



INVERELL SHIRE COUNCIL NOTICE OF JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

4 May, 2017

A Joint Committee Meeting will be held in the Committee Room, Administrative Centre, 144 Otho Street, Inverell on Wednesday, 10 May, 2017, at the conclusion of the Civil & Environmental Services Committee Meeting.

Your attendance at this Joint Committee Meeting would be appreciated.

PJHENRY PSM

GENERAL MANAGER

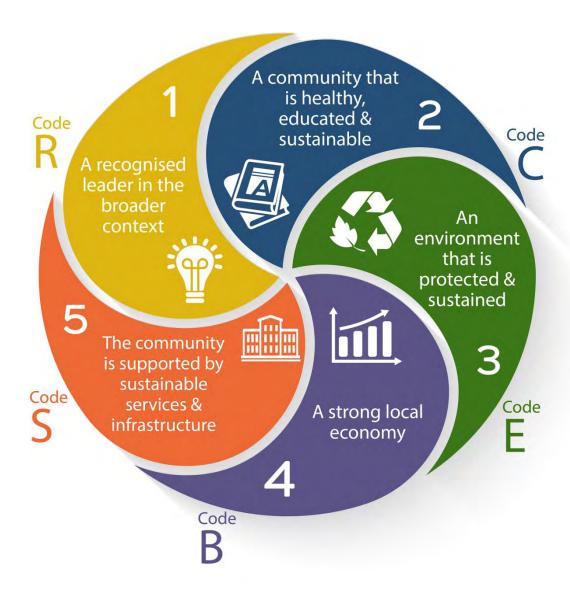
AGENDA

1. NSW PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT - DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Quick Reference Guide

Below is a legend that is common between the:

- Inverell Shire Council Strategic Plan;
- Inverell Shire Council Delivery Plan; and
- Inverell Shire Council Operational Plan.



DESTINATION REPORTS

TO JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING 10/5/2017

ITEM NO:	1.	FILE NO : S18.6.11	
DESTINATION 3:	An environment that is protected and sustained		
SUBJECT:	NSW PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT - DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT BEST PRACTICE GUIDE		
PREPARED BY:	Chris Faley, Development Planner		

SUMMARY:

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment have released the *Development Assessment Best Practice Guide* to assist Council to improve delivery timeframes.

The Committee is requested to consider the contents of the *Development Assessment Best Practice Guide*.

COMMENTARY:

In March 2017, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) released the *Development Assessment Best Practice Guide* (the Guide). A copy is included as Appendix 1 (D5-D36).

The Guide promotes a number of underlying principles to assist Councils to improve development assessment timeframes. These include:

- 1. Pre-lodgement advice services;
- 2. Efficient lodgement and processing practices;
- 3. Notification procedures commensurate with impacts;
- 4. Corporate accountability for assessment timeframes in the form of key performance indicators; and
- 5. Delegations that support a consistent, targeted and efficient decision making process.

General discussion has been provided below on the underlying principles of the Guide.

Pre-lodgement advice services

Council's Development Services has a strong commitment to assisting applicants in the preparation of Development Applications by taking an active role in the pre-application process. Since 2006, Council has offered a free service, providing up-front preliminary town planning advice at the initial stages of a proposed development.

Council's investment into this service provides an important step for applicants in the Development Application process by identifying development issues up-front. This process helps to ensure that Council receives applications that have better responses to policy and compliance requirements. This in turn means that Council are in a position to focus on the assessment and determination of a Development Application once it is lodged, rather than liaising and negotiating with an applicant to get the application up to the required standard.

Efficient lodgement and processing practices

Generally, a Development Application lodged with Inverell Shire Council is reviewed by a Council Planning Officer and formally processed ready for formal planning, engineering and building assessment within two (2) working days.

In 2015, Council participated in a *Business Process Mapping of Council Processes for Lodgement of Development Applications* with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, which was subject to a report to the Civil and Environmental Services Committee in November 2015 (Resolution 115/15). A copy of this report has been included as Appendix 2 (D36-D55) for the information of the Committee.

The following is a summary of the key observations of Inverell Shire Council's Development Application Business Process Mapping:

- 1. Council has a high level of customer focus in their approach with the primary view to facilitate DA determination as quickly as possible. The result is a fast DA turn around;
- 2. Council has acknowledged that their biggest risk is 100% accuracy in data entry into Council's corporate applications (especially Pathway and TRIM) such as typing errors and spelling mistakes. The result is that files or correspondence sometimes don't appear in search results when looking for information; and
- 3. Council has a detailed procedure manual covering the entire DA process.

Council's lodgement and Development Application workflow processes are consistent with the newly released *Development Assessment Best Practice Guide*.

Notification procedures commensurate with impacts

Notification of adjoining landowners and/or advertising of Development Applications in Inverell are determined in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 1 of the *Inverell Development Control Plan 2013* (IDCP).

Council has also developed an internal IDCP checklist to determine those applications which require notification/advertising and those that do not. Specifically, the checklist takes into consideration the development type and scale as well as the likely environmental impacts such as noise, stormwater, traffic, impacts on views and privacy and the relationship of the proposed development to existing uses on adjoining land.

The applications which are not notified are subject to a "fast track" style assessment process. Applications which require advertising are subject to a slight delay due to the limited publication of the Inverell Times on Tuesdays and Fridays only.

Corporate accountability for assessment timeframes in the form of key performance indicators

Each year, the Department releases a Performance Monitoring Report on Development Assessment Times for all Council's in NSW. Inverell Shire Council's assessment times are consistently and significantly better than the NSW average. The outcomes of the Performance Monitoring Report are formally provided to Council linking it with the outcomes contained in the Strategic Plan.

To maintain better than average assessment timeframes, Senior Staff have adopted internal procedures to monitor applications, including Assessment Tracking Lists and weekly "directions" meetings.

Delegations that support a consistent, targeted and efficient decision making process

The Guide suggests the following in relation to Council Delegations:

General Manager and Planning Staff:

Should determine DAs other than situations such as:

- 1) Where there are more than ten objections by way of individual submissions from different households (note that a petition or pro-forma documents are counted as one objection).
- 2) The development does not comply with an adopted council policy (including a development control plan), development standard in a Local Environmental Plan unless, in the assessment officer's opinion:
- 2. Compliance with the policy is unreasonable and unnecessary in the circumstances; and
- 3. Any variation of a development standard has been addressed in accordance with Clause 4.6 or any other requirements of the council's Local Environmental Plan.
- 3. The development is of Regional or State Significance.
- 4. Notification in writing has been received by at least three councillors that the DA is required to be submitted to the elected council for determination. Any such notification should include reasons or policy position for why the application requires reporting to the council for determination.

Council determinations:

Council meetings should be held at least twice a month to facilitate more council determinations within a 40 day period. Prior to the council meeting, the assessment report, recommendation and draft determination should be reviewed by a senior officer or manager. Assessment material including architectural plans and supporting information should be made available seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

In relation to the above recommendations, the following is noted for Inverell Shire Council:

- At present, a single objection to a Development Application (regardless of quality or content), requires that Development Application be referred to a Civil and Environmental Services Committee for consideration; and
- The timing of Committee Meetings (i.e. one Committee Meeting a month and no meetings in December or January) can delay the assessment of a Development Application.

It should also be noted that within the structure of Council's Civil and Environmental Services division there is capacity for a high level of review of Development Applications, whereby the Director Civil and Environmental Services maintains an arms length from the development assessment process (Development Services Division) and can review development assessment reports prepared by town planning staff.

The Department considers that the principles, procedures and practices contained in the Guide should be used to guide the assessment and determination of all local and regional Development Applications.

The Committee is requested to consider the contents of the *Development Assessment Best Practice Guide*.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN, DELIVERY PLAN AND OPERATIONAL PLAN:

Strategy: E.03 Protect, rehabilitate and manage all impacts on the built and natural environment.

Term Achievement: E.03.01 Industrial and residential estate areas designed constructed and maintained to deliver ecologically sustainable outcomes.

Operational Objective: E.03.01.01 To establish measures and processes to protect the built environment and safety of the residents of the Shire through both direct control and education.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Nil

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICERS COMMENT:

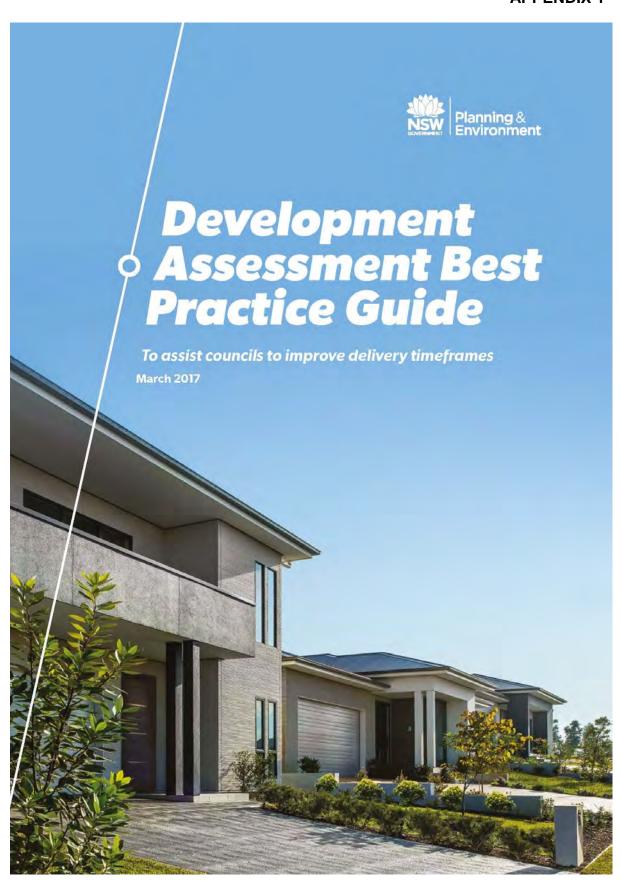
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

A matter for the Committee.

