

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

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Community Housing Concierge

Program Guideline

January 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

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

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Community Housing Concierge

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Introduction

In October 2022, the Australian Government announced the National Housing Accord (the Accord). The Accord brings together all levels of government, investors and the residential development, building and construction sector to deliver on an aspirational target of 1.2 million new well-located homes over five years, from 2024. Under the Accord, the New South Wales allocation is 377,000 new, well-located homes by 2029. The Accord also requests States to improve access to social and affordable housing, by building a strong and sustainable Community Housing Provider (CHP) sector.

What is the Community Housing Concierge?

The Community Housing Concierge is a new pilot initiative, providing a service to help participating CHPs navigate and build capability with using the planning system. Our goal is to provide CHPs with more certainty and confidence in the planning system, ensuring crucial community housing projects are delivered across NSW as quickly as possible.

It will be integrated within the Planning Concierge of the Planning Delivery Unit (PDU) of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

The Planning Concierge also provides broader support service programs for developers, Aboriginal land managers as well as investment attraction support for NSW Government agencies.

The service

We acknowledge planning can be complex. The pilot service will work closely with Community Housing Providers to provide end-to-end planning support.

The service offering includes:

- Planning pathway navigation, sound boarding and early resolution of issues.
- Ongoing portfolio management (i.e., regular structured check-ins on each of the partners projects) to ensure projects are efficiently progressing through the planning system.
- Support on concurrences and referrals between DPE, councils and other state agencies.
- Information updates on new or revised government policy and expert insights on planning processes.

- Access to the Planning Delivery Unit Case Management Service if projects get stalled in the system.

The Community Housing Concierge Service is not a consent authority and does not provide favourable planning outcomes.

Our partnership with you

If your application is successful, you can expect a partnership with the Community Housing Concierge to include:

- Allocation of a dedicated partnerships manager.
- Monthly meetings (for an initial 6-months) and access to your partnerships manager via phone or email.
- A project management tool for each party to keep up to date with your projects and pipeline.

Consistent with the *Planning Concierge Service Charter and Probity Agreement (Attachment A)* partnerships will be in place for 12-months with opportunity for review.

How do I apply?

Applications for the Community Housing Concierge service will be made via an expression of interest (EOI) form. DPE may conduct multiple EOIs for the service depending on demand and program capacity. There is no fee or service charge for this application.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to access the Community Housing Concierge service, you must meet the following criteria:

- Be a registered Community Housing Provider, including Aboriginal Community Housing Providers.
 - Have current or upcoming projects in the NSW planning system, which will contribute to the five-year National Housing Accord timeframe.
-

Expression of Interest evaluation process

In addition to key eligibility criteria being met, the following factors will be considered as part of the EOI evaluation process, which will be used to determine which CHPs are included in the pilot:

- Scale of investment and timing of investment (number of projects to be delivered and when)
- Geographic spread
- Variety of housing types
- Support a variety of Tiers
- Ability to facilitate positive outcomes for Aboriginal communities
- Recipient of government funding
- Demonstrated capacity as a model proponent
- An evaluation of the ability for the Community Housing Concierge to make a meaningful impact on the portfolio

DPE will assess applications, and considering program capacity, determine which CHPs are accepted into the program.

CHPs already receiving Planning Concierge support service will be transitioned into the Community Housing Concierge and do not need to take part in the EOI process.

Anticipated intake

The program is a pilot, and we expect to onboard approximately 15 new CHP partners from the first EOI.

An eligibility pool will be established for future intakes as resourcing becomes available.

In addition to the Community Housing Concierge, a referral can be made to the [Planning Delivery Unit Case Management](#) service if a project, that is delivering social and affordable housing is currently under assessment and is stalled in the planning system.

To ensure wide access to Aboriginal Community Housing Providers, organisations may submit an EOI or access the service directly by referral from the [Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association](#) to the [Aboriginal Planning Concierge](#).

As part of the evaluation process, the assessment panel may identify referral opportunities to other PDU services if the organisation is not selected for a Community Housing Concierge partnership.

How to apply

Please apply via the [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#) form by 20 February 2024.

Any questions about the Expression of Interest process may be directed to chpconcierge@dpie.com.au or the Program Contacts listed on page 3.

Timelines

The timeline for the Expression of Interest, outcomes and onboarding of partners is as follows:

Milestone	Expected timing
Expression of Interest open	From Tuesday 23 January 2024 to Tuesday 20 February 2024
Outcome communicated to nominees	March 2024
Onboarding	April 2024

Expectations

Probity agreement

All partners of the Community Housing Concierge are expected to enter into a *Planning Concierge Service Charter and Probity Agreement* (the Charter), which outlines expectations and rules of engagement. The Charter is available at **Attachment A** and nominees are required to review prior to making an application. Groups are also asked to review the Model Proponent Guidelines at **Attachment B** prior to making an application.

