

# Regional Housing Flying Squad FAQ

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This document answers frequently asked questions about the Regional Housing Flying Squad to assist councils in understanding and expressing an interest in participating in the program.

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## Overview

### How has the Regional Housing Flying Squad changed since the pilot program?

The department has considered the feedback provided by councils who participated in the pilot program and has sought to incorporate these comments into a revised program design. One of the prominent comments on the pilot program was the need to reduce administrative burden on councils. A key objective has been to minimise the amount of manual input information required by councils as much as possible. It is important to recognise, however, that councils as the consent authority have obligations that are not appropriate to delegate, such as formally requesting information from applicants and agencies.

### How do I know if my council is eligible?

All 96 regional councils in NSW are eligible. A list of eligible councils is included in Appendix C of the [Program Guidelines](#).

### What are the requirements for participation in the program?

Please refer to the [Program Guidelines](#) for the relevant program business rules and the Participation and Services Delivery Deed. Please contact the flying squad team at [flyingsquad@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:flyingsquad@planning.nsw.gov.au) for any specific questions.

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## Expressions of Interest

### Can I resubmit development applications that were rejected in previous rounds of expressions of interest?

Yes. Development applications that were rejected can be resubmitted in future rounds of expressions of interest.

### Will the Regional Housing Flying Squad accept late applications?

In response to council feedback from the pilot program, the Regional Housing Flying Squad will not accept late applications as they delay the triaging, evaluation and acceptance stages of the program. This in turn impacts on the efficiency of assessments within the program. The dates for each Expression of Interest stage are provided well in advance, to help councils plan ahead.

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## Regional Housing Flying Squad Planners

### How are the Regional Housing Flying Squad planners being recruited?

The recruitment for the Regional Housing Flying Squad has formed part of the recent bulk recruitment undertaken by the department. The Regional Housing Flying Squad undertook internal recruitment within the department in the first instance to minimise the potential impact associated with the potential recruitment of council planning staff.

### What experience do Regional Housing Flying Squad planners have in the assessment of development applications?

The Regional Housing Flying Squad has intentionally recruited planners with development assessment experience, with a particular focus on local government experience where possible (with the exception of planners recruited as part of the incubator program). A good planner will proactively seek out any issues with a development application so they can be addressed. The Regional Housing Flying Squad will work collaboratively with councils and applicants to find solutions to any issues that might arise during the assessment process, as would occur during any robust merit assessment process.

### What experience do Regional Housing Flying Squad planners have in heritage assessment?

Planners within the Regional Housing Flying Squad have a broad range of experience, including in the assessment of Aboriginal Cultural heritage and non-Indigenous heritage. The Regional Housing Flying Squad also has the option to engage independent heritage experts or experts in other disciplines, should it be required during the assessment of a development application.

### How does a consultant planner join the Regional Housing Flying Squad?

Consultant planners were utilised during the pilot program stage of the Regional Housing Flying Squad. This new iteration of the Regional Housing Flying Squad mostly utilises planners recruited and employed directly by the department. However, technical expertise in specific disciplines may be sought from consultants to assist with assessments. As per the NSW Government's procurement protocol, any consultants used for services over a certain value must be on a pre-qualified scheme. Please contact the flying squad team ([flyingsquad@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:flyingsquad@planning.nsw.gov.au)) if you are interested in providing services or looking for more information on how to sign up to a scheme.

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## Process

### What assistance will be provided in cases of referral issues with external agencies?

Regional Housing Flying Squad planners will liaise with external agencies to resolve issues, and if escalation is required, PDU's case management team can get involved to help mediate resolutions. For development applications that councils are assessing outside of the Regional Housing Flying Squad, councils should contact the Planning Delivery Unit for case management support.

### Who will communicate with applicants and referral agencies?

The Regional Housing Flying Squad will liaise with applicants and agencies in the same manner that a council planner would. The Regional Housing Flying Squad will not be responsible for providing formal correspondence to such parties, including for example, requests for additional information. In these situations, the Regional Housing Flying Squad will prepare correspondence, then provide this correspondence to councils to forward in a formal capacity as the consent authority to the applicant.