APPENDIX 1







A strong economy and booming job market makes New South Wales (NSW) a place where people want to live.

To ensure this guide reflects the needs of councils and those submitting DAs, it will be reviewed six months.

That's why more people are moving here from interstate and fewer people are leaving.

It's also the strong economy that gives us a chance to think innovatively about how we can approve new homes faster to meet projected growth. NSW will need to provide homes for another 2.1 million residents by 2036.

Councils play a vital role in delivering housing in NSW, as they process and determine the majority of development applications (DAs).

The DA process is a key link in the housing supply chain and impacts on how efficiently new housing can be delivered to the market.

In recognition of this, the Premier of NSW has set a priority for faster housing approvals, with a target of 90 per cent of housing approvals to be determined within 40 days.

That's why we have developed the Development Assessment Best Practice Guide – to assist in delivering the Premier's housing target.

The guide has been tested in a pilot project, which has shown that when best practice processes and procedures are applied, determination times improve.

Councils are the experts in local development, and this guide has been developed in collaboration with a steering committee of councils, to draw upon their expertise and to ensure the guide reflects the needs of council staff.

To ensure this guide reflects the needs of councils and those submitting DAs, it will be reviewed six months after release which will allow councils to evaluate the guidelines and provide feedback.

The NSW Planning Portal is another key resource that will work hand-in-hand with the guide to provide faster housing approvals. The portal will soon have the functionality for online lodgement of DAs, which will significantly improve the DA process, bringing great benefits to council staff and, to the lives of people in NSW.

Currently, a number of individual councils allow some applications to be lodged electronically. The new portal will become the central point for all online DA lodgement and complying development certificates.

The guide will help councils focus on delivering a high level of service to their customers prior to lodgement, so they receive an assessment ready DA.

Receiving assessment ready DAs will create a more efficient assessment process, which will lead to improved service for all customers and faster housing approvals for the people of NSW.

The Hon Anthony Roberts MP Minister for Planning and Housing

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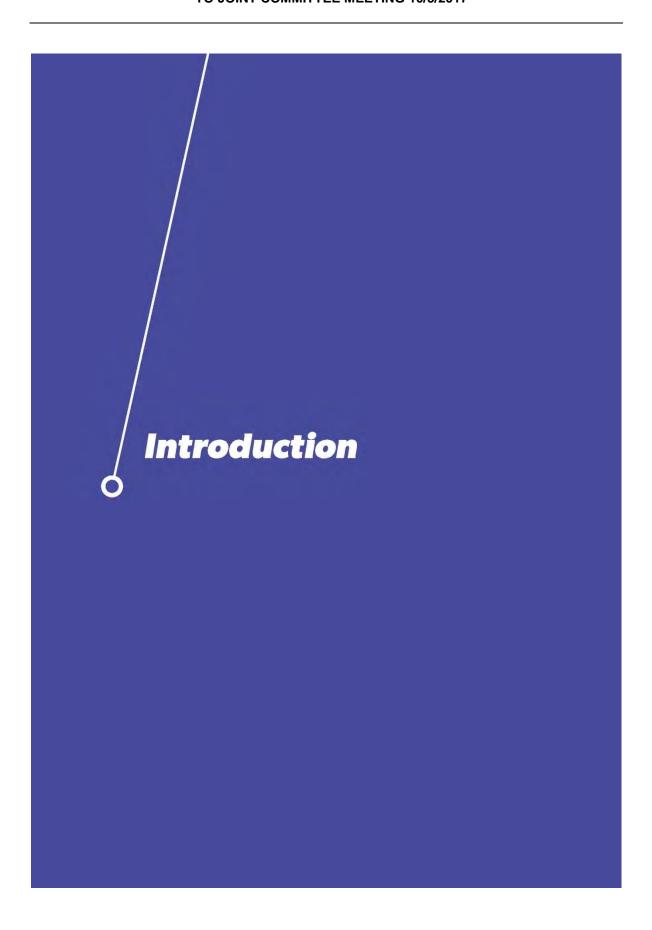
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Boosting the supply of homes in NSW in a timely matter is a key priority for the NSW Government for a number of reasons:

- It will provide certainty to the housing market by bringing new housing online sooner – making it easier for people to find or build homes.
- It will help meet demand as Sydney plans for an additional one million people over the next 10 years.
- Building new and sustainable communities and increasing supply is important for housing affordability.
- A strong housing market is integral to the NSW economy – driving investment, and generating jobs and wealth.

The development assessment process is a key link in the housing supply chain and impacts on how efficiently new housing can be delivered to market. In recognition of this the Premier of NSW has set a priority for Faster Housing Approvals, with a target of 90 per cent of housing approvals to be determined within 40 days.

The majority of development applications (DAs), including housing applications, are processed and determined by local government which means that councils play a vital role in delivering housing in NSW. In light of the Premier's target it is timely to review development assessment processes to identify opportunities for improvement for all DA types.

In recent years there have been a number of initiatives to improve the approval process for housing. This includes the introduction of complying development to fast track approvals for simple housing and other development types. Where such applications meet certain criteria they can be determined by a council or accredited certifier without the need for a full DA. The NSW Government is committed to ongoing improvement to the complying development system to make it easier and therefore more attractive to people wanting to build a home.

The government will soon launch its online application lodgement system, which will be a component of the NSW Planning Portal. The system will transform the development assessment process, creating a single point where applicants can access information about what is needed for an application and submit it.

Underlying the online lodgement system are the Secretary's Requirements which will replace Schedule 1 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. These set clear minimum requirements for applications including administrative and technical documentation. The aim of the Secretary's Requirements are to ensure that once an application is received it is fit for assessment and determination purposes.

To complement these initiatives and to assist councils in meeting the Premier's target, and to improve the processing of all DAs, the Department of Planning and Environment, in collaboration with Camden, Campbelltown, Central Coast, Canterbury-Bankstown, Blacktown, Liverpool and Parramatta councils, has prepared this Development Assessment Best Practice Guide (the guide). The guide is a collection of best practice assessment processes as identified by leading local government practitioners.

The guide promotes a number of underlying principles that, if consistently applied throughout the assessment process, will lead to improved determination times. The guide draws on leading practices and procedures being used by councils which have proven to assist in the timely determinations of DAs.

These include:

- Targeted pre DA services.
- · Efficient lodgement and triage practices,
- Notification procedures commensurate with impacts.
- Corporate accountability for assessment timeframes in the form of key performance indicators.
- Delegations that support a consistent, targeted and efficient decision making process.

Importantly, the principles, procedures and practices adopted in this document should be used to guide the assessment and determination of all local and regional DAs to ensure that efficiency gains are achieved for all types of applications.

The guide has been prepared for use by:

- Customer service staff the first point of call either at the front counter, over the phone or responding to electronic correspondence.
- Assessment officers building surveyors and planners who are responsible for assessing applications.
- Senior assessment staff and management usually those who have delegations to determine applications. Generally, from the senior planner level up to the director and general manager.
- Technical officers engineers and others who provide specialist advice as part of the development assessment process.
- Administration officers administrative professionals, including administration officers to decision making authorities, who support the development assessment process.
- Elected government officials and other decision makers – councillors or panel members in understanding their roles and responsibilities in the development assessment process.

This guide promotes best practice principles and approaches for those directly interacting with the council development assessment process and is consistent with the automated actions that take place when an application is submitted on the NSW Planning Portal.

Unless stated otherwise, reference to days within the guide equates to calendar days.





This guide addresses the procedure and process of the assessment, not the assessment merit.

To ensure that the majority of determinations can be delivered within the 40 day target timeframe, the following procedural principles should be adopted:

Investment in the pre-lodgement stage:

The quality and adequacy of DAs, the speed in which they can be assessed and determined, and the standard of the built form outcome are generally influenced by the amount and type of resources councils invest in the pre-lodgement stage.

Councils that invest time and resources at the pre-lodgement stage receive applications that have better responses to policy and compliance requirements. The lodgement of an 'assessment ready' DA allows the assessment officer to focus on assessing and determining the application rather than liaising with the applicant to get the application to a standard where it can actually be assessed. Better quality of information also allows the assessment officer to have a thorough appreciation of the proposal and its built form implications.

Formalise assessment timeframes within council:

Adopting clear performance targets for council staff relating to assessment timeframes ensures that the development assessment process is transparent, accountable and outcomes focused.

Jurisdictional comparisons across Australia indicate that consent authorities that have statutory timeframes and/or implement key performance criteria at senior levels are more likely to have good delivery timeframes.

Councils should adopt key performance indicators in line with the Premier's target as follows:

- General manager/director/team leaders:
 90 per cent of DAs determined within 40 days.
- Team leaders/assessing officers/referral officers: Undertake assessment stage within 35 days.

Delivery focused assessment processing:

Establishing a culture that supports efficient and consistent development assessment – driven by the assessing officer, and supported by all levels of management and services – is fundamental to improving delivery times.

Applications that are not capable of being assessed and determined on the information submitted at lodgement are likely to have resource implications for assessments, workloads and morale.

