NSW Planning Portal Council (medium to low volume) Reference Group – Quarter 2 meeting

Held on: 13/06/2024 – 1pm to 2.30pm

At: Online via Teams

Chaired by: Caitlin Williams, Planning and Engagement Manager, DPHI

Attendees:

Jo Amalfi, Fairfield City Council

George Andonoski, Strathfield Municipal Council

Sharon Banning, Richmond Valley Council

Breanna Beattie, Narromine Shire Council

Linda Blinkhorn, Local Government NSW

Hugo Bridey, Narrandera Shire Council

Heidi Bryce, Murrumbidgee Council

Barbara Campbell, Greater Hume Council

Denise Catlin, Richmond Valley Council

Jason Chanphakeo, Council of City of Ryde

Emily Chelli, Cessnock City Council

Emma-Rose Cooper, Lithgow City Council

Tamwyn Daley, Blue Mountains City Council

Glenda Dunn, Central Darling Shire Council

Payarm Eskandari, Mosman Council

Paige Frost, Yass Valley Council

Kylie Grainey, Byron Shire Council

Erin Green, Bland Shire Council

Jasmine Gregory, Hay Shire Council

Wade Hudson, Gunnedah Shire Council

Simone Ivanovski, Shell Harbour Council

Aaron Johansson, Regional Cities NSW

Rohan Johnston, Junee Shire Council

Liesa Kemp, Yass Valley Council

Sheridan Kirk, Parkes Shire Council

Mark Kirton, Snowy Vallys Council

Nikkita Manning-Rayner, Balranald Shire Council

Judee Nolan, Kiama Municipal Council

Terri O'Brien, Federation Regional Council

Damian O'Shannassy, Oberon Council

Jane Partridge, Local Government NSW

Rachel Pleasant, Bellingen Shire Council

Marianne Portolesi, Griffith City Council

Geoffrey Press, Bathurst Regional Council

Sanju Reddy, Council of City of Ryde

Kurt Savage, Canada Bay Council

Niki Tagliapietra, Blue Mountains City Council

Jessica Trace

Leanne Twigg, Cowra Shire Council

Mandy Wiles, Goulburn Mulwaree Council

Bridget Wilks, Maitland City Council

Rebecca George, Upper Lachlan Council

Stephen Adam, DPHI

Kieran Babich, DPHI

David Berryman, DPHI

Vikrant Das, DPHI

Kate Fitzpatrick, DPHI

Margaret Gomez, DPHI

Markus Hafner, DPHI

Tegan Harris, DPHI

Nerida Mooney, DPHI

Andrew Schofield, DPHI

Katerina Sotiropoulos, DPHI

Lisa Walton, DPHI

* Partial attendance

Apologies

Sarah Griffiths, Berrigan Shire Council

Trudy Kalteren, Griffith Shire Council

Michelle Henry, Narrabri Shire Council

Faiq Kidwai, Building Commission NSW

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 2_Presentation_13062024.pdf*.

Actions

ID	Action	Responsible	Due date
CM24.2.1	The department to investigate the error occurring for a subdivided property when linking a related consent, and the address look up issue for Central Darling Council.	Principal Solution Digital Manager	Q3 2024 meeting
CM24.2.2	The department to hold a virtual co-design workshop to capture feedback from councils unable to attend the face-to-face sessions.	ED, DAI	COMPLETE
CM24.2.3	The department to send the quick reference guide for managing the council administration account to be sent to Greater Hume, Federation and Goulburn Mulwaree Councils.	Planning and Engagement Manager	COMPLETE

ID	Action	Responsible	Due date
CM24.2.4	The department to investigate the creation of a voting system for councils to provide feedback on the prioritisation of the requests.	Principal Solution Digital Manager	Q3 2024 meeting
CM24.2.5	The department to identify information in the application form that can be obtained through other sources to reduce the number of fields the applicant enters and the potential incorrect information being input.	UX team	Q3 2024 meeting

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:
  o 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.
- Griffith Council asked for the number that applicants should contact for customer support.
  Response: Applicant should contact ServiceNSW on 1300 305 695 or 1300 650 908 (BASIX queries only), or contact the customer support team by completing the online form - https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/help-and-resources/submit-enquiry .
- Members of the reference group advised that applicants were experiencing difficulty when trying to link a related consent application when the address had been subdivided.
  Response: The department will investigate this matter.

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 .
- LG NSW asked whether the change to the concurrence and referral service would be communicated to councils.
  Response: NSW Councils have been advised of the change through the Planning Bulletin, targeted communications to high referral councils and through the NSW Planning Portal pre and post release communications.
- Central Darling Council advised that they were having problems with the address look up in their local government area which was preventing applications for a construction or occupation certificate being submitted on the Portal.
  Response: The department will investigate this issue.

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

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

- Attendees were advised that following the release on 28 June 2024, and the hypercare period there would be a pause on the delivery of new features on the NSW Planning Portal whilst the following activities occurred:
  - o PEGA platform upgrade
  - o Crown Jewels infrastructure and cybersecurity requirements
  - o Stabilise APIs
  - o Policy / regulatory and bug fixes
  - o UX review
  - o Operating model
  - o 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 (medium to low 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.
- Bathurst Regional Council advised that the "mum and dad" applicants contact council for guidance and support with the application process and this took time out of the planners day to discuss.
  Response: Applicants can be referred to ServiceNSW for assistance using the digital services, but they are unable to provide specific policy guidance to applicants. Councils will still play a role in this. The department is also developing additional support materials to assist users and reduce the need to contact the customer support team.

