NSW Planning Portal Council (high volume) Reference Group – Quarter 2 meeting

Held on: 11/06/2024 – 9.30am to 11am

At: Online via Teams

Chaired by:

Attendees:

Josephine Attie, Canterbury-Bankstown Council

Sue Bidas, Lake Macquarie City Council

Michelle Bisson, City of Newcastle Council

Jules Bray, Queanbeyan–Palerang Regional Council

Kate Broadbent, City of Newcastle Council

Peter Conroy, Blacktown City Council

Dan Croft, Port Macquarie Hastings Council

Mariam Fares, Bayside Council

Mark Fowler, Bega Valley Shire Council

Karon Gogoll, Albury City Council

Abby Hale, Penrith City Council

Jarrod Husking, Blacktown City Council

Sarah Irani, City of Parramatta

Philip Jamieson, City of Sydney Council

Katie Johnstone, Waverly Council

Lisa Kennedy, Kempsey Shire Council

Mona Lababidi, Cumberland Council

Linley Love, Georges River Council

Adam Matlawski, Mid Coast Council

Ann Mesic, Tweed Shire Council

Nadir Mian, Wollongong City Council

Jorjia Hampton, Maitland City Council

Alison Millerchip, Central Coast Council

Kevin Nonweiler, Liverpool City Council

Ksana Osborne, Ku-ring-gai Council

Paul Osborne, The Hills Shire Council

Jane Partridge, Local Government NSW

William Pillon, Campbelltown City Council

Ryan Pritchard, Camden Council

Darlene Ridings, Willoughby City Council

Carly Sawyer, Northen Beaches Council

Zali Smith, Orange City Council

Wendy Spear, Wollondilly Shire Council

Sue Wade, Ballina Shire Council

Vicki Walker, Lismore City Council

Pauline Webb, Customer Service Network

Michelle Windebank, Singleton Council

Carolyn Wiseman, Sutherland Shire Council

Stephen Adam, DPHI	Nerida Mooney, DPHI
Kieran Babich, DPHI	Andrew Schofield, DPHI
David Berryman, DPHI	Meghann Sikorski, NSW Building Commission
Jane Blakeney, DPHI	Katerina Sotiropoulos, DPHI
Ankur Choksi, DPHI	Lisa Walton, DPHI
Vikrant Das, DPHI	Luke Goldsmith, DPHI
Kate Fitzpatrick, DPHI	Margaret Gomez, DPHI
Margaret Gomez, DPHI	Tegan Harris, DPHI
Yashna Kumar, DPHI	Markus Hafner, DPHI

Apologies

Vikrant Das, DPHI	Rachel Josey, Inner West Council
Linda Blinkhorn, LG NSW	Carmen Landers, Clarence Valley Council
Maya Goldsmith, Penrith Council	Andrew MacGee, Campbelltown City Council
Cecily Hancock, Bega Valley Shire Council	Ashleigh Sherry, Northern Beaches Council
Sue Jones, Bega Valley 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_high– Quarter 2_Presentation_11062024.pdf*.

Actions

Nil

Minutes

Introduction

- Apologies received prior to the meeting were recorded.

- The members were advised that updates on the quarter 1 Reference Group meeting agenda items and answers to questions on notice from that meeting will be provided outside of this meeting.

Program update

- The department has undergone a functional review, and the management of the NSW Planning Portal and the departments' customer support team are now part of the customer and digital division in corporate services. This means that the team will remain focused on the delivery of the technology and user experience, and related policy will remain within the planning department.

- The team will continue to maintain the NSW Planning Portal but over the coming period will be focusing on stabilising the platform, uplifting the related technology and improving the user experience.

- The A/Executive Director, Digital, Analytics and Insights advised the reference group that since April she had been speaking with as many stakeholders as possible to understand the needs of the different groups, the main pain points and what improvements would make a difference. This feedback was being relayed regularly to the leadership. An update on the program 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.

- Councils were reminded that all customer support requests will be allocated a P-ticket number when received by the department. If a P-ticket number hadn't been provided, then the department had not received the request. Councils were asked to ensure that they had a P-ticket number before escalating the issue.

