

NSW Planning Portal Council (medium-to-low volume) Reference Group – Quarter 1 meeting

Held on: 21/03/2024 – 1pm to 2.30pm

At: Online via Teams

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

Attended

Bradley Allen, Snowy Valleys Council

Jo Amalfi, Fairfield City Council

Josephine Attie, City of Canada Bay Council

Robyn Bradley, Wagga Wagga City Council

Nerida Brown, Parkes Shire Council

Heidi Bryce, Murrumbidgee Council

Barbara Campbell, Greater Hume Shire Council

Denise Catlin, Richmond Valley Council

Emily Chelli, Cessnock City Council

Emma-Rose Cooper, City of Lithgow Council

Kristy Cosier, Gilgandra Shire Council

Patsy Cox, Gwydir Shire Council

Carolyn Crain, Bourke Shire Council

Tamwyn Daley, Blue Mountains City Council

Glenda Dunn, Central Darling Council

Carine Elias, Council of the City of Ryde

Payarm Eskandari, Mosman Municipal Council

Paige Frost, Yass Valley Council

Rebecca George, Upper Lachlan Shire Council

Claire Golder, Temora Shire Council

Erin Green, Bland Shire Council

Kylie Graine, Byron Shire Council

Jasmine Gregory, Hay Shire Council

Sarah Griffiths, Berrigan Shire Council

Kirsty Hanrahan, Oberon Council

Michelle Henry, Narrabri Shire Council

Sarah Hopkins, Mid-Western Regional Council

Bridey Hugo, Narranderra Shire Council

Simone Ivanovski, Shellharbour City Council

Rohan Johnston, Junee Shire Council

Nikkita Manning-Rayner, Balranald Shire Council

Hamish McTaggart, Muswellbrook Shire Council

Karen Merrick, Upper Hunter Shire Council

Nicole Miller, Hawkesbury City Council

Judee Nolan, The Council of the Municipality of Kiama

Terri O'Brien, Federation Council

Lily Parker, Strathfield Municipal Council

Jane Partridge, Local Government NSW

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| Glen Pereira, Hilltops Council | Mandy Wiles, Goulburn Mulwaree Council |
| Geoffrey Press, Bathurst Regional Council | Stephen Adam, DPHI |
| Jai Reid, Burwood Council | Liam Alagh, DPI |
| Birgit Ronnfeldt, Lockhart Shire Council | Jane Blakeney, DPHI |
| Kurt Savage, City of Canada Bay Council | Vikrant Das, DPHI |
| Niki Tagliapietra, Blue Mountains City Council | Kate Fitzpatrick, DPHI |
| Jessica Trace, Dungog Shire Council | Luke Goldsmith, DPHI |
| Leanne Twigg, Cowra Shire Council | Margaret Gomex, DPHI |
| Jessica Veenhuizen, Bellingen Shire Council | Nerida Mooney, DPHI |
| Emily Walsh, Narromine Shire Council | Khaleda Murad, DPHI |
| Pauline Webb, National Local Government Customer Service Network | Meghann Sikorski, Building Commission NSW |
| Laura Whitney, Gunnedah Shire Council | Caitlin Williams, DPHI |

Apologies

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Stef Alchin, Gilgandra Shire Council | Ryan Cole, Burwood Council |
| George Andonoski, Strathfield Council | Sheridan Kirk, Parkes Shire Council |
| Linda Blinkhorn, LG NSW | Damian O'Shannassy, Oberon Council |
| Rachel Pleasant, Bellingen Shire Council | Anthony Tavella, DPHI |
| Louise Sureda, LG NSW | Hudson Wade, Gunnedah Shire Council |

Material

A copy of the presentation to the Reference Group is attached with these minutes for reference:
NSW Planning Portal Reference Group – Council_medium– Quarter 1_Presentation_19032024.pdf.