Issues and concerns regarding design and compliance should be resolved as far as practical during the pre-lodgement stage. Where DAs are deemed deficient following lodgement, the applicant should be encouraged to withdraw the application, it should be rejected or it should be determined on the information before council. Councils that have adopted a corporate and performance based approach to the assessment of DAs have demonstrated improved assessment timeframes and increased staff satisfaction. To deliver a consistently corporate based approach to development assessment requires all users to be clear on their respective roles, accountabilities and responsibilities during the process. To achieve this, an Assessments Efficiency Partnership Agreement has been prepared to provide clarity around the roles of the different users of this guide and how all individuals in the process should work together to drive efficiency. The agreement is included as Appendix A.

Standardise:

The adoption of standardised processes and procedures can help to reduce assessment timeframes – these may include standardised report templates, conditions, delegation instruments, policies around notification, 'Stop the Clock', advertising, and operational procedures for decision making forums.

Development standards and development controls should be streamlined. Adopting performance based development controls, as opposed to traditional prescriptive instruments will generally lead to better planning outcomes and help ensure that requests for variations are minimised and do not become standard practice.

Councils are encouraged to adopt all necessary measures to support the assessment officers and establish a more efficient development assessment process.

Business system improvement and online tools:

Councils with high volumes of DAs should implement measures to enable digital management of all development assessment processes including lodgement, assessment, determination and file management. Councils that have invested in software to manage lodgement, assessment and determination of DAs have reduced assessment and administrative workloads. Digital business systems also provide a more integrated and secure document management system, reduce the cost of archiving and they consolidate property information in a centralised and accessible manner.

Such software can also assist integration with the NSW Planning Portal.

Incentives:

Incentives are an important driver for applicants, and can be leveraged by councils to reduce assessment timeframes.

Successful initiatives that have been adopted by some councils include:

- Fast tracked assessment process for applications that have been subject to pre-lodgement meetings or panels.
- Fast tracked assessment process for applications that are fully compliant and do not require notification or referral.
- Refunds or partial refunds on lodgement fees for applications that are withdrawn at the Preliminary Assessment stage for being incomplete or inadequate.

Assessing officer workloads:

In general, assessing officers are capable of achieving the 40 day assessment timeframe when they manage up to 25 relatively straightforward DAs at any one time.

Where officers have more than 25 relatively straightforward DAs, and/or where a significant proportion of the applications are complex, assessment timeframes increase proportionally.

Level of assessment officer support for applicants during the assessment process:

It is the practice of some councils to provide a high level of ongoing support throughout the assessment process for certain applicants, including 'Murn and Dad' applicants. While the rationale behind this business practice is acknowledged, it is counter intuitive to a timely determination. Such practices include:

- Consistently accepting incomplete and inadequate applications.
- Ongoing discussions around design and compliance related issues that should have been resolved or agreed to at the pre-lodgement stage.
- Issuing multiple Stop the Clock and Further Information requests.
- Allowing lodgement of multiple revisions of architectural plans.

Councils should make every effort to provide a high level of support to applicants throughout the pre-lodgement stage. This includes ensuring adequate staff are available to walk applicants through DA requirements, documents and processes, to the extent required to ensure an assessment ready DA is submitted. This will allow assessment officers to focus their efforts on a speedy merit assessment. Focusing financial and resource investment on pre-lodgement support will result in the submission of quality DAs and improved assessment timeframes.

Management:

Supportive and competent management is critical to a successful development assessment team.

Directors, managers and team leaders should be responsible for tracking and monitoring the assessment timeframes and be accountable for performance. This includes reallocation of applications when necessary, employing additional staff and ensuring timeframes are met at all times, including when assessing officers are on leave.

The processing of some DAs is delayed by the inability of assessment officers to resolve an issue or solve a problem. Senior officers or management should be available to assist and facilitate resolution in such circumstances. Senior staff should ensure they are available for regular 'directions meetings' as a forum to guide junior officers and better manage their DA case loads.

Delegations:

While noting that delegations at council level often reflect varying planning issues facing different Local Government Areas, councils should make every effort to maximise and standardise development assessment delegations to ensure a consistent and efficient decision making process. Delegations should:

- Facilitate decisions which reflect the nature of the DA.
- Acknowledge the judgement of their professional staff, particularly in planning and environmental management.
- Seek the continued merit assessment at the appropriate level to minimise politicisation of the decision making process.





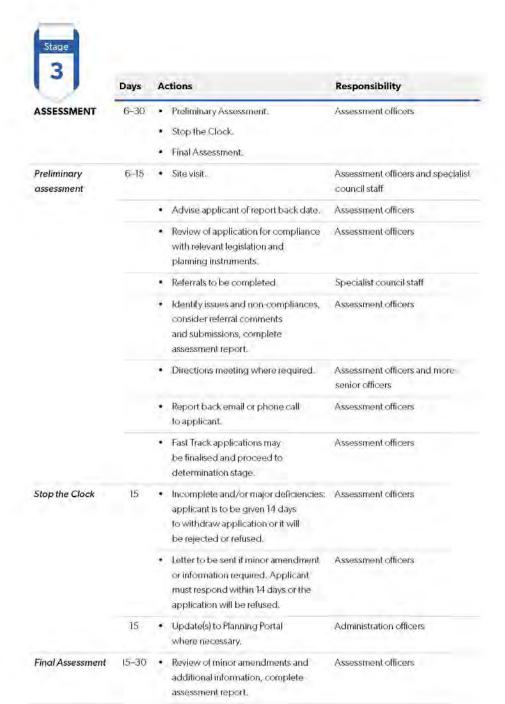
DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT BEST PRACTICE PROCESS MAP

Days	Actions	Responsibility	
N/A	Pre-lodgement advisory services.	Duty assessment officer including	
	 Pre-lodgement meetings with 	planners and surveyors	
	applicants and referral authorities	Senior assessment staff and	
	(where relevant).	technical officers	



LODGEMENT, NOTIFICATION, REFERRAL AND ALLOCATION

Days	A	ctions	Responsibility	
1-6		Applicant submits DA which is checked for completeness and adequacy against the Secretary's Requirements.	Assessment officers	
		Lodgement processed.	Customer service staff	
	•	Clearing house.	Senior assessment staff, technical officers and other specialist council staff	
	•	Updates, file management, completing exhibition and notification requirements, completing internal and external reternals, delivering file to assessing officer with any notes or conditions from the cleaning house.	Administration officers	

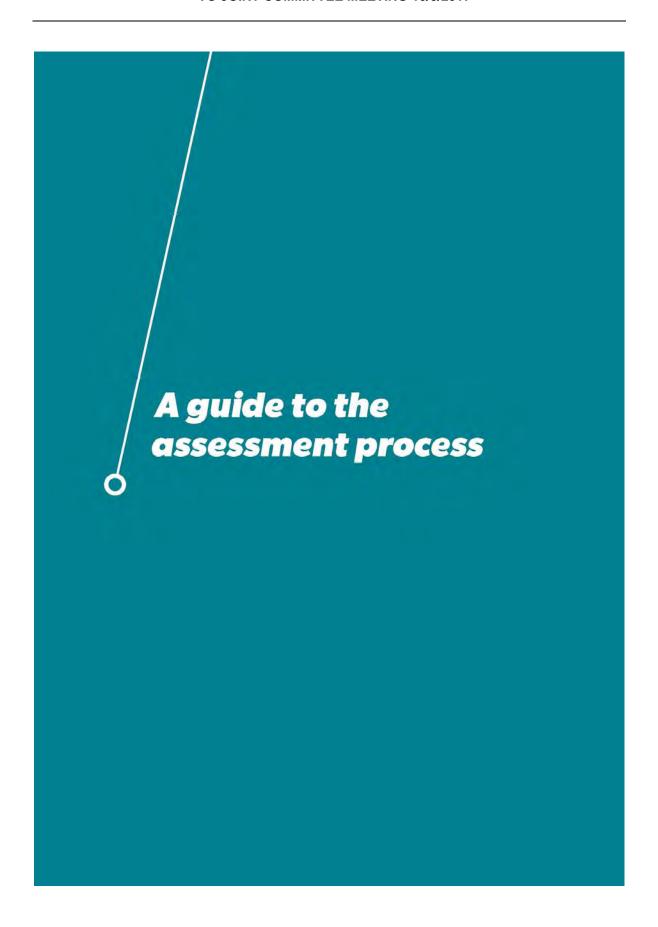




	Days	Actions	Responsibility
DETERMINATION			
Fast Track	15-20	Peer review.	Equal or more senior officer
applications	20-25	Determination by delegated authority.	Per instrument of delegation
Standard	30-35	Peer review.	Equal or more senior officer
applications	35-40	 Determination by delegated authority. 	Per instrument of delegation
	35-40	 Determination by council, IHAP and JRPP. 	Per instrument of delegation



	Days	Actions	Responsibility
POST- DETERMINATION			
Fast Track applications	25	 Contact applicant and advise of determination. 	Assessment officers
		 Prepare Notice of Determination, and any relevant consent and stamped plans. 	Administration officers
		Check determination material.	Assessment officers
		 Provide determination package to applicant. 	Administration officers
Standard applications	40	 Contact applicant and advise of determination. 	Assessment officers
		 Prepare Notice of Determination, and any relevant consent and stamped plans. 	Administration officers
		Check determination material.	Assessment officers
		Provide determination package to applicant.	Administration officers



This section sets out the general practice requirements and associated timeframes for each stage of the development assessment process.

Stage 1 | Pre-lodgement

Key Objective

 To provide informative and timely pre-lodgement services to ensure once an application is lodged it can be considered and determined in an expeditious manner.



