
Online Development Applications

Date : May 10, 2017

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (**the Department**) has announced plans to move the lodgement of Development Applications (**DAs**) online, saving significant time for applicants.

The average time taken to prepare and submit a traditional DA is up to ten (10) days. The Department's proposed online system has the potential to reduce this time to thirty (30) minutes.

Whilst some Local Councils currently allow online submissions of DAs, the Department proposes a unified system which will be a "one stop shop" for development applications and complying development certificates. In the future the system will connect any type of application to be lodged to any local council within New South Wales.

Features of the Proposed Online DA Lodgement System:

- standardised requirements for documents submitted with DAs
- additional contextual guidance provided to applicants
- function to check whether or not complying development can be undertaken on a property
- submission and lodgement of complying development certificates online
- viewing of spatial data of a property online
- people can 'park' an application and come back to it at a later time
- individuals will be able to register for alerts in relation to Local Environment Plans, State Significant Development and DAs in that person's local area

With the features listed above, the new system has the potential to reduce delays caused by poorly completed applications and inadequate supporting documentation. Further, the new system provides support to the applicant through the process by providing of contextual guidance.

Land Owner's Consent

The signature of a land owner will no longer be required when submitting a DA, instead the online system will require a declaration that the person submitting the application is either:

- a land owner, or
- has the permission of the land owner to lodge the application on the land owner's behalf

If the second option is declared the applicant will be required to submit the land owner's name and contact details. The land owner will be notified of the registration number and the date that the application was submitted.

Payment of Fees to Council

Fee payments will also be made through the online system and paid into a clearing account of the Department. These fees will then be distributed, including GST where applicable, to the account nominated by the Council on Wednesday of each week. Electronic payments made to Council bank accounts will also include key identification details for the transaction including a unique portal reference number, payment reference, payment amount and date.

Community Feedback

To provide for these processes, the Department will need to make amendments to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*.

The Department is currently seeking feedback from the community and Local Councils in relation to the proposed amendments. The relevant documents in relation to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment (eplanning) Amendment 2017* can be viewed online at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/title-exhibition>.

As with any new online system there are sure to be teething issues once the system is rolled out. The submission period allows Councils to provide feedback on the proposed system and highlight any issues that they may foresee arising.

Takeaways for Councils

The proposed online system for DA lodgement has the potential to not only provide cost savings to the applicant but also to the Local Council itself through the provision of applications that are in a standardised form, reducing time spent deferring applications due to insufficient information being supplied.

Further, the proposed online system will make DA tracking more transparent for the applicant, allowing online monitoring of the progress of the application and reducing Council time spent dealing with enquiries.