



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL

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Submission Cover Sheet

Engagement with Development Application Processes in the ACT

Submission Number: 037 - Australian Institute of Architects

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Legislative Assembly for the ACT
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Via email: LACCommitteePUR@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiry into Engagement with Development Application Processes in the ACT

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and feedback on the ‘Inquiry into Engagement with Development Application Processes in the ACT’.

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. The Institute works to improve our built environment by promoting quality, responsible, sustainable design. The following comments are made by the ACT Chapter of the Institute whose professional members are practising architects with first-hand experience of the development processes in the ACT and who act in the public interest of their clients across a range of residential, commercial urban developments.

The ACT Chapter would welcome the opportunity to assist this Inquiry and would be pleased to meet with the Committee to provide practical examples of how the DA process could be further improved to deliver better outcomes for the community, businesses, organisations and the Territory. In this regard, we acknowledge the continuous improvement work of government agencies such as the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) with respect to DA processes.

Our comments in this submission are at a high level and around broad themes:

- Impact of DA processes
- Uniformity of DA processes
- Timeframes and transparency of DA processes
- Cost to consumers/organisations/businesses
- Advice
- E-Development platform.

Impact of DA process

We would like to see improvements made in the current DA processes to foster and grow further investment in the ACT and reduce any burden on consumers/users of the DA approval system who are currently experiencing delays in the processing of their applications due to a system backlog.

Uniformity of DA processes

We would like to see greater uniformity with respect to how the DA process is managed by government agencies. For example, approval for works on public land is managed by Transport Canberra City Services (TCCS) and not the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). When a DA is lodged, it is forwarded to other government agencies and for public notification. However, with respect to consideration of DAs by Transport Canberra City Services, there is no uniformity in process and no public notification required. This absence of public notification can result in works being approved by Transport Canberra City Services without consideration of public opinion.

Timeframes and transparency

We regularly receive feedback from our members regarding the lengthy DA processing times and the need for transparency with regards to processes such as the 'completeness check'.

The completeness check, while a worthwhile part of the approval process, falls short for some applications – generally those applications that do not (or cannot) fit within the one-size fits all checklist approach. Further transparency should be provided on the timeframes for the completeness check which has become an additional review period that is outside the statutory DA review period. During the completeness check period, no assessing officer is allocated to the application so there is no way to appropriately communicate about the lodged DA.

There is clear information regarding statutory timeframes for DAs. However, the one size fits all approach to statutory timeframes is neglected when the process goes beyond the standard development application. When an amendment to a DA is lodged or further information is required, no timeframes are applicable.

Cost to consumers/organisations/businesses

Even the simplest DA can take 3-4 months. When timeframes blow out, there can be significant resulting cost and time implications for homeowners, small businesses, organisations and developers which has the potential to impact on development in the Australian Capital Territory. We would be happy to provide examples in this regard.

Advice

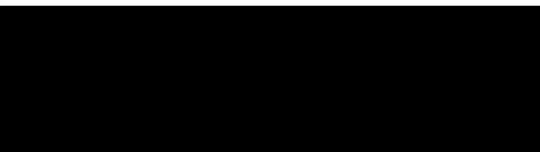
The pre-application process has been very thorough and helpful in the past. However, the process is becoming less helpful as it is common for government officers involved in this consultation to have no further contribution in the assessment process once the DA has been lodged. This is of particular concern where the assessment is referred to entities such as IQON water and ActewAGL as there is a need for consistency of information flow. In addition, the pre-application consultation outcomes aren't always appropriately communicated to the team that undertakes the completeness check, especially when out-of-the-box solutions have been found for a development/design reason. This lack of coordination can lead to DA knockbacks which costs money and wastes a significant amount of time for all participants.

E-development system

The ACT Chapter is supportive of the review of the E-development system as the current system malfunctions regularly, is clunky to use, and cannot be used on modern secure web browsers such as Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. Over the last three years, we have been liaising with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate with respect to improvements to the E-development system. Our Institute representative was last provided with an update with respect to the E-development system in March this year and we look forward to receiving advice that improvements to the platform will be delivered in the near-future.

In conclusion, the ACT Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects would welcome the opportunity to assist this Inquiry. Please contact our ACT Executive Director, Ms Liz Lang in the first instance on
[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Philip Leeson FRAIA
ACT Chapter President

3 August 2018