

## NSW Planning Portal Council (high volume) Reference Group – Quarter 1 meeting

Held on: 19/03/2024 – 1pm to 2.30pm

At: Online via Teams

Chaired by: Andrew Schofield, Planning and Engagement Manager, DPHI

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### Attendees:

Sue Bidas, Lake Macquarie City Council

Michelle Bisson, Newcastle City Council

Andrew Bland, Lane Cove Municipal Council

Olivia Bradly, Port Stephens Council

Ashley Brewster, Maitland City Council

Mark Brian, Eurobodalla Shire Council

Kate Broadbent, Newcastle City Council

Esra Calim, Cumberland Council

Peter Conroy, Blacktown City Council

Dan Croft, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council

Rod Croft, Murray River Council

Kim Edwards, Dubbo Regional Council

Karon Gogoll, Albury City Council

Maya Goldsmith, Penrith City Council

Jarrold Husking, Blacktown City Council

Sarah Irani, Council of the City of Parramatta

Philip Jamieson, Council of the City of Sydney

Sue Jones, Bega Valley Shire Council

Lisa Kennedy, Kempsey Shire Council

Katherine Lancaster, Wingecarribee Shire  
Council

Carmen Landers, Clarence Valley Council

Angela Lazaridis, Bayside Council

Linley Love, Georges River Council

Isobella Lucic, North Sydney Council

Andrew MacGee, Campbelltown City Council

Adam Matlawski, Mid-Coast Council

Beth Matlawski, Waverley Council

Emma McClellan, Coffs Harbour City Council

Kendall McEvoy, Eurobodalla Shire Council

Nadir Mian, Wollongong City Council

Alison Millerchip, Central Coast Council

Rachel Ng, Georges River Council

Kevin Nonweiler, Liverpool City Council

Ksana Osborne, Ku-ring-gai Council

Paul Osborne, The Hills Shire Council

Jane Partridge, Local Government NSW

Ryan Pritchard, Camden Council

Ashleigh Sherry, Northern Beaches Council

Christine Smith, Tamworth Regional Council

Zali Smith, Orange City Council

Wendy Spear, Wollondilly Shire Council

Carmen Spreitzer, Shoalhaven City Council

Janet Twohill, Tweed Shire Council

Sue Wade, Ballina Shire Council

David Waddell, Regional Cities NSW

Liam Alagh, DPHI \*

Jane Blakeney, DPHI \*

Vikrant Das, DPHI

Margaret Gomez, DPHI

\* Partial attendance

Vicki Walker, Lismore City Council

Bridget Wilks, National Local Government  
Customer Service Network

Conor Wilson, Inner West Council

Carolyn Wiseman, Sutherland Shire Council

Faiq Kidwai, Building Commission NSW

Nerida Mooney, DPHI

Khaleda Murad, DPHI

Caitlin Williams, DPHI

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## Apologies

Josephine Attie, Canterbury-Bankstown  
Council

Paul Cashel, Shoalhaven City Council

Mariam Fares, Bayside Council

Rachel Josey, Inner West Council

Anthony Tavella, DPHI

Dawn Valle, Tweed Shire Council

Pauline Webb, National Local Government  
Customer Service Network

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## Material

A copy of the presentation to the Reference Group is attached with these minutes for reference:  
*NSW Planning Portal Reference Group – Council\_high– Quarter 1\_Presentation\_19032024.pdf.*

**Actions**

ID	Action	Responsible	Due date
CH24.1.1	<p>Councils requested the ability to be provided with permissions to roll back assessment stages of an application and amend incorrectly input application numbers to allow them to fix minor issues without customer support.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> The department to consider this request and provide an update to the reference group.</p>	Director, Digital Delivery	Q2 2024 meeting
CH24.1.2	Send an invitation to the Technical Reference Group to Campbelltown and Woollahra Councils.	Caitlin Williams	Complete 19/03/2024
CH24.1.3	Councils to escalate any old customer support P-Ticket numbers to Margaret Gomez.	NSW Planning Portal Council Reference Group	Ongoing
CH24.1.4	<p>Councils requested the ability to view they're own P Ticket numbers to track the progress and comments.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> The department to consider this request and provide an update to the reference group at the next meeting.</p>	Director, Customer Support	Q2 2024 meeting
CH24.1.5	<p>Councils requested that the department provide a strategic roadmap that goes beyond process changes and planned releases. This would assist councils with long-term financial and process considerations.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> The department advised that at the next reference group meeting an update on the longer-term strategic vision would be provided.</p>	A/ Executive Director, Digital, Analytics and Insights	Q2 2024 meeting
CH24.1.6	The department to provide responses to unanswered questions at the Q1 2024 reference group meeting in Q2 meeting.	NSW Planning Portal team	Q2 2024 meeting

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### Minutes

#### Introduction

- The members were welcomed to the 2024 NSW Planning Portal Council (high volume) Reference Group. An overview of the objectives of the group and the role of the nominated representative was provided.