Actions

| ID | Action | Responsible | Due date |
|----------|---|---|-----------------|
| CM24.1.1 | The department to review the development types where a BASIX Certificate or NABERS is required, and to identify possible system amendments required. | Director, Environmental Policy / Director, Digital Delivery | 30 April 2024 |
| CM24.1.2 | Project Manager, BASIX to contact Goulburn Mulwaree Council to discuss their technical issues with BASIX Certificates. | Project Manager, BASIX | COMPLETE |
| CM24.1.3 | Building Commission NSW to provide clarity on whether the recording of inspections will become mandatory through the PC appointment application due to the changes to reporting requirements. | Building Commission NSW | Q2 2024 meeting |
| CM24.1.4 | The Building Commission NSW to provide a response to the query from Central Darling Council about limited building surveyor resources in Western NSW. | Building Commission NSW | Q2 2024 meeting |
| CM24.1.5 | Representative from Central Darling Council to provide examples of feedback from builders where they have been unable to use the NSW Planning Portal. | Central Darling Council representative | Q2 2024 meeting |
| CM24.1.6 | The department to conduct testing on the Section 10.7 Planning Certificate service to identify any issues with the generation of multiple lots. | Director, Digital Delivery | Q2 2024 meeting |
| CM24.1.7 | The department to develop short planning application information sheets for customers to assist them with the process. These will be made available for council review and feedback, prior to being finalised and shared. | Planning and Engagement Manager | Q2 2024 meeting |
| CM24.1.8 | The department to speak with Bathurst Regional Council about their experiences with the NSW Planning Portal. | A/Executive Director, Digital Analytics and Insights | 15 April 2024 |

| ID | Action | Responsible | Due date |
|----------|---|---------------------------------|----------|
| CM24.1.9 | The department to include a reference to updated Quick Reference Guides in the release summary. | Planning and Engagement Manager | COMPLETE |

Minutes

Introduction

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

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.
- Central Darling Council advised that a BASIX Certificate was being requested for manufactured homes, where it shouldn't be. This was impacting applicants and resulting in negative interactions between council and the applicant.
Update post meeting: The Online DA service was reviewed and it was confirmed that there were no mandatory BASIX certificate requirements for development applications based on development types, including manufactured homes.
 There is a system validation where a BASIX Certificate will need to be uploaded if the applicant answers Yes to the question "Do you have a BASIX Certificate?". The selection of "yes" on the development application form will also identify a BASIX Certificate as a mandatory required for the related Construction and Occupation Certificate applications as they are linked applications. The department recommends that when a consent authority reviews the development application prior to lodgement, that this value be corrected if needed.
 Further information on relocatable homes can be found in [Planning Circular PS 21-016](#).
- Goulburn Mulwaree Council advised that they were experiencing difficulty with the ability to access or complete any BASIX Certificates. The department advised that the Project Manager for the BASIX project would contact the member after the meeting.
- A council (no name provided in the chat) advised that they were experiencing difficulties with the Section 10.7 Planning Certificate application where an application for one lot becomes multiple lots if they are all on one street number or assessment number. The department to test the Section 10.7 Planning Certificate service to identify any technical issues.

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.
- Blue Mountains City Council requested clarification on whether the recording of inspections was to be done on the PC appointment application due to the changes to the reporting requirements for certifiers. Cessnock City Council advised that they believe the reporting is tied to the Construction Certificates, however Blue Mountains and Goulburn Mulwaree Councils thought it was to be recorded against the Principal Appointment application. The Building Commission NSW will provide clarification prior to the quarter 2 meeting.
Post meeting update: Critical Stage Inspections and Written Direction Notices are to be recorded against the Complying Development Certificate or Construction Certificate and not the Principal Certifier appointment. For more information on how certification data is reported, please view: [Certificate data reporting](#) .
- Central Darling Council advised that there were very few building surveyors and building inspectors west of Dubbo, and they are often not familiar with the Planning Portal and how to use it. When developing the requirements, was the Building Commission aware of this? The Building Commission NSW will provide a response at the next meeting.
- Central Darling Council advised that they had feedback from builders that they were unable to apply for applications online. The Department requested that examples be provided so that the team could review to identify anything we can do.

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.
- 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.

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.
- 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.