PRE-LODGEMENT ADVISORY SERVICES

To be determined by council/applicant

Dedicated services providing general advice on DAs including: requirements for lodging a DA, and relevant development standards and development controls, likely assessment stream and timing.

PRE-LODGEMENT MEETING

- A formal meeting with council officers to discuss lodgement requirements, assessment processes and design review where required by State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 – Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development (SEPP 65).
- Council provides detailed advice on all aspects of the development process including compliance requirements, design and planning.
- Council/applicant may request a follow up meeting prior to lodgement to: review the DA for completeness and address any outstanding issues.

The pre-lodgement process is a key stage in the development assessment process. It should enable applicants to:

- Determine whether or not their development proposal could be dealt with as a complying development as opposed to lodging a full DA.
- Ensure they are aware of all administrative and information requirements prior to lodging a DA.

 Be familiar with their roles and the roles and responsibilities of council staff and decision makers in the assessment and determination process.

Councils should ensure that their websites include a link to the NSW Planning Portal and a dedicated Planning and Development section that provides council specific resources for applicants including an explanation of the process, FAQs and contact details for Pre-lodgement Advisory Services.

Pre-lodgement advisory services should be encouraged for all DAs, provided free of charge (although fees can be charged for pre-DA and Design Excellence meetings). These services should be accessible during business hours and staffed by suitably qualified officers.

Pre-lodgement advisory services should cover:

- · General queries for straightforward DAs.
- Advice on the type of professional services that may be required in the preparation of applications.
- Information on when approvals from other authorities and state agencies may be required.
- Clear information on council requirements and expectations for DAs including compliance with relevant development standards and controls.
- Booking requirements for pre-lodgement meetings and panels (see below).

A record of the pre-lodgement advisory service should be noted on council's electronic property system. The note should only include the address, date and subject matter of the advice. The record of discussion will provide improved continuity of service and advice.

Pre-lodgement meetings should be mandatory for more complex DAs, for example:

- · Capital investment value greater than \$2 million.
- · Residential flat buildings, multi dwelling housing.
- Complex proposals including those with environmentally constrained sites.

Design Excellence meetings as required under SEPP 65 should occur prior to lodgement where possible to ensure that the design of residential flat building DAs are adequately addressed on the lodged plans.

Pre-lodgement meetings should:

- · Be booked and be subject to fees.
- Require applicants to provide concept documentation a minimum of two weeks prior to the meeting.
- Involve professional staff from council, the applicant, and where practical those responsible for the preparation of architectural plans and supporting specialist reports.
- Identify relevant external and internal referral requirements.
- Have in attendance representatives from other authorities or state agencies where it's anticipated external referrals may require significant issues to be addressed.
- Identify key assessment issues and specialist technical requirements, as well as expectations regarding compliance with relevant development standards and controls.
- Be used to provide specific direction on issues of concern so the applicant is clear on the resolution preferred by council.
- Agree to an in-principle timeframe for determination.
- Include formal records of the meeting which are to be copied to the property file and provided to the applicant within two business days.

Pre-lodgement meetings should not be required by councils for smaller-scale Fast Track applications.

Secondary pre-lodgement meetings may be necessary for particularly complex applications.

NSW Planning Portal

The NSW Planning Portal allows applicants to identify a site's constraints, the planning controls that apply to it and the information they will be required to submit in any application. Customers should be directed to the NSW Planning Portal to inform themselves at the pre-lodgement stage.

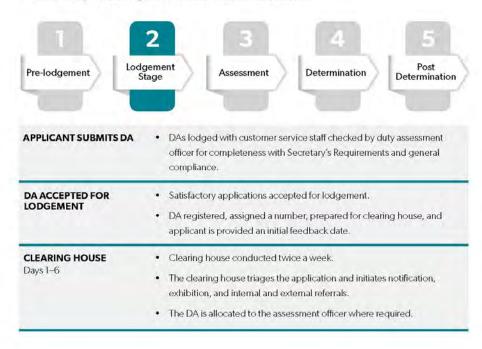
Computers for public use could be set up in the reception area of council offices so applicants can access the NSW Planning Portal, with council customer service staff available to answer any queries.



Stage 2 | Lodgement, notification, referrals and allocation

Key Objectives

- To ensure that all DAs have meet the relevant Secretary's Requirements for lodgement.
- To ensure that any additional information required by council for lodgement is reasonable and consistently applied.
- To ensure expeditious lodgement, notification and referral of all DAs.



GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Lodgement: DAs should be checked by the duty assessment officer in the first instance. Applications can only be accepted if they satisfy the Secretary's Requirements, are generally compliant with the development standards and are supported by an acceptable level of information.

Councils must be reasonable and consistent when requesting information in addition to the information specified by the Secretary's Requirements.

Evidence of pre-lodgement advisory services, Design Excellence Panel and/or pre-lodgement meetings where applicable, should be provided and the application cross-checked with the formal records. Administration officers should carry out required support services including scanning, copying and other administrative processes. At this point the council should provide the applicant with a report back date at which point the assessment officer will provide an update or initial feedback on the processing of the application. Ideally this should be within 15 days of lodgement.

Electronic lodgement

Applicants will soon be able to lodge their applications online through the NSW Planning Portal. Electronic lodgement is a more efficient form of lodgement, benefiting councils and applicants and should be encouraged.

Clearing house: Councils with a high volume of annual DAs are encouraged to establish a clearing house to vet and triage incoming applications.

The clearing house team should comprise experienced senior planning and technical staff and supporting administration officers that can:

- Identify the appropriate assessment stream (Refer to the 'Assessment' section for explanation of the three DA streams – page 22);
 - 1. Fast Track
 - 2. Standard
 - 3. Other (council, IHAP or JRPP)
- Initiate notification and exhibition requirements.
 Councils should adopt notification and exhibition procedures that are proposal and impact specific and consistent with current government policy.
- Identify internal referrals where required, such as engineering requirements and external referral agencies.
- Identify any relevant standard conditions
 of approval from technical officers (such as
 engineers) that could be included to negate the
 need to seek internal referral.
- Allocate applications to the appropriate assessing officers.
- Identify the relevant decision maker as applicable at that time and ensure target meeting dates and/ or agendas for determination are scheduled.

The clearing house should be supported by administration officers who immediately carry out administrative tasks including:

- Issuing a letter to the applicant confirming lodgement of the DA.
- · Arranging notification or exhibition.
- · Issuing internal and external referrals.
- Placing copies of notification and referrals on the hard copy (where applicable) and electronic file.
- Placing relevant assessment checklists on file for the allocated assessment officer.
- Placing copies of other relevant information identified by the clearing house team on the file including conditions, comments and target determination/meeting date.
- Delivering the application to the allocated planner.

Best practice notification of DAs

1. Fast Track DAs

Fast Track DAs should not require notification or exhibition. (Refer to the 'Assessment' section for explanation of the three DA streams – page 22).

2. Standard DAs

Notification of any Standard DAs should not exceed 14 days.

In determining the extent of notification, councils should consider the proposed development's impacts on neighbouring properties and the likely level of public interest. It may be that some Standard DAs do not require notification.

3. Other DAs

DAs that require as a minimum notification, as well as possible exhibition. The extent and period of notification and/or exhibition should correspond to impacts and statutory requirements.



Stage 3 | Assessment

Key Objective

 To undertake an assessment in a timely manner that is reasonable, commensurate with the impacts and delivers a sound planning outcome.



GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The DA process should be divided into three streams, depending on the type of DA being considered:

1. Fast Track

These are DAs that comply with development standards and development controls, have limited environmental or planning constraints, and do not require notification, advertising or internal or external referral.

These applications are generally minor in nature and unlikely to cause impacts on neighbouring properties.

Fast Track applications can be assessed and determined in the Preliminary Assessment stage (see following page).

2. Standard

Standard DAs require notification; and/or advertising; and/or internal or external referral; and/or detailed consideration of environmental or planning matters as part of the assessment process.

Standard applications require the completion of both the Preliminary Assessment and Final Assessment stages. The Stop the Clock provisions should only be used once and only where absolutely necessary (that is, in response to information received as a result of exhibition or assessment information gaps identified during the preliminary assessment).

3. Other

These are standard DAs that trigger separate assessment and determination requirements including by the elected council, an Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel (IHAP) or Sydney Planning Panel (SPP)/Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP).

It is noted that both IHAPs and SPP/JRPPs have their own processing and delivery guidelines that should be considered by assessment officers in their assessment processes.

Preliminary Assessment (days 6-15):

Assessing officers should carry out a site visit with relevant specialist staff and undertake a preliminary assessment in regard to compliance with relevant environmental planning instruments.

Any major planning deficiencies are to be identified and comments from referring areas of council or state authority considered. If the DA includes requests to vary development standards and controls, an assessment should be carried out and a determination obtained from the relevant delegated authority.

A directions meetings should be held between junior and more senior staff at this point to efficiently problem solve complex issues and provide general assessment guidance and strategies where required.

If the DA remains fundamentally incomplete, contains major deficiencies or there are variation requests that cannot be supported in all reasonableness: the applicant should be encouraged to withdraw the application or be advised that the application will either be rejected as invalid or determined on the information currently before council. If the application is otherwise determined to be complete and able to be determined, the assessment officer should also deliver this update to the applicant in accordance with the earlier provided report back date.

If minor amendments are justified, these should be addressed by condition of development consent in the first instance, or if absolutely necessary, Stop the Clock correspondence.