- Councils were asked to ensure that when they raised a support query that they provided the following information to minimise delays:

  - Application type

- o Site address/s

- o Username

- o Description of issue, including a screenshot if possible

- o What assistance is required

- An update on the number of individual tickets by reference group member council was provided. Attendees were advised that 90% of the tickets received between 1 July 2023 to 4 June 2024 had been resolved. Several councils commented that the report figures did not align with their understanding of the numbers.

  Response: The department advised that they were unable to provide live reporting due to limitations within their customer support tool, and that the figures were accurate as of the 25 May 2024. Councils were encouraged to contact Margaret Gomez directly with any escalations or discrepancies.

- Lake Macquarie City Council asked whether the department was able to provide a breakdown of the tickets by topic. This would provide insight into the aspects of the Portal that needed the most attention.

  Response: The department is currently unable to report the category by ticket as that information is not recorded in a reportable field. An update to the system is being scoped which would lead to improved reporting.

Release updates

- A high-level summary of the changes being implemented as part of the 28 June 2024 release was provided to the group. This included amendments to the NSW Planning Portal to support the Building Commission's building reforms.

- Attendees were advised to send any system enhancements to Kieran Babich, Principal Solution Delivery Manager on email: kieran.babich@environment.nsw.gov.au .

- An update was provided to the members on an enhancement to the concurrence and referral service. This enhancement was to tighten the referral criteria to meet the referral requirements under Section 4.14 for referrals to the Rural Fire Service. Councils are still able to refer an application to the Rural Fire Service using 'other' for bushfire assessment matters. Attendees were advised that they could provide any feedback to Tegan Harris, Senior Manager Planning Facilitation- Agency partnerships on email Tegan.harris@dpie.nsw.gov.au .

- Central Coast Council requested improvements to the administration rights to enable councils to make amendments to some of the fields to speed up the process.

Response: The department has this request on the prioritisation backlog for discussion at the co-design workshops.

- Queanbeyan-Palerang Council advised that their API had document limitations (number, size and length of file name) which was causing problems for the council. They requested the ability for applicants or council staff to remove documents after submission.

  Response: For consideration as part of the backlog, please provide further detail on this matter to Kieran Babich.

- Queanbeyan-Palerang Council requested the ability to remove superseded documents.
  Response: The department advised that there was existing functionality for a council to mark documents as superseded, and then to filter the document table to display only documents of relevance (based on the filters selected).

- Tweed Shire Council advised that they were having difficulty accessing the NSW Planning Portal.

  Response: The department advised that this was caused by a Microsoft error and that the department was working with Microsoft to resolve the issue for impacted council.

- Campbelltown City Council advised that they had received amendment to DA applications, but it was not consistent. Other councils expressed interest in also having this functionality for their local government area.

  Response: The department advised that the 'Amendment to DA' functionality was not enabled in production and that the department would investigate why Campbelltown City Council had received these applications.

- Councils requested the following functionality be considered:

  - Ability to upload documents to the application without triggering an additional information request. This would be used for fee estimates, quotes and receipts. (Multiple)

  - Ability to amend the modification application type (Waverley)

  - Notification process for legal appeals for determined applications under appeal. (CBCC)

  - Access to documents relating to the appointment of a principal certifier whilst the development is underway, not once the certificate is registered with council. (NCC)

  - Ability to hide inactive council users from the list of council users within the organisation administrator functionality (Multiple)

- Additional guidance to the applicant to ensure that they are completing the 'Notice of Intention to Commence work' through the NSW Planning Portal. (Orange)

<u>Response</u>: For consideration as part of the backlog, please provide further detail on this matter to Kieran Babich.

Future Direction

- The A/Executive Director, Digital, Analytics and Insights presented the themes that had emerged from the recent discussions with stakeholders to the members of the Reference Group.

- Members were asked to rank the themes in order of priority and the results were:

Please order these items themes based on what you believe is the most important to your organisation

Theme
More co-design with councils
Clear the backlog of support cases
Moratorium on new
Feature and technology roadmap
More time for user acceptance testing / release preparation
API stability and vendor engagement

- Members also commented that data accuracy and reporting were a key concern for their organisations.