#### Customer service update

- The levels of customer support for the program were outlined for attendees, including how to escalate a P ticket. If needed, the ticket could be escalated to Margaret Gomez on email address: [margaret.gomez@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:margaret.gomez@planning.nsw.gov.au).
- An update was provided on the actions the department has taken to reduce the backlog of customer support tickets. If you have not had a response to your ticket within 3 weeks, Councils are encouraged to escalate their P ticket to Margaret Gomez.
- Campbelltown City Council asked whether Council raised support tickets received priority. The department advised that support requests raised by the Ministers office, Ombudsman or that had a financial or reputation impact were prioritised.
- Lake Macquarie City Council requested that determination issues also be automatically prioritised. The department advised that this would need to be included in the subject line for that initial prioritisation triage to occur.
- Sutherland Shire Council requested visibility of the status of your P tickets online. This would help to track them and view updates. At present there was no visibility for councils which led to contacting the customer support team and raising a duplicate ticket. The department will consider this request.
- The department advised that any old support issues that did not have a P ticket number would need to be re-submitted.
- Councils requested the ability to reconcile outstanding tickets with each Council. They advised that there is a possibly a significant number of old cases that no longer require action. The department advised that they could conduct a search by email address and would welcome working with councils to validate their support requirements.
- Councils requested clarification on what to do if a ticket was marked as closed but the matter hadn't been resolved. To reduce the chance of this occurring, the department advised that the support team is currently verifying whether the technical escalations have been resolved, prior to closing the P ticket.
- Newcastle City Council requested the ability for councils to make own edits and to roll back stages so they don't have to contact customer support. This request was supported by other members of the reference group. The department advised that they would consider this request and provide an update at a future meeting.
- Councils requested to know how many staff were in the customer support and technical support teams. The department advised there were approximately 10 customer support staff and 4 technical staff.

### Program updates

- The MOG changes being made to the various digital services were discussed. Councils were advised these changes would impact the Agency names within the Concurrence and Referral service.
- The NSW Planning Portal roadmap and the types of releases was discussed. The roadmap can be viewed at <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/roadmap-nsw-planning-portal> and it is updated monthly.
- Penrith City Council advised that they were undertaking a review of all core council systems, and the strategic vision for the NSW Planning Portal has an impact on the review and funding requirements. Council requested that the department develop and share the strategic direction for the program to assist councils with these decisions. This request was supported by other councils. The department advised that more information will be able to be developed and shared shortly, pending the outcome of a funding bid.
- Lake Macquarie City Council requested clarification on why there is a need to update the digital services so frequently. The department advised that the NSW Planning Portal needed to be updated to address regulatory requirements, as required. In addition, there were minor enhancements made to the portal to improve functionality and usability. To minimise the impacts on stakeholders the department had amended the release plan to include three major releases each year.
- Lake Macquarie City Council suggested that the Department look to implement policy changes without impacting the APIs or the digital services, and instead insert the requirements into the assessment process. The department advised that a lot of policy changes being made were not resulting in changes to the Portal, however some required additional information to be provided by the applicant or certifier which resulted in updates to the digital services. These changes may determine additional application requirements or facilitate the collection of data.
- Blacktown City Council asked how councils could be involved in the strategic planning and establishment of the project roadmap, but also policy development that impacts local government such as the calculation of the cost of development and development application fees. The department advised that opportunities were available to provide feedback on policy changes during exhibition periods, and that further discussions with the NSW Planning Portal Council Reference Groups would occur about the strategic vision for the program.
- Bayside Council requested that detail of proposed changes be communicated to councils to ensure that they are aware of impacts to their business processes and APIs. The department advised that there are pre-release communications sent to stakeholders approximately 2 weeks before a release, and Technical Reference Groups where impacts on APIs are communicated to vendors and council technical staff ahead of their release.
- The Acting Executive Director, Digital Analytics and Insights advised that NSW Planning Portal had recently transferred into her portfolio. A review of the feedback and services was underway, and the team will be looking to complete technical remediation and stabilisation, as well improving the customer service function. Councils could raise their concerns with her directly on email [nerida.mooney@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nerida.mooney@dpie.nsw.gov.au) or phone 0424 205 714.
- Penrith City Council requested an update on whether a strategic roadmap would be released beyond process changes and planned releases. This would assist councils with long-term

financial and process considerations, especially related to the assessment phase of the process, planned future API mandates and considerations for other application types to be included on the Portal. Other councils supported this request. The department advised that at the next reference group meeting an update on the longer-term strategic vision would be provided.

