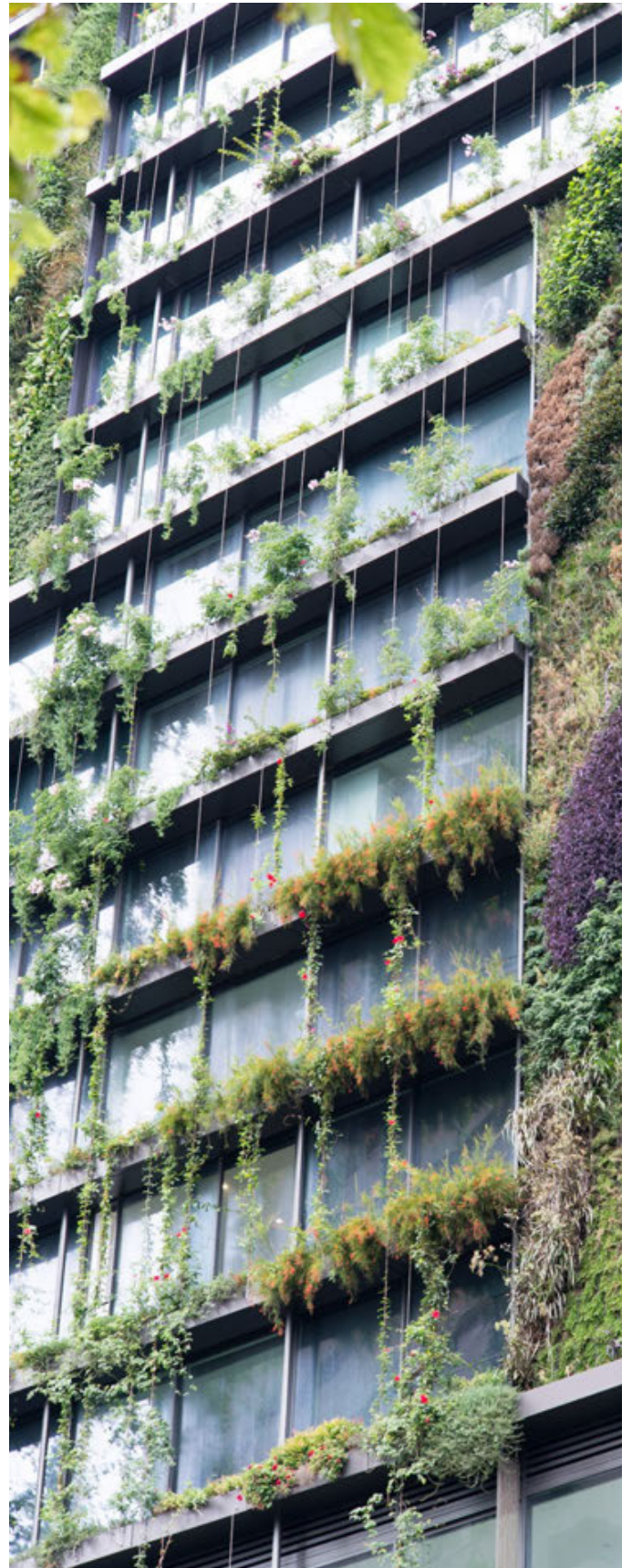
inconsistency) and deliver clear public value.

- Continue to evaluate and improve the Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner (REAP) Scheme, and consider how REAPs can contribute to more proportionate and risk-based approaches to environmental impact assessment.
- Trial the use of AI and other digital tools for pre-screening, compliance checks and simple assessments, particularly for low-risk or routine applications.

Changing planning system culture and practice is a multi-year endeavour, that must begin with a change in the Department's own approach to administering the EP&A Act.

The Department has a critical leadership role to play in modelling the behaviour we want to see others adopt, but to be successful, all shoulders must press the wheel of change.

Cultural change is not a one-off initiative but an ongoing commitment to improving how the system operates and how decisions are made. This commitment is essential to delivering a planning culture that is more agile, consistent and focused on delivering high-quality outcomes.