- Attendees were advised that following the release on 28 June 2024, and the hyper care period there would be a pause on the delivery of new features on the NSW Planning Portal whilst the following activities occurred:

  - PEGA platform upgrade

  - Crown Jewels infrastructure and cybersecurity requirements

  - Stabilise APIs

  - Policy / regulatory and bug fixes

  - UX review

  - Operating model

  - Develop a technology and features roadmap.

- Councils were advised that a series of workshops have been proposed to co-design and agree on the priorities for fixes to the NSW Planning Portal digital services.

- Members requested that an online workshop be held for those unable to travel to the face-to-face workshops.
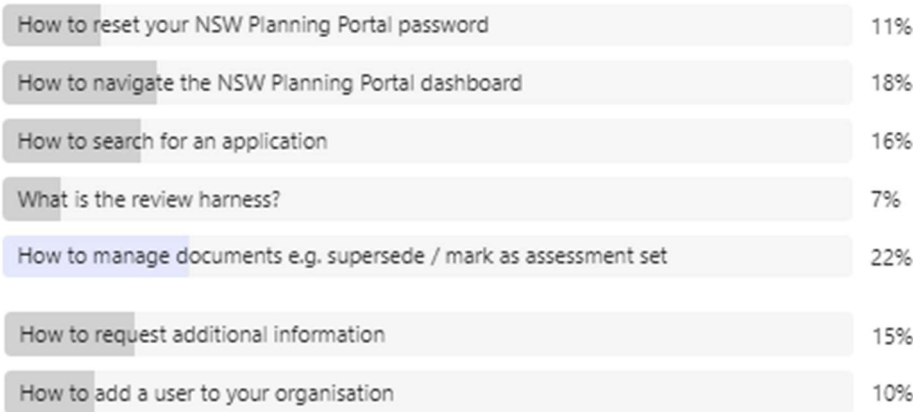
  Response: The department committed to holding a virtual workshop.

- Members of the NSW Planning Portal Council (high volume) Reference Group were supportive of the direction for the program for the next six months. They were also supportive of being involved in co-design workshops to inform the priorities for the program as well as the development of the technology and feature roadmap.

- Councils advised the department that one of the primary barriers for building was the cost of building and the number of builders available in their local government area.

 Other matters

- The department advised members that a survey had been developed to capture the details of those that would like to be provide feedback to the department on the NSW Planning Portal digital services and other digital platforms, and the future direction of the program. Members were reminded to complete this survey and circulate to their colleagues as relevant.

- Members were advised that the concept for the quick reference guide webpage had been delayed but would be circulated shortly for review and comment.

- The department advised that a range of short eLearning videos were being developed to provide clarification to users on how to use standard functionality. The videos could be included in a NSW Planning Portal induction pack for new council staff, used by stakeholders as 'self-serve' support materials, and/or sent by the customer support team to resolve customer support requests more efficiently.

- Attendees were asked to identify the topics that would be of most interest to their staff as part of an induction pack. The results were:

We are looking to create a collection of resources that a council could use to induct staff. From this short list of topics, which do you believe we should prioritise?

Topic	%
How to reset your NSW Planning Portal password	11%
How to navigate the NSW Planning Portal dashboard	18%
How to search for an application	16%
What is the review harness?	7%
How to manage documents e.g. supersede / mark as assessment set	22%
How to request additional information	15%
How to add a user to your organisation	10%

- Members requested that a video be created about deferred commencement, completing the notice of intention to commence work in the portal and payment of contributions fees.

- Members were advised that the department would be offering a subscription service so that interested stakeholders could register for updates on the NSW Planning Portal. Once the service had been created the details will be circulated to members. The members in attendance supported this approach.

- Members requested that the department provide the reference group members with visibility of the current backlog at the next meeting so that they can be prioritised with the councils. Members also noted that attendees at the meeting may have a different view on the priority to their colleagues, so a system that also provided visibility to other council staff would be preferred.

  Response: During the proposed co-design workshops with councils, the department will review the backlog for prioritisation. The department will also investigate the creation of a voting system for councils to provide feedback on the prioritisation of the requests.

Upcoming meetings

Next meeting: 17 September 2024