Fast Track DAs should be able to be determined at this stage. Conditions arising from internal referrals should have been provided during the clearing house, Assessment reports for Fast Track DAs should be brief with compliance with relevant standards and controls being clearly determined.

Final Assessment (days 15-30):

All 'Standard' and 'Other' DAs should be finalised as soon as practical following notification/
exhibition/referral taking into consideration all submissions received, including internal and external referrals, and any additional material provided by the applicant.

While council staff should make every effort to resolve issues raised in submissions, the practice of negotiating the withdrawal of submissions should be resisted. Council officers should use their professional judgement in ultimately resolving the matter (by condition if need be) to ensure the determination of the application is not unduly delayed.

Councils in applying conditions on their determinations should consider the following:

- Only applying the conditions where it is essential to eliminate risk of an unfavourable outcome with substantial consequences.
- Ensuring that consents minimise the need for further approvals including deferred commencements.
- Consider providing the applicant a right of response on recommended conditions before determination if non-standard.
- Consider adopting and publishing model conditions on an industry basis (such as housing).

The detailed assessment report should be promptly finalised and supporting determination material prepared for the determining authority. Final Stop the Clock (by day 15): If Stop the Clock correspondence is issued to the applicant, a response is required within 14 days. If the applicant is not able to provide information within 14 days, the council should consider whether the information is critical to the assessment, and if so either encourage the application to be withdrawn or determine the application on the information before it at the time. The Stop the Clock provisions should only be used once and not be as a means to manage caseload.

ASSESSMENT TIMEFRAME:

- Fast Track applications assessed and determined within 6–15 days of lodgement.
- Standard and Other applications assessed within 30 days of lodgement before proceeding to determination stage.

PROCEDURAL TIMEFRAMES:

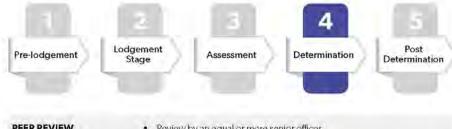
- Internal referrals should be completed, and comments provided to the assessing planner within 10 days of being allocated the DA.
- Stop the Clock correspondence should be issued no later than 15 days after being allocated to the assessing officer.
- Council should give no more than 14 days to an applicant to respond to Stop the Clock correspondence.



Stage 4 | Determination

Key Objectives

- To ensure that the decision is made in a timely manner.
- To ensure that the level of decision making reflects the nature of the DA.
- To ensure that the determination provides certainty and minimises the need for either modification or further approvals.
- To ensure the decision upholds the integrity of the planning system.



PEER REVIEW Days 30-35

- · Review by an equal or more senior officer.
- DELEGATED Days 35-40
- Determinations made under delegated authority.

COUNCIL, IHAP AND JRPP DETERMINATIONS

Days 35-40

· All documentation expeditiously submitted to decision maker compliant with agenda timeframes.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The determination stage of a DA should be limited to a peer review and then determination by the one relevant authority or delegate. Requests for further information or amendments to plans should have been addressed during the assessment stage and should be avoided immediately prior to determination.

Where applications have unresolved issues or concerns at this late stage in the process with no immediate view of resolution, applicants should be encouraged to withdraw the DA or be advised that a decision will be made on the information before council at that time.

Administrative support teams should issue final documentation upon determination.

Delegations

Development assessment delegations should be maximised and standardised to ensure a consistent and efficient decision making process. For example, the:

General manager and planning staff:

Should determine DAs other than situations such as:

- Where there are more than ten objections by way of individual submissions from different households (note that a petition or pro-forma documents are counted as one objection).
- The development does not comply with an adopted council policy (including a development control plan), development standard in a Local Environmental Plan unless, in the assessment officer's opinion:
 - compliance with the policy is unreasonable and unnecessary in the circumstances;
 - any variation of a development standard has been addressed in accordance with Clause
 4.6 or any other requirements of the council's Local Environmental Plan.
- The development is of Regional or State Significance.
- Notification in writing has been received by at least three councillors that the DA is required to be submitted to the elected council for determination. Any such notification should include reasons or policy position for why the application requires reporting to the council for determination.

Determinations made under delegated authority should include a prior review of the assessment report, a recommendation and draft determination by an equal or more senior officer. Council determinations: Council meetings should be held at least twice a month to facilitate more council determinations within a 40 day period. Prior to the council meeting, the assessment report, recommendation and draft determination should be reviewed by a senior officer or manager. Assessment material including architectural plans and supporting information should be made available seven days prior to the meeting.

IHAP, SPP/JRPP and other determining authorities: Council should consider the guidelines prescribed by the relevant determining authority in preparing the particular application for decision.

Any comments or assessment report, a recommendation and draft determination must be reviewed by a senior officer or manager.

If there is a need to notify council, this should be done early in the process so as not to delay final determination.

Best practice procedures for council, IHAP, JRPP and other determining authorities

- Councils should have a minimum of two meetings (council, committee or IHAP) a month, DAs should only be considered by the determining authority, meaning a DA should not go to council for information prior to being determined by SPP/ JRPP (unless it is a council DA) nor should a DA go to IHAP for recommendation prior to being determined by council.
- DAs must be considered by the SPP/JRPP, council or IHAP within 10 business days of the manager's/senior assessment officer's endorsement.
- Matters should only be deferred by decision makers in exceptional circumstances where there is a significant risk of a sub-optimal outcome that has significant consequences. There should be a maximum of two decision delays (decision delays comprise deferrals and site visits – a site visit and subsequent consideration at another meeting would equate to the maximum of two decision delays).

ASSESSMENT TIMEFRAME:

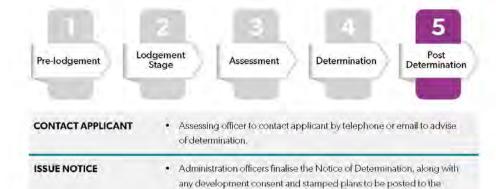
Determination, including peer review should be completed in 5–10 business days. DAs being determined by council, IHAPs and JRPPs should be scheduled by the assessing officer during the preliminary phase of the assessment stage to ensure there are no delays.



Stage 5 | Post determination

Key Objective

· To ensure the applicant and other relevant stakeholders are notified of decisions without delay



applicant or collected from council.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

An assessing officer should advise the applicant of the decision by telephone or email within one business day. If the assessment officer is not available to do this, it is the responsibility of senior assessment staff to ensure that this is undertaken within the timeframe.

The remainder of the post-determination stage should be carried out by administration officers who arrange for the determination, including any relevant development consent and stamped plans to be posted to the applicant, collected from council offices, or delivered electronically.

Administration officers should also handle all electronic updates including notifications and file archiving following issue of the determination.

ASSESSMENTTIMEFRAME:

One day

· Administration officers finalises online reporting and closes file.



Intent

Streamline the assessment process by clarifying roles, responsibilities and communications around the DA, process by:

- 1. Putting the responsibility of submitting complete applications with the applicant.
- 2. Focussing council customer support efforts at the pre-lodgement stage.
- 3. Committing to timeframes for the assessment officer to report back on applications.
 - 4. Limit distractions to assessment officers during the assessment phase of a DA.

Agreement

Applicant	Council	
Pre-lodgement and Lodgement		
 Commits to utilising pre-lodgement services and meetings (where appropriate). Provides sufficient information 1-2 weeks prior to a pre-lodgement meeting. Only lodges complete applications. 	 Provides clear and publicly available information on application requirements and pre-lodgement services. Has regular pre-lodgement meetings available to book in advance. Ensures all appropriate technical staff and state agencies (where complex concurrence and external approvals may be necessary) are in attendance at pre-lodgement meetings. Customer service staff are trained to provide basic submission and process advice on lodgement and pre-lodgement. Has a duty assessment officer available during office hours to answer standard questions on development standards, controls, assessment streams and timing. 	

Applicant	Council
Assessment	
 Allows the assessment officer to undertake the assessment without escalating issues or disrupting staff unnecessarily. 	Calls/emails the applicant within two days of receiving the application to: Advise they have been allocated the application.
 Will only escalate an issue with more senior staff and/or councillors following/after the report back date. 	 Commit to a report back date (generally at 15 day of lodgement).
Commits to having only a single member of their project team contact council.	Reports back to the applicant by the report back date to advise:
projest team contact council.	 The application has been assessed and has been determined.
	The application has a recommendation but is yet to determined by others.
	The application is at neither of these stages and the reasons for this.
	Where an application is yet to be determined, council explains the reasons and commits to a determination timeframe.
	All staffto return applicant's phone calls/emails within 24 hours when made after the report back date.
Determination	
Once given a council/IHAP/SPP/JRPP meeting date agree to not contact assessment officers seeking further updates or discussions around the merits of the application.	Assessment officer to advise applicants within one business day of decision and/or of any change to decision timing (e.g. if matter is deferred or doesn't make an agenda).

Agreement to be included on council websites and attached to application forms and to be acknowledged by both parties.

APPENDIX 2

MINUTES OF THE CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, 144 OTHO STREET, INVERELL ON WEDNESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER, 2015, COMMENCING AT 8.30 AM.

SECTION E INFORMATION REPORTS

1. <u>BUSINESS PROCESS MAPPING OF COUNCIL PROCESSES FOR LODGEMENT</u>
OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS \$18.6.11

RESOLVED (Jones/Harmon) that the items contained in the Information Reports to the Civil & Environmental Services Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 11 November, 2015, be received and noted.

ITEM NO:	2.	FILE NO: S18.6.11	
DESTINATION 1:	A recognised leader in a broader context		
SUBJECT:	BUSINESS PROCESS MAPPING OF COUNCIL PROCESSES FOR LODGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS		
PREPARED BY: Chris Faley, Development Planner			

SUMMARY:

Inverell Shire Council participated in a Business Process Mapping of Council Processes for Lodgement of Development Applications with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.