5

Roadmap



5. Roadmap

The EP&A Act reforms will start in stages and will be supported by amending regulations, planning instruments, and guidance materials to assist in the implementation and interpretation of the changes.

The first stage of the reforms under the first proclamation commenced on 15 December 2025 and includes:

- updated Objects of the EP&A Act.
- legislative recognition of the HDA and DCA.
- the ability for the Secretary to constitute joint local planning panels outside of Greater Sydney.
- changes to the matters for consideration when assessing a DA under section 4.15 and associated provisions.
- the increased ability for the Secretary to intervene in historical development consents.
- other minor amendments.

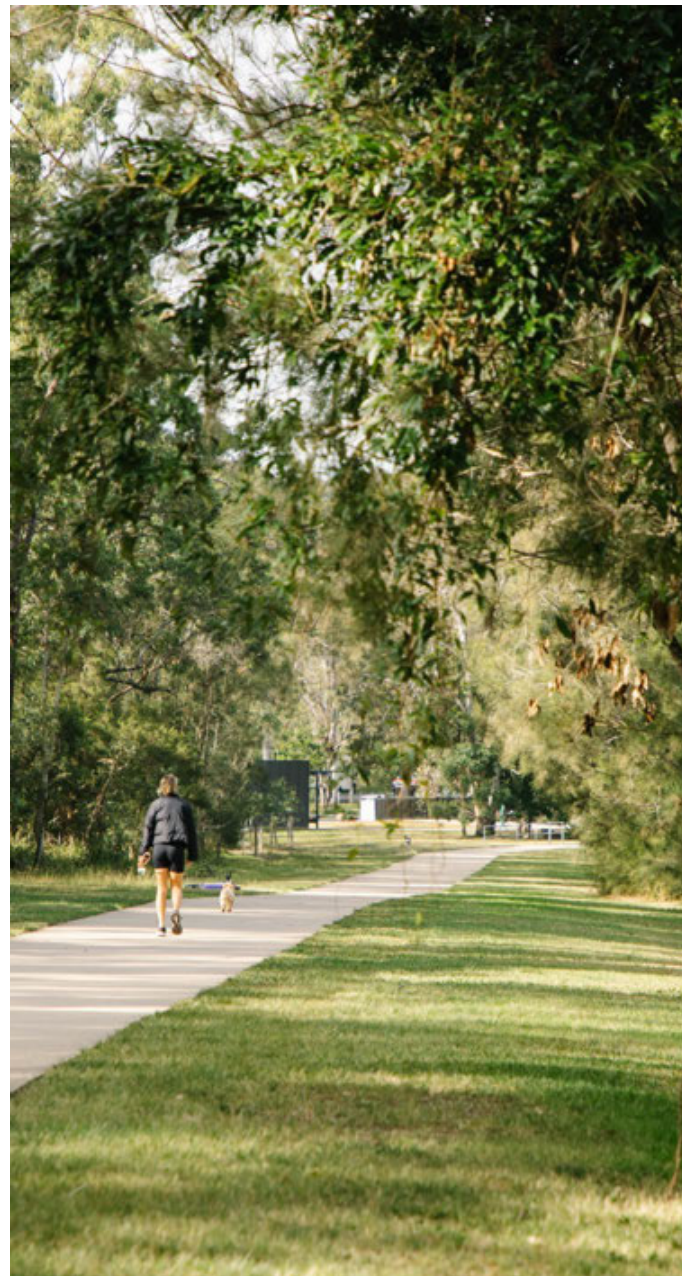
More information on the first proclamation can be found [here](#).

The Department will consult with stakeholders throughout 2026 to inform the development of the other key reforms, including the:

- consolidation and reduction of concurrence and referral provisions.
- Statewide Community Participation Plan.
- model and standard conditions of consent.

- variations to complying development standards.
- submission requirements for DAs.
- declaration of development as eligible for targeted assessment.

See Figure 7 below for a timeline of the reforms.