As outlined in the Charter, partnerships are approved on a 12 monthly basis with annual review.

Appendices

Attachment A – Planning Concierge Service Charter and
Probity Agreement

Department of Planning and Environment

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Planning Concierge

Service Charter and Probity Agreement

November 2023





Acknowledgement of Country

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The Planning Concierge

The Planning Concierge (Concierge) performs a planning and support function that assists investors and Government with navigating the NSW Planning System. Concierge provides one of the core functions of the Planning Delivery Unit (PDU), whose purpose is to drive efficient planning decisions by increasing capability and building trusted relationships across the planning system.

Service Charter

- This Service Charter (the Charter) sets out the services provided by the Concierge, and the terms on which they will be provided. It ensures that the Concierge functions:
 - are efficient, consistent, transparent, and fair;
 - align with probity fundamentals;
 - empower Concierge staff to identify and control risks;
 - help deliver on NSW Government and Planning priorities;
- This Charter is to be read in conjunction with other NSW Planning policies and guidelines that govern activities that support the NSW planning system.
- Concierge was established in July 2020 as part of the planning reform and provides a support service to major and diverse developers as well as Aboriginal land managers deliver high public value projects across NSW. Planning Concierge works with proponents, agencies, and consent authorities to efficiently resolve complex issues and ensure enhanced customer experiences for all parties interacting with the NSW Planning System.




The Concierge team provides the following key services:

- Connecting partners, government agencies and consent authorities to facilitate discussions and resolve complex issues that are impeding the progress of projects.
 - Identifying pathways for issue resolution within DPE and government agencies.
 - Keeping partners informed of DPE policy progression and look for opportunities for consultation and industry sounding workshops.
 - Follow up of overdue referrals with State Government agencies.
 - Discussing potential planning pathways and solutions, without compromising sound planning decisions.
- Has a clear and standard approach to maintaining partnerships with developers, Community Housing Providers, Aboriginal land managers, and State Government agencies, including:
 - Commitments from all partners on the quality of the information and documentation provided, probity and professional standards to be upheld.

- Exploring and pursuing opportunities for closer collaboration between the Department, councils and statutory referral agencies.
- Identifying pathways for issue resolution within DPE and other Government agencies.
- The Concierge team does not:
 - Retain any statutory approval powers nor make decisions on behalf a consent authority.
 - Guarantee a favourable planning outcome or determination for projects being undertaken by developers.
 - Interfere with decision making processes or lobby by or on behalf of any developer partner. or seek to prosecute decisions made by consent authorities or statutory referral agencies.
 - Provide legal advice that should be relied upon by any partner.




Concierge: Our Commitment

Concierge is committed to maintaining service standards to ensure we are meeting the needs of our partners. Service standards include:

<p>Professionalism</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will engage purposefully with respect and transparency.• Meetings are to be held on a schedule agreed between the Partner and Concierge and adjusted as required. Generally, meetings are held with partners monthly, quarterly, or on an as needed basis.• Agenda items will be called approximately a week out for the regular meeting.• Meeting Minutes are to be provided to the group within 3 business days of the meeting.• Undertake actions agreed during interaction between the Partner and the Planning Concierge in a timely manner.
<p>Communication</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Correspondence or requests for support received by the Planning Concierge team will be responded to in a timely manner. The length of time required to respond to correspondence may vary according to the issues raised and the work required to prepare a response. Where a longer response time is anticipated, Concierge will provide an initial acknowledgement and updates as required.• The Concierge team will make themselves available to partners and provide continuous service as required in between formal meetings.• Solution focussed – Concierge will leverage tools, resources and relationships that can support partners to resolve complex planning issues that are, or have the potential, to cause delays in decision making processes.
<p>Effective Governance</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will operate in accordance with the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption's <i>Probity and Probity Advising, Guidelines for Managing Public Sector Projects, November 2005</i>. The Probity Principles outlined in the Guidelines have been adopted by Concierge and shall inform all decisions related to Concierge functions. These include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Transparency and accountability○ Impartiality○ Managing conflicts of interest○ Ensuring confidentiality○ Value for Money

Our Partner's Responsibilities

Acknowledge partnered approach adopted for a Planning Concierge service, all partners are required to

