

# Priority Assessment Program

---

Program Controls  
Framework

May 2022

# Table of contents

---

---

Project objectives and benefits	4
Public accountability and probity	5
Project management pathways	6
Participation criteria	7
Project selection process	8
Selection governance	9
Reporting	10

---

# Program Purpose

---



- The program is an assessment support mechanism to help accelerate major projects through the assessment process. It does not occur at the expense of ‘business as usual’.
  - The Priority Assessment Program is aimed at supporting major projects that:
    - will make a substantial contribution to the delivery of the strategic objectives of the government; and
    - will have significant public benefit including the strategic objectives of housing, open and green space, community development or environmental protection and enhancement.
    - will make have an overwhelming positive impact on the economic development of the State or region to assist with the recovery from the COVID19 pandemic.
  - The Program is a project management approach for existing assessment processes. Inclusion in this Program doesn’t predetermine the assessment outcome. All projects will be assessed in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
  - Projects will be State significant development (SSD), State significant infrastructure (SSI) or may involve a rezoning matter related to a major project.
  - The Program is scheduled to be run between 2020/21 to 2022/23 financial years. Projects can be considered for inclusion at any time during this time.
-

# Program objectives and benefits

---

## Objectives

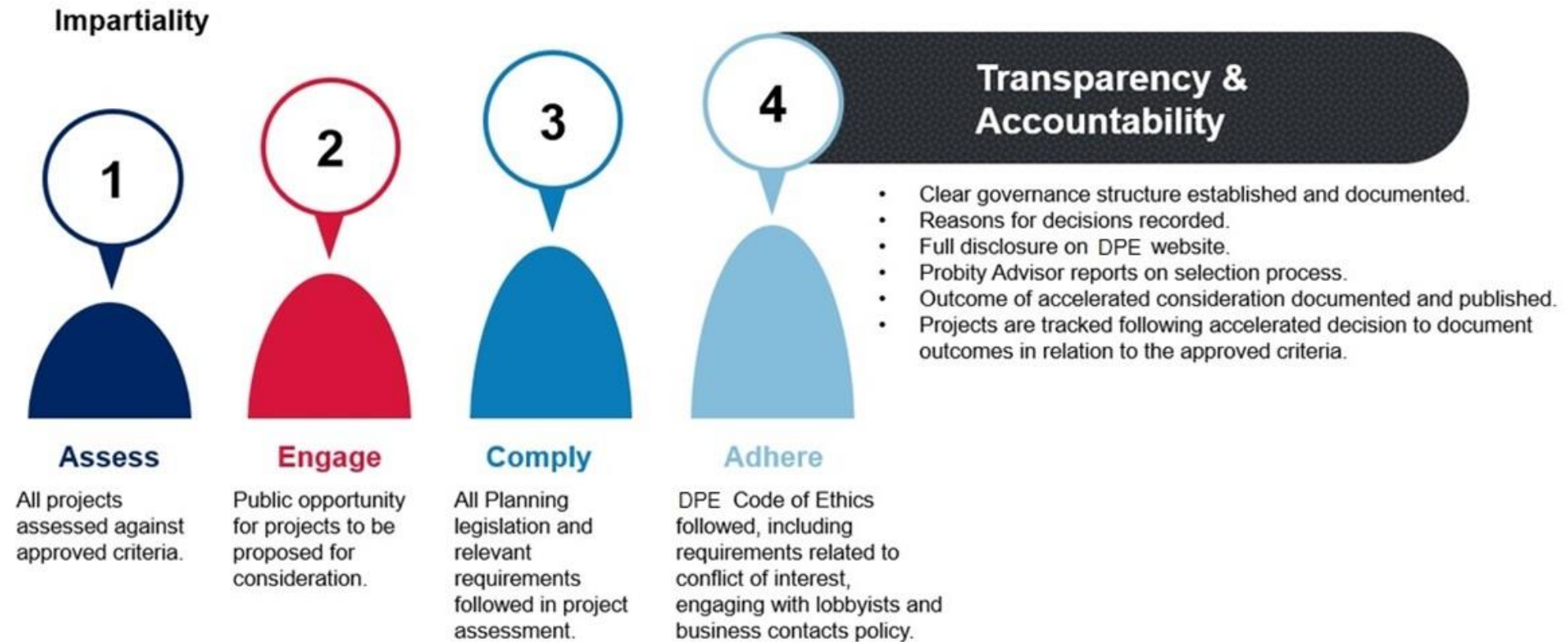
- To support the recovery of the NSW economy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Provide assessment decision support to accelerate completion of project with high public and economic benefit to NSW, and which have a high degree of alignment with strategic objectives.
- Activate the economy via the pipeline of planning projects that have high likelihood of delivery, creating investment certainty and confidence in the planning system.
- Provide case-management support and assist the completion of planning decisions to keep people in jobs and the construction industry moving as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Benefits