### Does a preliminary assessment of the development application first need to be undertaken by council?

Yes. Councils are expected to undertake a preliminary review of the development application to ensure it meets the adequacy requirements of Part 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2021 and to satisfy the information requirements listed under the [Regional Housing Flying Squad Program Guidelines](#) for development applications accepted into the program.

### Will the Regional Housing Flying Squad utilise council templates for reports and conditions?

Where possible and to create efficiencies with councils, the Regional Housing Flying Squad will utilise council templates to minimise the administration load on councils. For councils who do not have their own templates or are looking for assistance to update their templates, the Regional Housing Flying Squad will be able to assist with this.

### Will the Regional Housing Flying Squad use councils' systems and councils' standard conditions to upload reports and consents?

It is not expected that access to council systems will be required by the Regional Housing Flying Squad. Where available, council's standard conditions will be used, however, councils remains responsible for the uploading and creation of any documents on the Planning Portal or council systems.

### Who will manage objectors and return development application queries?

Councils, as the consent authority, will maintain their responsibilities for notification and exhibition processes, including the collation of submissions which will then be provided to the Regional Housing Flying Squad for consideration as part of the assessment process. Fortnightly update meetings between councils and the Regional Housing Flying Squad should enable councils to provide information to the public on the status or details of the development application. Should a development application encounter significant public interest, alternative arrangements can be negotiated with a council.

### Will the Regional Housing Flying Squad address Planning Panels with their development application assessment reports?

On request of council, the Regional Housing Flying Squad can make its staff available to brief the relevant Planning Panel. This may, however, be restricted to an online briefing and will remain at the discretion of the Regional Housing Flying Squad.

### In what situations will the Planning Delivery Unit work with other agencies to help with the speedy assessment of development applications?

Provided that a development application meets the Planning Delivery Unit's case management criteria, the Planning Delivery Unit case management team will liaise and work with all government agencies to resolve blockages, overdue referrals, or stalled projects that are delaying or preventing determination of a development application.

### Can development applications needing refusal be referred to the Regional Housing Flying Squad?

The intent of the Regional Housing Flying Squad is to support councils in unblocking residential development applications to increase housing supply in regional areas, and to improve the assessment times for these development applications.

If, however, during the merit assessment it becomes apparent to the Regional Housing Flying Squad that a development application should be refused, it will provide an assessment report to council stating such.

### Can councils submit development application for large subdivisions being lodged soon.

Yes. Provided the subdivision is for housing and had been accepted by council.

### Will councils be provided with section 4.15 assessment reports?

Yes. At the conclusion of its assessment, the Regional Housing Flying Squad will provide council with an assessment report which addresses section 4.15 and will also include a recommended development consent unless council requests otherwise.

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## Incubator program

### How will the new incubator element of the Regional Housing Flying Squad program work?

The Regional Housing Flying Squad will contribute to long-term solutions for the regional planner shortage through its 'incubator' program, which will see student / trainee planners with no planning experience work alongside experienced planners to develop their assessment skills. Student / trainee planners will also build connections with the regional councils they work with during their time in the flying squad, which may lead to regional employment opportunities and filling planning vacancies in regional councils.

### On what basis should the student / trainee planner be employed?

Whilst it is preferred that councils employ student or trainee planners for a period of 12 months or more to develop planning talent within their region, the department acknowledges this isn't always possible. The key outcome is to see councils investing in the development of their own planning staff. There is no minimum period for which a student / trainee planner must be employed and existing students / trainees would satisfy this objective.

#### Will any of the graduate or student planner positions within the Regional Housing Flying Squad be identified for Aboriginal people?

None of the roles within the Regional Housing Flying Squad has been specifically targeted for Aboriginal people, however, we encourage and welcome applications from all. If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, check out the department's [Our Mob on Country webpage](#) to understand the work of the Department of Planning and Environment and to receive assistance in applying for roles at the department.

#### Can councils access student or trainee planners through the flying squad?

If councils want to recruit and employ a student / trainee planner through the flying squad, contact one of the flying squad team leaders at [flyingsquad@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:flyingsquad@planning.nsw.gov.au)