The results of this Business Process Mapping are provided to Committee Members for information.

COMMENTARY:

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) engaged Capstone Asia Pacific to review the end-to-end Development Application process for receiving, processing and determining Development Applications at a wide variety of Councils to inform future strategy of electronic lodgement as part of the Department's ePlanning program.

Out of the total 152 Councils in NSW, 15 Council's, including Inverell Shire Council were selected to participate in this review.

Council's Manager Development Services and Development Planner met with representatives from the Department and Capstone Asia Pacific on 6 May, 2015 to discuss Inverell's approach to the stages in the Development Application process – investigation, prepare, lodge, assess, withdrawal and determination.

The following is a summary of the key observations of Inverell Shire Council:

- Council has a high level of customer focus in their approach with the primary view to facilitate DA determination as quickly as possible. The result is a fast DA turn around;
- Council has acknowledged that their biggest risk is 100% accuracy in data entry into Council's corporate applications (especially Pathway and TRIM) such as typos and spelling mistakes. The result is that files or correspondence sometimes don't appear in search results when looking for information; and

Council has a detailed procedure manual covering the entire DA process.

The Observation Report on Inverell is included as Appendix 1 (E6 – E10).

In October, 2015, the Department released the final report Business Process Mapping of Council Processes for Lodgment of Development Applications. A copy this report is included as Appendix 2 (E11 – E23).

A number of recommendations were discussed in the report, including:

- Investing in upfront assistance during the Investigate and Prepare stages:
- Provide additional services for applicants to investigate their proposed development;
- Completeness checks and payment of total fees prior to pre-DA meetings and Lodgement;
- Continuity of assigned assessing officers and full recording of pre-DA history;
- · Completeness checks and payment of total fees at Lodgement;
- Electronic copies of application documentation during Lodge;
- Online lodgement;
- Electronic assessments and documentation;
- Mobile devices for off-site access;
- Electronic stamping of plans and electronic signatures; and
- Electronic issuing of determination results.

Council's Development Services has a strong commitment to assisting applicants in the preparation of Development Applications by taking an active role in the pre-application process and offer a free service providing preliminary town planning advice.

An internal review of practices has identified a number of areas which can be improved, including completeness checks, internal application tracking, file notes and reduction in simple errors (e.g. typos, etc.). These matters have been discussed with Development Services staff and will continue to be monitored.

It is clear the future of planning in NSW is electronic, with a number of recommendations focusing on this aspect. Council has implemented a number of electronic tools in recent years, including application tracking and electronic housing code. However, the demographics of the Inverell Shire suggest that transition to a fully electronic system is unlikely in the near future.



Development Application Business Processing Mapping Workshop Observation Report

Inverell Shire Council May 2015

TRIALLING NEW WAYS FOR
FASTER, EASIER ONLINE
PLANNING APPROVALS

Document Version 0.2 Page 1



Page 2

Document Control Sheet

Control		Comment	
Document author	Lisa Roberts, ePlanning implementation		
Reviewed by	Jacinta Taylor, Business Process Analyst		1
Approved by	Clare Huxley, ePlanning Business Applications Manager		
Document version	1.0		
Release date			

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Acknowledgements

The Department acknowledges the time and contribution generously provided by Council's staff who participated in the Development Application (DA) Business Process Mapping (BPM) workshop and preparation of this report.

Document Version 0.2

Inverell Shire Observation Report



1.Introduction

1.1. Development Application (DA) Business Process Mapping (BPM)

The Department engaged Capstone Asia Pacific to conduct BPM workshops with selected councils. The objectives of the DA BPM workshops were to:

- Understand and map the existing end-to-end development application process. This will inform future planning around electronic lodgement of DAs.
- Help Council identify potential opportunities to gain further efficiencies within the existing processes.

1.2. Council Selection

The approach taken included:

- All councils were asked to indicate their willingness to participate 40 councils responded in the affirmative.
- A 10% sample size of NSW councils was selected in order to fully understand how councils
 are currently processing and determining DA's.
- The selection contained a spread of regional and metro councils covering complex and simple DAs with the final selection reviewed by an external panel.
- Key Council personnel involved in every aspect of the DA process were invited to participate. For a list of attendees, refer to <u>Appendix 4.1 Participants</u>.

1.3. Purpose of this document

This document outlines observations made during the course of the workshop, with recommendations for gaining further efficiencies within the existing processes.

2. Approach

2.1. Current DA Workflow Process

The workshop walked the participants step-by-step through the DA process from investigation by the applicant to determination, and identified the current workflow process used to receive, register, assess and determine development applications focusing on interactions between Council and the applicant.

Capstone Asia Pacific and the Department have mapped this process. The draft process diagrams were given to Council for their feedback before being finalised and signed off by the Department.

Council will be presented with a softcopy of the signed off DA Process diagrams.

Document Version 0.2 Page 3

Inverell Shire Observation Report



2.2. Observations in the Current DA Workflow Process

After completing the review of Council's current DA workflow process, some preliminary observations were identified and discussed with workshop participants that Council could make to streamline the current process.

The following tables identify suggested changes to the current DA process. Suggested changes were developed in part from discussions with Council staff and from observations made while mapping the DA process of other councils. When considering these suggestions, Council should also look for opportunities to improve Council's existing processes that would support broader goals Council may have for improving efficiency and transitioning from paper-based files to electronic records.

3. Recommendations

Categories have been used to identify if the recommendation relates to people, process and system. The relationship can be to one category or a combination of all three categories.

The following is a summary of the key observations:

- Council has a high level of customer focus in their approach with the primary view to facilitate DA determination as quickly as possible. The result is a fast DA turn around.
- Council has acknowledged that their biggest risk is 100% accuracy in data entry into
 Council's corporate applications (especially Pathway and TRIM) such as typos and spelling
 mistakes. The result is that files or correspondence sometimes don't appear in search
 results when looking for information.
- Council has a detailed procedures manual covering the entire DA process.

DA Category and System(s)	Process Improvement Opportunity	Suggested process change
Investigate		
Pathway (process)	Enquiries over the counter or via phone are not recorded or tracked by Council, unless the enquiry is a written request for information. Written requests are logged in TRIM (pre-application container).	Use file notes to log all enquiries received by Council at the counter or via phone and save in TRIM. This will enable the history of an enquiry to be retained in a central location and provide ability to perform analysis or reporting on enquiries received.
Lodge		
Credit Card Payments (process)	Council does not accept credit card payments for planning applications (they only accept credit card for GST-exempt fees and charges such as rates and water)	Investigate options for allowing credit card payments for planning applications.

Document Version 0.2

Inverell Shire Observation Report



DA Category and System(s)	Process Improvement Opportunity	Suggested process change		
Assess				
Determine				
All stages				
Electronic Records (process)	It was noted that human error (typos such as number inversions or spelling mistakes) when documents are attached to DAs in TRIM or Pathway occasionally result in them being attached to the wrong property	Although, a minor concern this could be overcome by closer checking, double checking by another officer or additional training.		
Duplicate Effort (process)	It was noted that the creation of hard copy and electronic files is duplicating effort. The requirement to create a hard copy file is necessary because the eSystems don't meet the planning area's requirements.	Transition to electronic files only following upgrade/review of council's eSystems so that they are fit for purpose (meeting the planning area's requirements).		

4. Appendix

4.1. Participants

Personnel who participated in the DA BPM workshop held on 6 May 2015 were:

Organisation	Participants	
Council	Anthony Alliston, Manager Development Services Chris Faley, Development Planner	
Capstone Asia Pacific	Andrew Little, Managing Director	
The Department	Lisa Roberts, Team Lead Implementation	

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BUSINESS PROCESS MAPPING OF COUNCIL PROCESSES FOR LODGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS (DA)



September 2015

Final Project Report



Document Control Sheet

Control		Comment
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Acknowledgements

Capstone acknowledges the time and contribution generously provided by council's staff who participated in the Development Application (DA) Business Process Mapping (BPM) workshop and the support of the ePlanning team throughout the project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an analysis and evaluation of the Business Process Mapping (BPM) exercise undertaken for development applications (DA) lodgement as part of the ePlanning program. Fifteen councils, of various sizes and including both metro and regional areas participated in a BPM exercise out of the total 152 Councils in NSW, which represents a 10% sample of the state.

Analysis included mapping the existing process followed by individual councils for the preparation and submission of a DA and then identifying the key findings, themes and issues within the process that were observed during the workshops. The DA workshop process was facilitated by Capstone Asia Pacific (Capstone) representatives with the assistance of representatives from Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E). Key council staff members advised on the consecutive stages in the DA process consisting of Investigation, Prepare, Lodge, Assess, Withdrawal and Determination stage. All BPMs were reviewed by the councils and DP&E prior to a finalised copy being issued, alongside an observations report that identified key council issues within the current DA process and opportunities for improvement.

Results of the analysis identified over 170 observations were made during the workshops. We identified common themes that required similar actions to be addressed. These key themes revolved around systems, process and people and have been captured and summarised in this report.

The key outcome of the BPM analysis allowed each council to identify its own areas for improvement, in addition to common challenges where a potential shared focus or effort may be beneficial. From these workshops it was identified that some councils lacked the capability to capture applicant enquiries and DA process information within their systems and lacked the appropriate training and knowledge sharing facilities on changes to planning legislation. Further findings have been documented in this report under key findings.