- Provides improved communication between proponents of major projects and the Department.
- Enables more efficient resource allocation with defined objectives and targets on a case by case basis.
- Support proponents and DPE assessment teams to fast-track strategically important projects.
- Provide clearer expectations about assessment requirements for all stakeholders, including commitments to public benefit, public value and overall project schedule.
- Improved oversight and monitoring of major project assessments including decision-making processes and timeframes.

# Public accountability and probity

Shared and transparent decision-making is critical. Oversight is fundamental to the program.



# Project management pathways

## Milestones

- Issuing of SEARs
- Exhibition
- Response to Submissions
- Assessment
- Final determination
- Any other key milestone on a project

## Project Management Pathways

- A clear schedule will be agreed, informed by the statutory process.
- Proponent(s) will commit to the quality of information to support the assessment and decision.
- The project schedule will be monitored by senior executives within stakeholder organisations – including milestone reporting and monitoring/mitigation of project schedule risk.
- Projects will be under assessment by DPE but other consent authorities may be involved, including the Independent Planning Commission and the Australian Government.

# Participation criteria

Projects being considered for case management will be considered against the following criteria

## Strategic Alignment

Projects that align with, or act as a catalyst for existing State Policies/Strategies and land use strategies.

**State Plans and Strategies.** Makes a significant contribution to the delivery of key government plans and strategies such as the State Transport Strategy, State Infrastructure Strategy, Regional Economic Development Strategies or Premier's Priorities.

**Alignment with land use strategy.** The project is recognised in a regional or district plan as being aligned to a spatial or economic strategy, is within a strategic centre, a location for employment or land release, an economic corridor or will enable the delivery of a Lighthouse Precinct

**Synergy/catalyst.** The project creates investment certainty that can unlock significant further development in a precinct and/or generates significant downstream economic activity.

## Economic Benefit

Projects will result in significant capital investment and create or protect jobs:

**Economic scale.** The project provides for significant capital investment in the medium term

**Job creation or protection.** The project creates a significant number of new jobs (construction or operational) or safeguards existing jobs.

## Public Benefit

Projects will provide significant public benefit such as improving open or public space and/or provide social and environmental benefits.

**Homes** – The project will contribute new homes in areas of need across NSW

**Social benefits.** The project provides significant social benefits (e.g. substantial affordable housing, a major community facility, aboriginal land, build-to rent);

**Environmental benefits.** The project provides significant environmental benefits (e.g. biodiversity corridors, threatened species refugia, improved surface water quality, renewable energy);

**Public space.** The project provides significant open or public space, better access or connections to open or public space, or provides an appreciable improvement to the quality of public space through design.

## Design Excellence

Projects that leverage existing infrastructure or improve designs of neighbourhoods are more likely to have better community benefits.

**Design Excellence, sustainability and urban design.** The project provides for high quality urban design or sustainability outcomes, such as incorporating high measures of energy reduction and environmental benefit.

**Existing or planned infrastructure.** The project is well-serviced by existing or planned infrastructure (e.g. open space, community facilities, major transport facilities).

## High Likelihood of Delivery

The project delivery plan enables timely delivery of the planned benefits to the economy and community. This will maximise the likelihood of the program objectives being met. In assessing this participation criteria a number of matters will be considered:

**Proponent experience.** The proponent has capacity and experience to deliver the project as proposed; and

**Proponent capacity.** The proponent can demonstrate the financial capacity to complete the project (independently verified); and

**Willing to commit.** The proponent and all relevant consent authorities are willing to commit to delivering milestones on-time, (including timely project delivery) and to signing a Service Charter.

**Proponent schedule.** The proponent can commit to construction commencing (for DAs) within 18 months.

**Project delivery risks.** There are no known significant environmental factors, construction risks, land access issues.