5. Roadmap

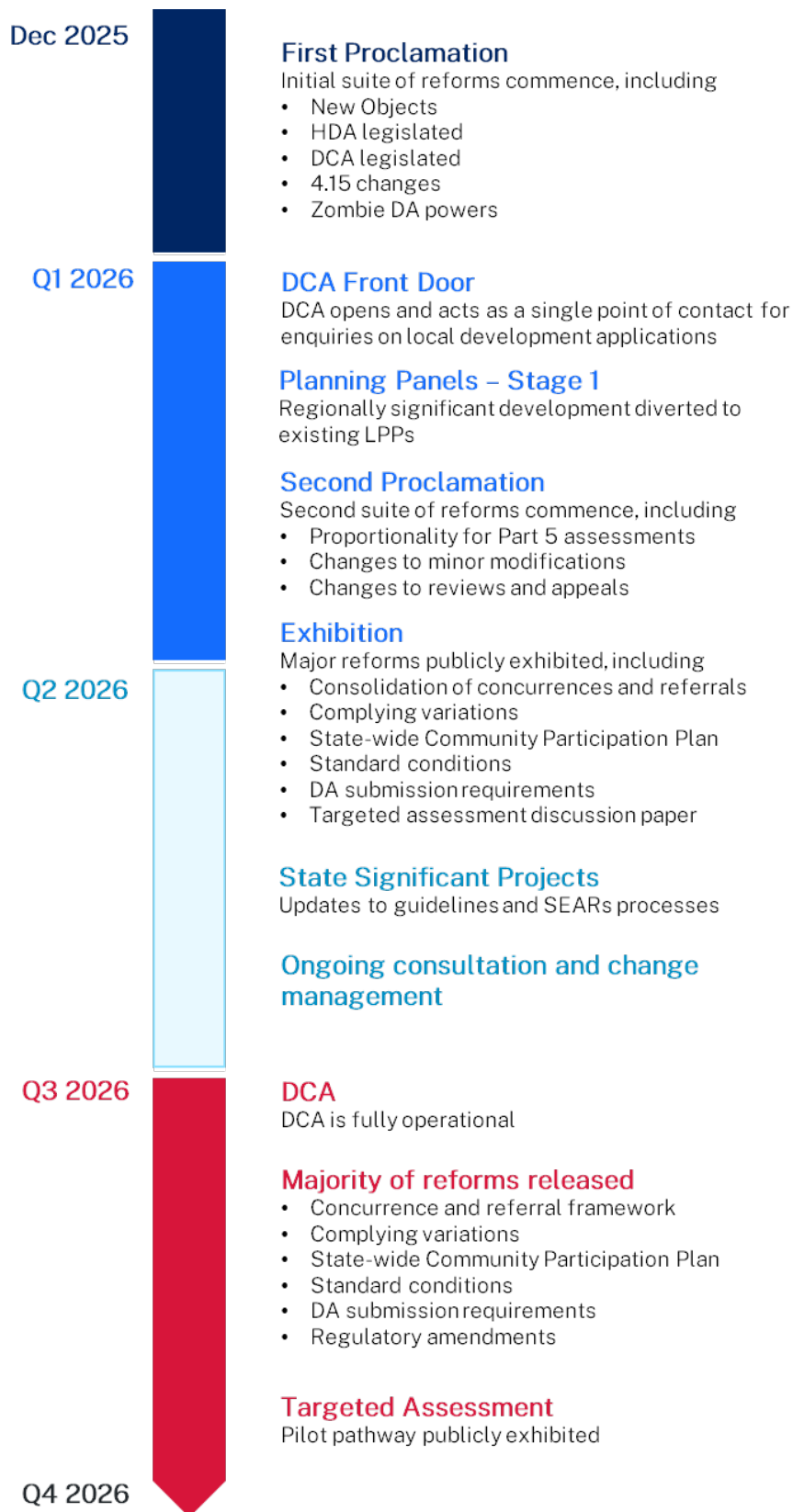


Figure 7: Timeframes for implementation

5. Roadmap

How to stay updated

To stay informed about the implementation of the EP&A Act reforms and related planning system updates:

- Subscribe to receive regular updates on the Department's [website](#).
- Engage with your professional networks and peak bodies, which will continue to be briefed throughout the implementation process.
- Email our team at planningsystemreform@dphi.nsw.gov.au with any questions you may have.