<p>Professionalism</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage purposefully with respect and transparency.• Act as a Model Proponent.• Undertake actions agreed during interaction between the Partner and the Planning Concierge in a timely manner.
<p>Communication</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nominate a primary point of contact for the Concierge to engage with for administrative purposes.• Use reasonable endeavours to inform Concierge if it intends to escalate any planning matter being discussed with Concierge within the NSW Government or at a Ministerial level.• Provide accurate and timely information to the Concierge, knowing that the information provided will be treated as commercially sensitive and not shared outside of the relationship unless required to under relevant legislation.
<p>Effective Governance</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediately advise the Planning Concierge if the partner becomes aware of any actual or perceived conflict of interest or other issue that can be negatively perceived or impact the partnership.• Advise if any third-party lobbyist is being brought in to support a project. If a third-party lobbyist is engaged, the Partner will request a meeting via the DPE Lobbyist Contact Register prior to any meetings involving the lobbyist.• Provide regular and constructive feedback to Concierge on its experiences in working with Concierge and across the NSW Planning system more generally.

Termination of partnership & change of scope of services

- This Charter is valid for 12 months from execution.
- A review will be undertaken every 12 months to ensure continued alignment with Concierge service qualification criteria and effective utilisation of Concierge and DPE resources.
- Director, Planning Concierge retains sole discretion to withdraw or, if deemed appropriate, alter the scope or frequency of ongoing Planning Concierge services.
- Planning Concierge support may be terminated if:
 - The partner does not comply with their responsibilities.
 - The partner becomes bankrupt or is put into administration.
 - The partner or one of their projects is referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, or other regulatory state government agencies.
 - The strategic value of the proposed project is reduced to below the threshold levels and Concierge qualification criteria.

Ongoing Planning Concierge support may also be terminated by mutual agreement of Director Planning Concierge and the Partner at any time.

Probity and Transparency

It is noted that:

- Concierge is not a consent authority or a lobbyist. It will not influence the decisions of consent authorities or agencies or undertake activities that are or could reasonably be perceived as performing a lobbyist function.
- All individuals, including Planning Concierge staff, engaged with Planning Concierge must declare conflicts of interest as soon as known and manage appropriately
- Concierge reserves the option to engage an external probity adviser for complex projects where it is deemed appropriate.
- The progress of projects, key activities undertaken, and decisions made at partner meetings will be documented to ensure transparency and community confidence that the Concierge is delivering the objectives of *the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. We will:
 - Provide agendas, minutes, and note actions from our meetings.
 - Release information in compliance with GIPA requests, Standing Order 52s, subpoenas and other legally binding orders. Where appropriate we will consult with partners prior to the release of information and inform them of any review rights they have in relation to the release of information.

Agreement

I, as delegated representative of agree to partner and engage with Planning Concierge in line with this Service Charter:

Partner Representative

Signed:
[Signature of Partner representative]
Name:
Date:
Position:
Phone:
Email:

Planning Concierge Representative

Signed:
[Signature of Partner representative]
Name:
Date:
Position:
Phone:
Email:

Attachment B – Model Proponent Framework

FACT SHEET: How to be a Model Proponent

What is a Model Proponent?

A model proponent demonstrates their commitment to both the project¹ they are advancing and the requirements and integrity of the NSW planning system throughout the entire process.

- Proponents of critical State significant infrastructure (critical SSI) projects are expected to act as model proponents. This expectation is documented in the critical SSI Protocol and confirmed with the application to the Minister for declaration of a project as critical SSI.
- Proponents of budget-funded (government) infrastructure projects are also expected to act as model proponents. This expectation is documented within the MOUs between Planning Group and each counter party.
- Planning Group may seek a commitment to being a model proponent for other projects, including fast-tracked or priority assessments programs.

Why is it important to be a Model Proponent?

To establish and maintain community confidence in the environmental impact assessment process, proponents are expected to conduct themselves as model proponents throughout the entire process.

What does a Model Proponent do?

A model proponent conducts its business in relation to environmental impact assessment and the Planning-led whole-of-government assessment of the project, in the following manner:

- genuine commitment to balancing the economic, environmental and social outcomes in the scoping, design, assessment and delivery of major projects;
- application of accepted and best-practice techniques and procedures, including Government policies and guidelines, throughout all stages of the process;
- appropriate consideration of government and public commentary on concerns arising from the project;
- strong commitment to a high standard of ongoing community engagement and reporting on project progress and delivery;
- a willingness to respond to emerging issues and adjust project parameters to ensure environmental impacts are appropriately avoided and/or managed; and
- rapid disclosure to regulators of key issues arising from the project in a transparent manner and responding to compliance, enforcement and other performance issues as they arise in a timely way.

Where an organisation uses the services of another entity in any aspect of the process, it is expected that they be engaged on terms which reflect the need to operate as a Model Proponent.