# Project selection process

## Project selection process will ensure alignment of resources with achievement of objectives

- Projects will have a strong alignment to strategic objectives of the Government and have significant public benefits that deliver a positive legacy for communities and businesses and assist with the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Program will not be suitable or appropriate for all major projects. Other reform initiatives and improved BAU will continue to provide accelerated planning pathways to projects across NSW.
- Projects will be selected according to the program criteria, through a carefully monitored review and selection process. The selection process will be informed by advice from independent experts, government agencies, DPE assessment teams and proponents. Detailed assessment and verification reports will be reviewed by the program probity advisor.
- The Program Criteria will be applied by the Department to consider projects for inclusion through a three-stage triage process. The process will consider resources, the nature of the project and whether it will benefit from the processes available to the Program.
- The Program of Priority Projects will not be selected as a single group. Projects can be considered for inclusion at any time, subject to resources.

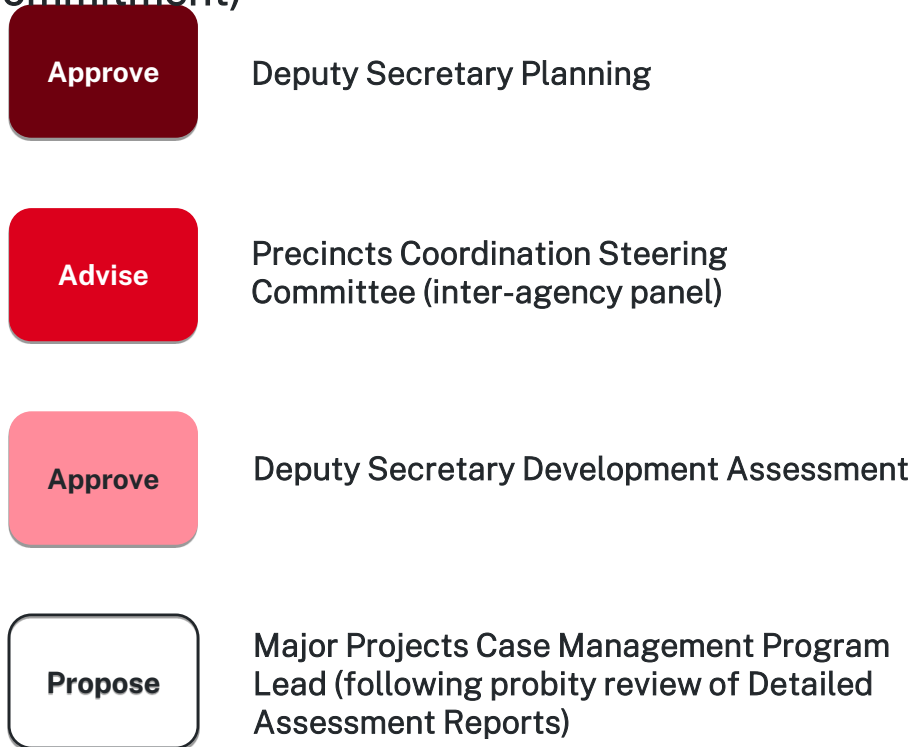




# Selection governance

## Selection Governance - Prior to Stage 2 (Verification)

↑ Commitment)\*



## Selection Governance - Prior to Stage 3



*\*Note: this process will also be used for de-selection of projects no longer meeting the Program participation criteria.*

# Reporting

## Program Reporting to:

- Dep Sec Planning and Dep Sec Development Assessment
- Precincts Coordination Steering Committee.
- Minister for Planning.
- Planning Reform Implementation Committee

## Program Reporting Requirements

- Schedule – program and projects
- Progress towards program objectives
- Risks and issues
- Outcomes

Report Name	Frequency	Audience	Responsible
Project Progress Report	Fortnightly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dep Sec Development Assessment</li> </ul>	Program Manager
Monthly Program Status Report	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minister’s Office</li> <li>• Dep Sec Planning</li> <li>• Dep Sec Development Assessment</li> </ul>	Program Manager
Planning Reform Implementation	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Reform Implementation Committee</li> </ul>	Program Manager
Probity report on project selection process	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dep Sec Development Assessment</li> </ul>	Probity Advisor