**Building Commission NSW building reforms program**

- An update on the Building Commission NSW building reforms program was provided, along with an overview of the changes being made in the next few months. These changes are being made in response to stakeholder feedback and many would remove the need for a stakeholder to contact customer support.

**Release updates**

- The recent and upcoming NSW Planning Portal releases, including the Farming pre-assessment tool (developed in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries) and myHome Planner (developed in conjunction with the Department of Customer Service), were discussed.
- Liverpool City Council asked whether the Departments’ AI project would integrate with the NSW Planning Portal digital services. The department advised that part of the technical governance process was to develop tools with the intent to integrate into the NSW Planning Portal to improve the process.
- The reference group was provided with an update on the chatbot functionality. It is currently being tested internally prior to its release in June 2024.

**NSW Planning Portal Engagement**

- An update on the number of training sessions and attendees this year was provided.
- An update on the internal knowledge management working group was provided. Members were asked for their feedback on the following:

Question	Response	Count
Do you currently use knowledge management (accessed via the NSW Planning Portal dashboard)?	Yes	89%
	No	11%
If you use knowledge management, what information do you access?	Quick Reference Guides	51%
	Release notes	24%
	Policy documents	10%
	Planning Circulars	15%

- The concept for the consolidated help and resources section of the NSW Planning Portal was discussed. Feedback was requested on:

Question	Response	Count
Do you believe that the proposed page structure will assist users to find the relevant Quick Reference Guides?	Yes	97%
	No	3%
Do you believe that the proposed page structure will improve the understanding of the application and assessment process and the users involved?	Yes	92%
	No	8%

- Additional feedback on how the concept could be improved was provided:

- Include a troubleshooting component wherever possible so users can self-help.
- Ensure chatbot refers people to this content.
- Search functionality by user type
- Include videos and/or workflow images that explain the process
- Ensure the content is updated regularly and maintained
- Link to QRGs from within the digital services i.e. relevant QRGs to that aspect of the process shown within the tool.

### Other

Members requested updates on the following topics at future meetings:

- NSW Planning Portal strategic roadmap / vision for the NSW Planning Portal
- Conditions of Consent for DA functionality i.e. Notice of Determination
- APIs - ongoing support, updates
- Ongoing support for the Portal including engagement with councils
- Involvement in determining priority projects, enhancements, release timeframes and tools for the NSW Planning Portal
- Current and future planning application mandates e.g. Section 68 approvals
- Fee payment via the Portal – Expansion of the payment functionality to include the Planning Reform Fee
- Face-to-face meet-up / smaller workshops with councils to provide feedback
- Improved reporting requirements – efficiencies delivered through the Portal
- Planned collaboration meetings between local government and the department, especially in regard to prioritising resolution
- Best practice ideas from other councils
- Update on DA Best Practice Guide
- Forum for Council users to provide the Department with general feedback and issues related to the Portal including Council driven enhancements e.g. closure of CNR automatically when the DA is determined / improvements to reporting functionality



Unanswered questions from the chat

Question	Response
Will there be a secured access for Council or Agency users?	No. The password protected knowledge management space will be archived, with all support materials available on the NSW Planning Portal. This will improve transparency of the process, as well as improve access to support materials.
Are there any plans to mandate further APIs for Councils, such as Section 68 or Section 10.7 Planning Certificates?	This request has been noted and an update will be provided at the Q2 2024 reference group meeting.
Is there any future enhancements to allow editing of a PCA application? It is the only application we cannot “edit”.	This request has been noted and an update will be provided at the Q2 2024 reference group meeting.
Has the issue relating a Construction Certificate to a PAN been resolved? You are unable to progress to submit.	This request has been noted and an update will be provided at the Q2 2024 reference group meeting.
Is there any plan to add the ability for filter/sort by “Uploaded date” in the documents tab?	This request has been noted and an update will be provided at the Q2 2024 reference group meeting.
Regarding the generating of NODs via the Portal, currently we can build the department's standard NOD templates into our own systems. Is this the long term plan or will there come a day where NODs must only be generated directly via the Portal and not using council systems at all?	This request has been noted and an update will be provided at the Q2 2024 reference group meeting.
Will there be any stakeholder testing of chatbot by councils? Clarence Valley Council would be happy to participate if possible.	This request has been noted and an update will be provided at the Q2 2024 reference group meeting.

Upcoming meetings

Next meeting: 11 June 2024