NSW Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure

Attention: XXXX

Date

Re: Establishment of the Statewide Community Participation Plan

Dear XXXX

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Explanation of Intended Effects (EIE) relating to the establishment of the Statewide Community Participation Plan (CPP).

At its meeting on 25 May 2026, Council considered the draft CPP and resolved the following:

XXXX

Whilst the objectives of making the system faster, fairer and more consistent is supported, Council is concerned that the proposed plan does not have sufficient regard to local context, built form complexity and long-established and reasonable community expectations. Council has also identified several operational and statutory risks that require consideration to ensure that the framework functions effectively and does not create unintended impacts on Consent Authorities.

While the draft plan promotes consistency and proportionality, the proposed framework fails to appropriately account for high density, highly constrained urban environments where:

- non-compliance is relatively common due to site constraints, and
- community interest and participation levels are significantly higher than assumed benchmarks given the complexity of the built environment.

The reforms represent a fundamental shift in how Council's engage with their communities, yet do not adequately address the potential operational, legal and reputational impacts on Council's administering these changes.

1. Proposed changes to notification and public exhibition of development applications and complying development certificates

a) Complying Development – Pre commencement and Variations

It is noted that while the Draft Plan introduces a seven-day 'pre commencement' of work notification, it subsequently creates critical inconsistency given that it is silent on the reforms relating to CDC Variations. The justification to remove the 7-and 14-day pre-DA written notice requirement is due to the works being fully compliant with the planning controls.

However, the proposed introduction of the CDC variation pathway undermines this premise, allowing development that deviates from established development standards without any commensurate increase in community awareness. The 10-day deemed non-refusal period proposed to this new approval pathway would make it impossible for Council to notify any variation to a development standard within the Code, thus removing the nexus of notification requirements for the same consent pathway.

Council has further concerns that written notification can often act as a trigger for identifying invalid CDCs. Expanding CDC flexibility without strengthening engagement pathways will reduce transparency and oversight. These changes will create inconsistencies in engagement for the same application type. This would appear to defeat the intent of the Draft Plan, in aiming for consistency and proportionality.

Suggested Action: CDCs, including compliant Certificates and Variation Requests must be accompanied by enhanced notification and review mechanisms, not reduced ones.

b) Selection of Councils in Table 1 (Discussion Paper)

Council has concern regarding the methodology used to select sample Councils in Table 1 of the Discussion Paper. The exclusion of more dense, fully urbanised LGAs demonstrates lack of consideration for constrained infill environments, legacy subdivision patterns, and cumulative amenity impacts.

In these environments, strict compliance is not always achievable, and planning assessment inherently involves balancing competing impacts, not confirming compliance.

Suggested Action: Any benchmarking or reform testing must include high density metropolitan LGAs as they represent complex and sensitive assessment environments where effective consultation can assist in the management of development impacts.

c) Low Impact Development and Council Discretion to Notify

The Draft CPP allows certain development to be exempt from notification where it is considered 'low impact' *and* compliant.

In North Sydney as well as other inner metropolitan areas, site constraints (topography, existing built form, lot configuration, views, drainage etc) mean that even minor works can generate community interest and material impacts. Subsequently, the majority of DAs in North Sydney (including modifications and reviews) are notified (e.g. from 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025, Council notified 89.9% of applications). Council has continued to articulate to the Department that the application of terms such as 'minor' or 'low impact' catch-all descriptors are not appropriate, noting their inherently subjective nature limits their effectiveness, particularly in dense urban environments.