- Wagga Wagga City Council advised that applicants had been told by ServiceNSW that they were unable to assist with a technical issue and that they needed to contact the Council. The department advised that this was not in accordance with our support agreement with ServiceNSW where any calls such as this should be transferred to the department.
- Strathfield Council advised that they raised support tickets in December 2023, but had yet to have a response. They did not receive a P-ticket number for those queries. The department requested that they send through an example so that it could be investigated.
- Councils stated that they were finding significant delays to the resolution of their support requests. This was impacting customers and their assessment timeframes and whilst improvements have been made they requested that the team be resourced adequately to ensure a faster turnaround. The department advised that changes had been made to the support structure recently and that there would be further improvements following a review.
- Bathurst Regional Council recommended that the contact us form on the NSW Planning Portal include additional drop-down fields to help triage the issue for a faster support turnaround.
- Fairfield City Council requested that the department consider providing access to the NSW Planning Portal organisation administrators to enable them to resolve minor issues such as amending documentation uploaded incorrectly. The department advised that they would consider this request as part of their review.
- Councils reported difficulty with the format of the standard conditions of consent generated through the NSW Planning Portal.
- 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 or phone 0424 205 714.
- Councils requested that the department consider improvements to the P-ticket system to improve the ability for councils to match tickets to their submitted support request. For example, embedding the description/summary of the issue in the automated P-ticket response.

NSW Planning Portal Engagement

- An update on the number of training sessions and attendees this year was provided.
- Attendees were asked for their feedback on the how many months into the future the training courses need to be published. 94% of respondents advised that training for the upcoming three month period was adequate. Members did request that additional courses be provided to other professionals such as lawyers for the Section 10.7 Planning Certificate service.
- 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 | 84% |
| | No | 16% |
| If you use knowledge management, what information do you access? | Quick Reference Guides | 69% |
| | Release notes | 10% |

| Question | Response | Count |
|----------|--------------------|-------|
| | Policy documents | 6% |
| | Planning Circulars | 10% |
| | Other | 4% |

- Additional feedback on the knowledge management functionality was provided:
 - The Quick Reference Guides provide you with the steps in the process, but if there is a problem with the application, they don't assist with troubleshooting.
 - Knowledge management is not easy to use in the current format. Navigating through the folders to access the relevant Quick Reference Guide can lead to system errors where the document is no longer visible.
 - You need to have the document downloaded as you can't have the Quick Reference Guide and the digital service open at the same time.
 - Member was unaware of this aspect of the dashboard.
 - Members use the resources in this section as part of staff onboarding.
 - Access to the documents outside the Portal would be really beneficial.
- Councils advised that they download the QRGs and send to applicants. They requested that the department advise when the QRGs are updated so that they can amend their local copy.
- 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 | 100% |
| | No | 0% |
| Do you believe that the proposed page structure will improve the understanding of the application and assessment process and the users involved? | Yes | 96% |
| | No | 4% |

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

- The concept looks great, will be a big help.
- Keyword searches would be helpful
- Notification to councils and other users when Quick Reference Guides are updated as often councils have links to the documents locally or have downloaded them.
- Ensure the page is prominent on the NSW Planning Portal webpage so that applicants can easily find it e.g. "Need help to apply".
- Ability to search a document by date updated.
- Ability to access superseded versions of the document in case functionality changes.
- Include a direct link to help.

Following feedback from members, the department will develop short planning application information sheets for customers to assist them with the process. These will be made available for council review and feedback, prior to being finalised and shared.

Other

Members requested updates on the following topics at future meetings:

- Conditions of Consent for DA functionality i.e. Notice of Determination
- Inspections functionality – where inspections are to be recorded
- Forum for Council users to provide the Department with general feedback and issues related to the Portal
- Specialised admin training, not just demonstrations
- Integration issues
- Break out sessions on issues facing Councils.
- Enhancing intuitive features of the Portal e.g. if dwelling selected Sustainability SEPP questions do not appear which causes confusion for an applicant.
- Enhancements / bug fixes being made on the Portal to address feedback

Unanswered questions from the chat

| Question | Response |
|--|---|
| Is there a video for a customer on how to lodge an application? | There are Quick Reference Guides for all digital services. The applicant guides are published on the NSW Planning Portal Applicant resources webpage. |
| I find it really beneficial to bounce idea off and ask questions, maybe this could be via an online forum? | This request will be considered and a response provided at the Q2 2024 meeting. |
| Is there an investigation to the standard conditions on the development consent? I am still having problems with this. In the end we are doing our own conditions of consent and ignoring the Department conditions of consent. I have been told other councils are also doing this for conditions of consent. | This feedback has been noted and a response will be provided at the Q2 2024 meeting. |

Upcoming meetings

Next meeting: 13 June 2024