It should be noted that each of the selected councils are strongly committed to such business improvement and in some cases, had improvement initiatives underway or changes proposed in these areas. We have noted key actions underway, at a high level in the individual observations reports issued to council.

This report notes the prospects of the councils are positive moving towards future ePlanning strategies. There have been best practice methods observed at many councils across all DA process stages. These have been highlighted in the 'Better Practice Observations' section of report. The major areas of weaknesses requiring further investigation and remedial action by respective council management were also noted, these areas focused around the Investigation, Prepare and Lodge stages.

Recommendations discussed include:

- Investing in upfront assistance during the Investigate and Prepare stages
- Provide additional services for applicants to investigate their proposed development
- Completeness checks and payment of total fees prior to pre-DA meetings and Lodgement
- Continuity of assigned assessing officers and full recording of pre-DA history
- Completeness checks and payment of total fees at Lodgement
- Electronic copies of application documentation during Lodge
- Online lodgement
- Electronic assessments and documentation
- Mobile devices for off-site access
- Electronic stamping of plans and electronic signatures

Electronic issuing of determination results

1. Introduction

1.1 Development Application Business Process Mapping

As part of the ePlanning program and future strategy of electronic lodgement 15 councils were independently selected to conduct a BPM exercise of the current processes for DA lodgement. Capstone was engaged by the DP&E to conduct process understanding workshops and map the current state end-to-end process for receiving, processing and determining the DAs for these councils.

The objective of the BPM exercise was to understand the existing end-to-end DA process at a wide variety of councils, including both metro and regional areas, as well as councils in various stages of providing online DA lodgement. This work will form part of the evidence base for the future strategy of electronic lodgement as part of the ePlanning program.

The finalised business process maps and individual observation reports were delivered to all councils during May through August 2015.

1.2 Purpose of this document

This document summarises the key findings, themes and issues within the DA lodgement process that were observed during the course of the workshops and preparation of the BPM's.

This report also presents the better practices observed during the workshops based on the findings in the individual council BPM's. Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of the 15 councils involved.

2. Approach

2.1 DA Workshop Process

The objectives of the DA BPM workshops were to:

- Understand and map the existing end-to-end development application process.
- Help council identify potential opportunities to gain further efficiencies within the existing processes.

The workshops were carried out during a 1 day site visit where relevant council staff provided guidance on the existing DA process from investigation by the applicant to determination by the council. DP&E team members also attended the workshops and contributed to the discussions.

Capstone captured the workshop discussions and together with the assistance of the DP&E mapped the processes for each council involved. The draft process diagrams were given to council for feedback before being finalised and signed off by the Department and issued to the relevant council.

2.2 Observations during the Workshop

After completing the workshops and review of a council's current DA process, preliminary observations that council could make to improve the current process were identified and discussed with workshop participants.

These workshop observations have been provided to each council as a separate observations report. The key themes from these observations have been summarised in the Key Findings section of this report.

3. Key Findings

There were over 170 observations made during the workshops conducted across the 15 selected councils. Many of these observations had common themes or require similar actions to address. Each council underwent a detailed mapping workshop that took the process overview below to the next level and mapped out each specific steps undertaken by the staff in each of the councils visited. The themes had drawn out from the workshops highlighted areas where improvements could be made more broadly across all councils or require similar actions to address. Some issues were simple observations including the limited knowledge of key toolsets that have been developed by the Department of Planning as a result of some of the previous work undertaken for the Electronic Housing Code program that can easily be used as reference tools for DA enquiries. Others are more complex and impact on the way the existing application systems are used. Some issues are more subtle such as going fully paperless, the journey can take time and there is a period where on the surface, there is more involved as both hard copy and softcopy are required.

We have summarised the key themes that were more prominent across all the councils in the section below. A table of all the themes that were observed during the workshop and their frequency across the councils involved has been included in the appendix.

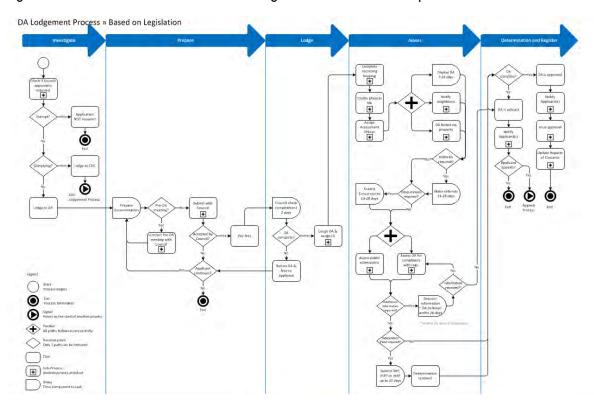


Figure 1: Process based on current NSW Legislation as a reference point.

Key themes across councils DA process

3.1.1 Capturing applicant enquiries

Councils do not always capture all customer enquiries within their systems. This was due to councils not having a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or council processes that do not require the enquiries to be recorded unless it was received as a written request.

It was recommended that councils could consider current procedures and implement the necessary systems/functionality to capture all customer enquiries. This will enable councils to perform reporting on these processes for meaningful analysis, to identify any recurring issues or identify improvement opportunities. This functionality could also be considered for any future automated DA system.

3.1.2 Capturing additional information for process delays

There are steps in the DA process where additional information or reasons for 'actions' are not recorded, such as reasons why an application that is received via mail is returned or reasons for 'stop the clock', where additional information is required and delays in the DA process are encountered.

Councils could review current procedures and configure their property system to prompt for a reason code or additional information in order to complete particular workflow tasks at the relevant stages. This will enable reporting against these reason codes for further analysis.

3.1.3 DP&E tools not fully utilised

Councils do not always make use of current tools supplied by the department to assist in gathering information such as planning viewer, EHC, IB etc. There is opportunity to use these tools more extensively and reduce work loads of customer service staff by directing customers to these sites.

3.1.4 Council training & knowledge sharing

The workshops highlighted that some planning and development staff require more formal training in order to ensure that maximum value is being obtained by the property systems (i.e. making use of all available functionality) and/or further training on changes to planning legislation. There was also interest from council staff in opportunities for knowledge sharing with other councils regarding their DA process and systems. The Department operates a Sponsors and Champions system and this will be reviewed in order to try and assist in meeting this need. Training and knowledge sharing will enable council to be better equipped and more efficiently assist customers on their planning enquiries.

3.1.5 Customer service centre configuration and resources

Several council's customer service centres are not effectively configured to efficiently handle customer enquiries. A number of potential changes were identified in relation to how the service counters could be arranged/adjusted or installation of a 'self-service' computer to enable customers to perform their own preliminary investigations. These changes/additions would enable customer service staff to more efficiently serve customers. Self-service computers with access to councils planning website and ePlanning tools will encourage customers to be more self-sufficient, therefore reducing the amount of basic questions that require service staff time and attention.

3.1.6 Electronic record keeping and automating manual processes

Various councils still use manual records, spreadsheets and hard copy assessment/working files. Some councils do not have an Electronic Document Management (EDM) system and other councils maintain both hard copies of application documents as well as electronic files. Most councils that took part are planning to move to electronic record keeping or implementing certain automation to eliminate manual processes (such as electronic assessment modules). These will enable application documents or information exchanged between the customer and council to be more efficiently and effectively recorded and maintained. Council field assessment staff could also minimise the need to print and file hard copies used during the assessment process if the information was available to them on mobile devices.

3.1.7 Legislation driven challenges

There are some legislation driven processes or requirements that councils find challenging to work with in the DA process. Typical examples include a lack of clarity around the exact document requirements, owners consent signatures, requirement to keep hard copy files (and number of copies) and fees (see below).

DP&E involvement is required to review the impacted legislative areas for opportunities to streamline and increase clarity of the legislation to improve the effectiveness of DA assessment outcomes.

3.1.8 Fees

The calculation of DA fees to charge applicants are largely legislated and driven by the cost of works reported by applicants and this can sometimes be inaccurate. This causes issues and delays in the DA lodgement and assessment process, particularly where council identifies that the cost of works is unrealistic and the applicant is required to subsequently correct the amount reported. Some councils put in place additional steps in the DA process to verify the cost of works for reasonableness.

Another challenge is the referral process and the need for council to collect certain fees on behalf of the referral agency. Many referral agencies require a manual cheque to be drawn for the remittance of fees collected, this process is inefficient. DP&E involvement is required to review the impacted legislative areas for opportunities to streamline and increase clarity of the legislation to improve the effectiveness of DA assessment outcomes.

3.1.9 Public awareness and education

It was suggested during various workshops that the number and nature of customer enquiries and complaints received by councils may indicate that the general public lack understanding of various aspects of the DA process. Councils would benefit from establishing more formal awareness and education programs to address the knowledge gaps in the public domain, as well as ongoing plans to ensure any changes are communicated or refreshed.

3.1.10 Referrals & other decision making bodies

Throughout the Prepare, Lodge and Assessment stages of the DA process, various external referring agencies may be engaged to provide their review and assessment of a DA. There are inefficiencies in the referral process leading to delays in the DA determination. There are inconsistencies between agencies in relation to referral requests, documentation requirements and the method of remittance for fees collected by council on behalf of referrals. For some councils the timeliness of referral responses or JRPP review take a long time resulting in significant delays in the determination period of the DA. These challenges impact the efficiency and overall assessment times which are often perceived as council delays. DP&E involvement in streamlining, making consistent referral processes and timeliness of responses would assist council improve their assessment process timelines. Consideration could also be given to publishing the performance of the various agencies, in the same way that Local Development Performance Monitoring (LDPM) data is published.