The proposal to rely on 'Council discretion' is operationally burdensome, and requires significant upfront assessment of compliance, which potentially introduces inefficiencies (discussed further) that are not relative to real world assessment conditions. It also shifts a disproportionate level of risk onto Council staff, who are effectively required to identify and nominate all relevant considerations at the outset, which creates potential for initial errors when conducting such initial assessment where application documentation is incomplete or inaccurate.

In this context, the Department should instead focus on strengthening the integrity of the lodgement process. This includes reviewing the approved form under Section 24 of the EP&A Regulation 2021, to ensure that all necessary information is captured at the time of application submission and confirmed at lodgement. Supporting documentation, such as the Statement of Environmental Effects, should be required to provide a greater level of detail and clarity to allow for an informed assessment.

Further, the NSW Planning Portal should be enhanced to better front-load these requirements, with purpose-built prompts and validation mechanisms aligned to the Draft CPP. This would reduce reliance on discretionary identification by Council staff and ensure that key considerations are systematically captured, improving efficiency, consistency, and completeness.

Suggested Action: Remove or significantly revise ‘low impact’ classification to reflect urban complexity or allow Council’s to define locally appropriate thresholds. In parallel, strengthen lodgement and validation requirements under the Approved Form, to include more detailed supporting documentation and enhance the ability of the NSW Planning Portal to front load and systemise these requirements, which reduces the reliance on Council discretion and minimises the risk of inaccurate or incomplete applications progressing to assessment.

d) Development Types Exempt from Notification

For development types to be exempt from notification, they must meet the following criteria:

- is permissible in the relevant zone, **and**,
- meets the relevant planning controls in a local environmental plan, development control plan and/or state environmental planning policy **and**,
- does not include a 4.6 variation

Council strongly objects to the breadth of development types proposed to be exempt from notification within Table 6 (Development Types Exempt from Public Exhibition and Notification). Land uses such as: Dual Occupancies and attached dwellings, ancillary development, works to heritage items, tree removal, RFBs and Shop Top housing regularly generate amenity impacts, particularly in dense urban areas, and often require Local Planning Panel Determination, indicating their significance.

Council questions why Section 4.55(8) modifications are not included within Table 2 and raises concern over restricting notification of reviews only to prior submitters for those that have been amended, which excludes affected tenants and new occupants, and potentially recently completed but potentially affected properties based on proposed amendments. Again, Council raises concerns that given the land constraints within the North Sydney LGA, even compliant schemes can have large impacts on adjoining properties. In addressing the issues identified by previous determinations, other new issues might be introduced which impact on other stake holders.

The draft CPP identifies “signage” as being a development type that may be exempt from notification and public exhibition.

It needs to be recognised that signage is a very broad land use term and can relate small scale business and building identification signage related to a property to very large scale illuminated advertisements not related to the land they are located on (e.g. billboards). Depending on the scale of the signage, they could lead to significant adverse impacts on nearby residents.

Suggested Action: Retain notification requirements for these development types or allow context-based exemptions rather than blanket exclusions. Should building and business identification signage be made exempt, any signage subject to clause 3.7 of *SEPP (Industry and Employment) 2021* should be subject to “local development” approval processes.

e) Exemption of RFBs and Shop Top Housing

The exemption of RFBs and Shop Top Housing Developments is fundamentally flawed. The Draft CPP assumes that compliance can be determined at lodgement stage and only compliant proposals will bypass notification.

However, under s39 of the *EP&A Regulation 2021*, Council cannot undertake detailed technical assessment at lodgement, which is reflective of the seven-day ministerial expectation for lodgement timeframes. Further, many applications omit or obscure critical details, which only emerge during a detailed assessment.

The consequences of this are that Councils must pre-emptively identify all non-compliances at lodgement, which is unrealistic, and there is an increased risk of incorrect classification, procedural invalidity, and Class 4 legal challenges. DCP controls, in particular, are numerous and take time to accurately assess for compliance. The proposed approach makes it particularly difficult to assess compliance with qualitative, non-numerical controls

Council also notes that it is extremely rare for such developments to achieve full compliance with SEPP, LEP, and DCP provisions, which seems to defeat the purpose of this exemption.