¹ For the purposes of this fact sheet, the term 'project' is used to refer to both infrastructure proposals and other development projects.

For all stages of projects Model Proponents will:

- collaborate constructively to achieve the efficient and timely determination of projects and resolve issues;
- provide information, documentation, advice, and responses within the timeframes requested; and
- proactively identify and action to resolve any issues during the process where a delay is occurring.

The Model Proponent in project development

The focus of this stage includes (but is not limited to):

- early identification of key technical, design and community-based economic, environmental issues;
- establishing the need for the proposed project;
- considering the best approach to engagement with the community and local government,
- preparation of a detailed scoping report; and
- request for Secretary Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs).

(Note: For CSSI and SSI projects this will include application lodgement)

The Model Proponent will:

- make allowance (contingency) in their budget and project timelines as a part of business case development, for additional studies or design changes that will arise as a result of public submissions or expert advice received during the Planning-led whole-of-government assessment process;
- consult with advising agencies and Planning Group in the preliminary stages of project inception including early business case development by means of scheduling site visits and planning focus meeting(s) and any other tools to assist with early identification of issues pertinent to the project;
- consult with the local community and local government (including industry, business and interested groups) to provide information on the project design and preliminary impacts that may be known. This may involve attendance at a public meeting or other forms of public engagement.
- prepare the detailed scoping report to support the request for SEARs;
- inform Planning Group of the progress of the project.

The Model Proponent in impact assessment and studies

The purpose of this stage is to conduct an environmental assessment of the proposed project and to seek further community input. Strong cooperation with the Planning Group and advising agencies throughout this stage will ensure issues are addressed expediently.

The Model Proponent will:

- undertake studies, assessments and design review necessary to address all SEARs in full;

- undertake community engagement during EIS preparation;
- consult with the advising agencies during EIS preparation to understand how the EIS should address all requirements (Note: this will not extend to seeking agency comment on draft EIS material, unless the project is critical SSI);
- organise agency site visits, if required; and
- provide the Planning Group at least 14 days notice of the expected date of EIS lodgement.

The Model Proponent in public exhibition

The purpose of this stage is to seek advising agency and community input on the proposed project

The Model Proponent will:

- submit an EIS that addresses the SEARs;
- engage a Registered Environment Assessment Practitioner to certify that the EIS adequately addresses all requirements;
- present the project to the relevant Senior Officer committee, if requested: and,
- revise the EIS if necessary to address any matters notified by the Planning Secretary before EIS public exhibition.

The Model Proponent in response to submissions and advice

The purpose of this stage is to update the proposed project design and environmental assessment following public exhibition.

The Model Proponent will:

- review and consider all submissions and advice received in response to the public exhibition of the EIS;
- consult with the advising agencies to understand how the Amendment Report, Submissions Report and/or Preferred Infrastructure Report (PIR) should address all issues raised in submissions and expert advice;
- undertake additional studies, assessments and design changes required to respond to submissions or expert advice, and prepare a response and (if requested by the Planning Secretary) a PIR;
- re-present the project to the relevant Senior Officer committee for comment, if required; and
- revise the Amendment Report, Submission Report and/or PIR if necessary to address any matters notified by the Planning Group, prior to publication.

The Model Proponent in assessment and recommendation or determination

The purpose of this stage is for the Planning Group to undertake the merit assessment of the proposed project and make a recommendation or determination of the application.

The Model Proponent will:

- promptly provide any additional information, or undertake additional studies or design reviews requested by the Planning Secretary as necessary to inform the Planning-led whole of government assessment process; and,
- promptly and reasonably respond to draft conditions imposed by Planning Group as part of finalising the recommendation to the decision maker.

The Model Proponent in project delivery

The purpose of this phase is to ensure a commitment from Proponents to a high standard of ongoing public reporting on project delivery and compliance for approved projects.

The Model Proponent will:

- secure all necessary licences, permits and other approvals required under other legislation prior to commencement of works;
- prepare all management plans and any other documents, required by the approval, and be responsible for ensuring that any contractors carrying out the project adhere to the conditions of approval and the requirements of management plans;
- consult with advising agencies regarding the provisions contained within the conditions of approval, including any management plans where relevant, before the commencement of works;
- engage a suitably qualified expert or experts to conduct an independent audit of the adequacy of management plans required by the approval to address all issues identified in the EIS and assessment report, and respond to all findings of the audit engagement prior to commencement of works; and,
- engage a suitably qualified expert or experts, to conduct an independent audit of the completion of actions identified in management plans required by the approval, post commencement, and promptly respond to all findings.

Note: Further guidance regarding the engagement of an independent auditor can also be found in the Planning Groups *Independent Audit Post Approval Requirements*.