- Bathurst Regional Council advised that some applicants were experiencing difficulty obtaining access to historic BASIX certificates.

  Response: When the BASIX service was migrated to the NSW Planning Portal in October 2023, completed BASIX certificates (projects), including those that were archived, were migrated for current users. They can be accessed in the BASIX historical work folder. If the applicant has changed their email address since the BASIX application was generated, they would need to contact ServiceNSW to request that the application be transferred.

- Members requested the ability for administrators to make ex-council users inactive.

  Response: The department advised that there is an existing quick reference guide on how to make council users inactive. The user cannot be deleted from the council profile however as this will impact the audit log for an application.

- Cessnock City Council asked for clarification about the critical stage inspections and whether the development type changes the inspection types for selection.

  Response: The department advised that the development type selection does not change the inspection types. The department also requested that the council email their API question to the team so that it can be investigated as there were no known API issues.

- Parkes Shire Council requested clarification on whether functionality would be developed that enables a council or owner to nominate a new applicant to enable an application to proceed. In their local government area a local person was submitting applications for multiple applicants but they are no longer in business and the owners are unable to access or progress their application.

  Response: The department has this proposed functionality on the backlog for consideration and is being investigated to ensure that security and privacy requirements are complied with.

- Parkes Shire Council advised that an applicant had been able to upload documents to a returned construction certificate application. When the council asked the application to re-submit the application, they were unable to as the application was still open.

  Response: The department asked the council to send through information about the examples provided so that it can be investigated.

- Bathurst Regional Council advised that applicants were selecting the incorrect climate zone for development and complying development certificate applications and that the council amended some of these in the review stage. Council would like to know if there is something else that can be done?

  Response: The department advised that new functionality would be implemented in the complying development certificate and post-consent certificate services that enables a council to return an application to the applicant for editing. They would then be able to amend most fields within the application. The department also advised that this could be an opportunity for enhancement where the validation of the relevant climate zone for the property is conducted in the backend and the user does not need to provide it.

- Gunnedah Shire Council requested that the department consider including the ability to appoint your principal certifier as part of the construction certificate application form. This would minimise confusion from the applicants about the steps to take, and reduce the time that council staff spend chasing this information.

  Response: The department to consider this request.

- Balranald Shire Council requested that the department include a sort by date option on the document table. This request was supported by other councils.

  Response: The department advised that this was an existing backlog item.

- Central Darling Council requested clarification on whether a BASIX Certificate was required for a manufactured dwelling.

  Response: The department provided a response to this following the quarter 1 reference group meeting. The relevant policy team advised that a BASIX Certificate was not required for a manufactured home. When an applicant selects "Manufactured Home" as the development type for a Complying Development Certificate or development application, it will not trigger a requirement for a BASIX certificate. However, if the applicant selected 'Yes' to having a BASIX Certificate on the related development application, then the document will be required to be uploaded to the occupation certificate. For more information about a BASIX certificate not being required for a manufactured home, please refer to Planning Circular PS21-016.

- Central Darling Council asked whether the department was reviewing the requirements for manufactured dwellings as more are now being built and there is confusion about the requirements for development and the inspections required.

  Response: This matter will be referred to the relevant policy team.

- Cessnock City Council requested clarification on how to configure the Consent Authority Required Documents. A support ticket had been raised and the quick reference guide was provided to assist.

- Central Darling Council asked the department to consider adding the planning reform fund fee to the payments collected via the NSW Planning Portal as the Planning Reform Fund system has repeated technical issues.

  Response: The department will consider this request.

- Goulburn Mulwaree Council advised that they are experiencing difficulties with the closing of Section 68 applications within the Portal.

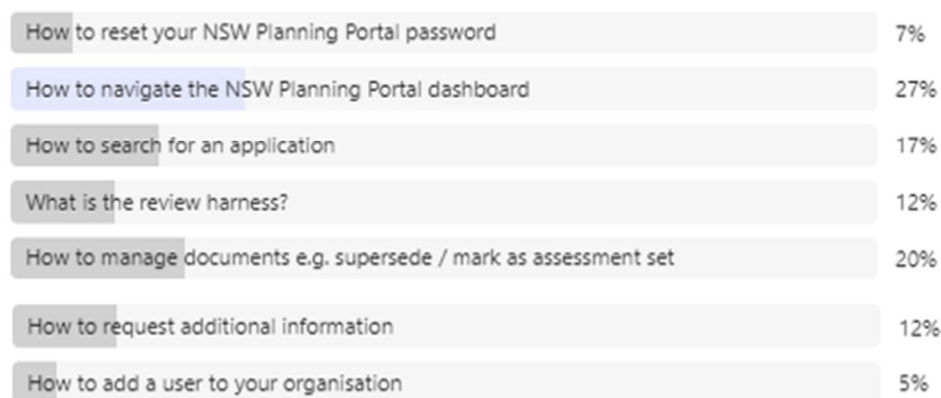 Response: The department requested more information to be able to investigate this issue.

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?

How to reset your NSW Planning Portal password	7%
How to navigate the NSW Planning Portal dashboard	27%
How to search for an application	17%
What is the review harness?	12%
How to manage documents e.g. supersede / mark as assessment set	20%
How to request additional information	12%
How to add a user to your organisation	5%

- Members requested that a video be created for applicants on how to provide additional information and how to make a fee payment.

- 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.

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure | SF24/21992

Upcoming meetings

Next meeting: TBC