Suggested Action: Remove the exemption for higher density land uses entirely. A discretionary ability to notify should remain for all multi dwelling and mixed-use developments.

f) Targeted Assessment

The EIE for this development pathway has not been exhibited. There is a lack of clarity on eligibility criteria, assessment pathways, and interaction with notification requirements given the limited information provided on this proposed new consent pathway to date.

Suggested Action: Defer inclusion of Targeted Assessment Pathway until full policy details are publicly exhibited and understood.

g) Higher Impact Development and Agency Referrals

Council notes that unlike other development pathways, notification timeframes for integrated developments have not been reduced or standardised and instead remain aligned with the current 28-day process. This appears to directly correspond with the proposed Development Coordination Authority (DCA) referral timeframe of 28 days (for CNRs), indicating an alignment between notification periods and referral agency process.

While Council acknowledges the rationale for aligning those timeframes, this highlights a broader inconsistency in the reform package. For integrated development, timeframes have been retained to reflect the realities of referral and concurrence processes; however, for non-integrated development,

notification timeframes have been significantly reduced or removed all together, without equivalent reform to other assessment dependencies.

This demonstrates that the Department recognises the need to align statutory timeframes with assessment complexity in the case of integrated development but has not applied the same logic consistently across the broader development assessment framework.

In practise, many non-integrated DAs involve comparable levels of complexity, constraints and impacts as integrated development, yet these applications are proposed to be subject to compressed or completely removed notification timeframes, creating a disconnect between assessment complexity and community participation opportunity.

The outcome is a two-tiered system where timeframes are appropriately calibrated, where State Agency involvement is explicit, and applies a blanket approach to notification reform that is not proportionate to actual development impacts.

Suggested Action: The Department is urged to adopt a consistent, principles-based approach to timeframe setting. This should ensure that notification periods are aligned with actual assessment complexity, not just development classification and high-density urban environments are afforded equivalent consideration to integrated development pathways where impacts and constraints are comparable.

h) Savings and Transitional Arrangements

Council notes the Draft CPP lacks detail regarding any savings and transitional arrangements. The document states that arrangements will be in place, however no detail is provided for Council to consider workflow transitions, legacy applications, system changes, or legal implications.

This creates significant uncertainty for Council and an inability to properly assess resourcing, risk, and implementation impacts.

Suggested Action: Provide comprehensive transitional frameworks prior to finalisation, including clear process mapping, system integration requirements including the NSW Planning Portal, and risk mitigation strategies.

2. Proposed changes to the notification and public exhibition of strategic planning and Proposed change to notification and exhibition of land-use planning

i) Planning Agreements

Whilst it is acknowledged that Schedule 1 to the EP&A Act does not specifically identify the minimum public exhibition requirements for planning agreements within CPPs, there are minimum public exhibition requirements for planning agreements under section 7.5 of the EP&A Act.

In terms of transparency and clarity, it is recommended that the statewide CPP be expanded to include minimum public exhibition periods for planning agreements. If required, Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act could also be amended.

Suggested Action: Details are to be included with regard to minimum timeframes for planning agreements.

j) Masterplans

The Draft CPP seems to be elevating the status of non-statutory documents such as “masterplans”. Reliance on the use of masterplans only is problematic as it is not consistently used throughout the NSW planning system. Furthermore, there are other similar types of documents (e.g. planning studies) that achieve the same function as a masterplan. The Draft CPP does not appear to expand the scope to cover similar types of documents.

It was further suggested that, where a masterplan has been publicly exhibited, a lesser exhibition period for any associated planning proposal or EIE is warranted, as all issues should have been addressed in the first instance.

This approach does not instil confidence in the planning system, as it may take years between the progression of a masterplan and an associated planning proposal or EIE. Newer residents may not be aware of the masterplan and may then question why they have not been notified of the progression of an associated planning proposal or EIE. Accordingly, it is not recommended that reduced timeframes for subsequent exhibitions and notifications be reduced.