3.1.11 Resourcing and staff allocations

A common challenge across most councils is the adequacy and appropriate allocation of scarce staff resources, particularly the duty planner or assessment officers. Assessment officers are often required to attend to customer service enquiries due to insufficient planning knowledge at customer service. Other councils have limited or inexperienced staff allocated to the upfront review of application documents during the lodgement process resulting in applications that are lodged with missing information or the quality of documentation is poor. This also has an adverse

impact on downstream processes such as registration of application documents at records management or the assessment process.

Councils could review their allocation and resourcing of key steps within the DA process to enable more effective use of staff time and improve process efficiencies. This may involve additional training for certain staff levels to alleviate the pressure of more experienced assessment officers. In addition the streamlining and automation of processes, where possible, as well as improvements to customer self-service, would help to relieve pressure on existing resources.

3.1.12 Review Process or Procedures

A number of process steps and related procedures throughout the DA process were identified for improvement by council staff during the workshop. This included website information that was either missing or out of date. Councils could conduct periodic process reviews to identify any necessary updates to procedures or the website. Relevant systems reporting of process statistics or common issues could assist council identify opportunities to improve the process.

3.1.13 Systems Configuration/Integration of existing systems

Many councils identified the need to improve the current configuration or integration of their Property Information System (PIS), Geographic Information System (GIS) or Document Management Systems (DMS) to remove double handling/duplication, reduce manual data entry and utilise workflows. Examples include enabling interfacing between the PIS and GIS which, in some circumstances, does not automatically update from one system to the other; ensuring that property systems are configured to provide online alerts; systems enhancement to enable the generation of standardised templates for letters and reports used by assessment officers; or increasing the use of current workflow systems to drive consistency and minimise human error. These system improvements may require council's information technology department or engagement of the software vendors. Some councils have already put actions in place to initiate these system improvements.

3.1.14 Implementing new systems or modules

Many councils identified the need for a new property or document management system, or implementing new modules/functionality to address current inefficiencies in the DA process. This is due to the current PIS not being able to integrate with other corporate systems, poor speed/performance or lack functionality leading to manual workarounds being in place. These councils would benefit from receiving support and knowledge from other councils who may have experience in implementing the systems or functionality in question. DP&E could also provide valuable input to assist these councils so that any investments in new systems/functionality can be made in line with future requirements/integration of the DA online system and wider ePlanning Program.

3.1.15 DP&E consideration for scope and costs of DA On-Line Project

Councils commonly provide the ability for applicants to submit a combined DA and Constructions Certificate (DA/CC) applications as there is common information required for both types of applications. However, the current scope of DP&Es DA online project does not include CCs. DP&E should consider broadening the scope of the on-line project and canvas further feedback from councils to enable all relevant and related council processes to be considered. Councils were also concerned about their ability to meet the costs involved with any required changes to align with the new DA on-line system and process. DP&E should consider the costs for councils to be involved.

3.2 Better practice observations

This section outlines better practices observed during the workshops grouped by DA process stage. This information is intended to assist councils looking to improve their 'as is' state in the related processes.

3.2.1 Investigate

- Invest in upfront assistance during the Investigate and Prepare stages. Some councils dedicate more time during the Investigate and Prepare stages of the DA process to assist applicants to better understand the DA process, the documentation requirements and the quality of the application. This involves focusing experienced planning staff to address customer enquiries and/or offering informal pre-DA discussions. Councils that provide this additional assistance upfront have experienced significant improvements in the quality of applications received and in turn reduced the amount of time taken to follow up information during the Lodgement and Assessment stages.
- Provide additional services for applicants to investigate their proposed development. Some councils offer applicants formal discussions via 'Minor DA' meetings for small less complex developments or 'concept' meetings for more complex development types. In these meetings experienced planning staff review and discuss proposed development concepts or preliminary plans and provide applicants with council's preliminary advice in writing. Councils that provide these additional services have found that they have improved customer satisfaction and planning outcomes.

3.2.2 Prepare

- Completeness checks and payment of total fees prior to pre-DA meetings. Some councils have a strict requirement for any relevant information to the proposal, including draft documents and fees, to be complete and paid prior to conducting the pre-DA meeting. This enables council to ensure that attendees at the pre-DA meeting are fully informed and prepared prior to the meetings and there is effective use of meeting time.
- Continuity of assigned assessing officers and full recording of Pre-DA history. Some councils ensure the same assessing officer, where possible, is assigned to the pre-DA meeting and the subsequent assessment once the DA is lodged. These councils also record the pre-DA in their property system as a separate document type and link this information to the subsequent lodgement record. The benefit of this is that councils and the applicant have continuity and ability to follow through the history of the application. The assessment process is also more efficient as the assessor has a better knowledge of the DA as they were previously involved and the history of the application is available within /councils systems.

3.2.3 **Lodge**

- Completeness checks and payment of total fees at Lodgement. Some councils have a strict process at lodgement to ensure that information is adequate and complete prior to accepting the application and 'lodging' into the property system. There are also requirements to ensure all fees are paid up-front. These councils benefit from this investment in time upfront as there is reduced need for follow up on information and fees once the application is lodged.
- Electronic copies of application documentation. Some councils require electronic copies of applicant documents and plans to be provided on USB or CD at Lodgement. This enables council to save time in the registration process as they do not need to scan hard copies of the application documents. Councils can also provide electronic stamping of plans directly on the soft copy plans.
- Online Lodgement. Some councils provide applicants the ability to lodge their entire application and payment of fees online. Applications lodged online are automatically updated to council's property system eliminating the need for council staff to perform the

lodgement step. The associated application documents and supporting plans are automatically sent from the online system to councils Document Management System. Councils that provide online lodgement benefit from time saved at the lodgement step as customer service staff do not need to be involved in the process. Council also benefits from having all application documents in an electronic form reducing the need to register and scan hard copy submissions.

3.2.4 Assess

- Electronic assessments and documentation. Some councils utilise assessment tools to facilitate the assessment process and provide assessment officers an automated checklist against relevant planning controls. These tools have workflows to guide the various steps in the assessment process such as site visits, notifications and submissions, referrals and assessment review and approvals. These tools also provide a central location for all documentation related to the assessment process and provide integration to the property and document management systems. Councils that utilise these tools have benefited from increased efficiency in carrying out DA assessments and consistency in the documentation of assessment results.
- Mobile devices for off-site access. Some councils provide their assessment officers with iPads equipped with software to access the DA plans. Officers can carry out their assessment during site visits and upload photos taken during the site inspection. This has enabled councils to improve the efficiency of site visits and timeliness of documenting inspection results.

3.2.5 Determine

Electronic stamping of plans and electronic signatures. Some councils have implemented tools to electronically stamp approved plans and enable the delegated authority to electronically apply their signature on determination letters. These councils have streamlined the determination process steps by eliminating the need for hard copy plans for stamping and the printing of letters for signing, as well as eliminating the need to re-scan stamped plans and signed letters for record retention. It has direct cost benefits in terms of reduced printing as well as indirect costs in staff time.

Electronic issuing of determination results. Some councils issue their determination documentation package via email and do not send hard copies. This practice is efficient and timely as once the application is determined, an email can be sent to the applicant with the relevant documentation attached. This also eliminates manual processes such as printing hard copy determination letters and stamping hard copy plans for issue to the applicant. It has direct cost benefits in terms of postage as well as indirect costs in staff time.

APPENDIX 1 - PARTICIPANTS

The following table shows the 15 councils that participated in the DA BPM exercise and also provides names of the Capstone staff who facilitated the workshops and DP&E staff who attended.

Councils	BPM workshop date
City of Botany Bay Council	15-Apr 2015
Lithgow City Council	17-Apr 2015
Willoughby City Council	21-Apr 2015
Sutherland Shire Council	21-Apr 2015
Muswellbrook Shire Council	28-Apr 2015
Rockdale City Council	29-Apr2015
Coffs Harbour City Council	4-May 2015
Inverell Shire Council	6-May 2015
City of Canada Bay Council	6-May 2015
Liverpool Plains Shire Council	8-May 201 <i>5</i>
Berrigan Shire Council	12-May 2015
Murray Shire Council	13-May 2015
The Hills Shire Council	13-May 2015
Shoalhaven City Council	21-May 2015
Lake Macquarie city Council	10-Jun2015

Capstone Staff	Title	
Andrew Little	Managing Director	
Mandy Tran	Senior Manager	
Syamala Murigiah	Consultant	
Isabelle Soh	Senior Manager	
DP&E Staff	Title	
Eamon Leneghan	Executive Director, eBusiness	
Clare Huxley	ePlanning Business Applications Manager	
Gordon Bradford	Team Leader, Innovation	
Jacinta Taylor	Business Process Analyst	
Michael Lucchitti	Senior Project Officer	
Nicholas Williams	Digital Liaison Officer	
Lisa Roberts	Team Leader, Implementation	

APPENDIX 2 - THEMES SUMMARY TABLE

This table lists the key themes that were observed during the workshop and their frequency across the councils involved.

Theme	Frequency
Review Process or Procedures	60
Electronic record keeping and automating manual processes	28
Systems Configuration/Integration of existing systems	22
DP&E tools not fully utilised	15
Public awareness and education	13
Implementing new systems or modules	12
Council training & knowledge sharing	10
Capturing applicant enquiries	8
Referrals & other decision making bodies	8
Customer service centre configuration and resources	5
DP&E consideration for scope and costs of DA On-Line Project	3
Resourcing and staff allocations	3
Capturing information regarding DA process delays	2
Fees	2
Legislation driven challenges	2