Suggested Action: No reductions in notifications and public exhibition processes be provided for planning proposals and explanations of intended effects if a strategic masterplan or planning study has been undertaken beforehand.

k) Minimum Public Exhibition Timeframes

There is confusion over the minimum timeframes for draft Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPS) and Draft Regional or District Strategic Plans (RSP or DSP).

On page 23 of the Draft CPP, it sets out the mandatory minimum timeframes as identified under the EP&A Act, yet on page 27, it states that there is no legislative requirement for the exhibition of draft RSP, DSP or LSPS and provides “recommended exhibition timeframes”.

To increase clarity and transparency the minimum mandated requirements under the Act need to be updated to reflect a longer timeframe as being proposed at a higher level under the draft CPP package. Including figures in two places is misleading and confusing, especially where the lead-in text is inaccurate.

Suggested Action: A single minimum timeframe be set for Local Strategic Planning Statements and Regional and District Strategic Plans

l) Concurrent State Significant Development (SSD) and Rezoning Proposals

It is unclear if two types of applications are being proposed at the same time, if the longer of the two minimum exhibition timeframes will be applied. Council’s Community Engagement Strategy states that the longer time frame will apply in these instances.

It is important that where SSDs are proposed concurrently with a Rezoning Proposal, that a minimum of 28 days is mandated. This is to reflect the complexity of the proposal and the issues needed to be addressed.

Suggested Action: Where a State Significant Development is proposed concurrently with a Rezoning Proposal, that a minimum of 28 days is mandated for exhibition

3. Community Engagement Strategy

Council is concerned that the Draft Community Participation Plan places a disproportionate emphasis on procedural consistency and prescriptive timeframes, at the expense of professional judgement, local knowledge, and context responsive engagement design. The proposed framework risks equating statutory exhibition periods with effective community participation and does not adequately recognise the relationship between the level of influence available to the community and the engagement approach adopted.

Council notes that high-density, highly constrained metropolitan environments such as North Sydney consistently experience levels of community interest, participation, and expectation that exceed assumed benchmarks. In these settings, community engagement is not simply a procedural obligation, but a critical mechanism for maintaining trust in the planning system and supporting the legitimacy of decision making. A blanket or “one-size-fits-all” approach to notification and exhibition does not adequately reflect these characteristics or community expectations.

Council is also concerned that the proposed framework shifts a disproportionate share of operational, legal, and reputational risk onto Consent Authorities. Councils are required to exercise discretion in relation to notification, exemptions, and development classification at very early stages of assessment, frequently before complete or accurate information is available. This increases inefficiency, heightens the risk of procedural error, and places additional burden on Council staff to justify engagement decisions, rather than focussing on delivering meaningful and effective community participation.

To ensure the Draft CPP functions effectively in practice, Council considers that the framework must better enable local calibration of engagement approaches, particularly for high-density metropolitan local government areas. This includes retaining appropriate notification pathways, avoiding overly broad or blanket exemptions, and explicitly recognising that engagement design should be driven by development impacts and assessment complexity, rather than solely by development type or compliance status.

Conclusion

In Summary, Council supports the overarching objective of achieving greater consistency in community engagement, however it is considered that further procedural clarity is required to ensure the proposed framework does not unintentionally impact Consent Authorities performance, customer experience, or statutory efficiency. In particular, a blanket, ‘one size fits all’ approach to community engagement is not appropriate, as it fails to account for the differing contexts of higher density metropolitan areas compared to growth or greenfield locations, where community expectations, scale of impacts, and assessment complexity vary significantly.

At this point in time, Council considers that the Draft CPP over prioritises consistency at the expense of local context, fails to reflect the realities of high-density urban areas, and introduces significant operational, legal and community engagement risks.

Council recommends a revised framework that enables local calibration of notification requirements, removes inappropriate exemptions, and properly considers the practical implications on consent authorities.

Council welcomes continued engagement with the Department as the framework is further refined, notes the Departments proposed 12-month review of the framework, and requests that Council be invited to provide further feedback as part of that review process.

Yours faithfully

Therese Cole
Chief Executive Officer