

November 2020

## FAQ – Priority Assessment Program

### What is the Priority Assessment Program?

The Priority Assessment Program is the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's medium-term response to the economic impact of COVID-19. The objective of the Program is to ensure that there is a pipeline of projects to drive the economic and social recovery of NSW from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### What is a Priority Assessment Project?

Projects included in the Priority Assessment Program are referred to as Priority Assessment Projects. These Projects will advance the strategic objectives of the State or a region, have a significant positive impact on economic activity in the short and medium term, and provide substantial public benefit. Initially, the Projects will include planning proposals, State Significant Development Applications (SSDAs) or State Significant Infrastructure applications (SSIs).

### How will the Priority Assessment Program achieve a medium-term response to the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Priority Assessment Projects will receive dedicated program management support to speed up the decision-making pathways through the planning system. Acceleration will rely on the cooperation and agility of all parties – the proponent, the Department and State agencies and councils. Proponents will be required to commit to a Service Charter which will include requisite information and meeting key process steps within agreed timeframes.

### Is the Priority Assessment Program just an excuse to override the planning system and make bad decisions?

All Projects will continue to be assessed in accordance with the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the usual oversight, probity and public consultation. The projects considered as a part of the Program will undergo a high level of scrutiny to ensure they can meet Program requirements.

### How many projects will be selected for inclusion in the Priority Assessment Program?

The Program will be resource intensive, with a focus on projects that demonstrate a strong alignment to the Program objectives. The Program will therefore be limited to a relatively small number of projects at any one time. The Program is designed to be expanded or reduced depending on case management capacity and State priorities.

### How can I be part of the Priority Assessment Program?

In general, the Department will review proposed and existing planning proposals, SSDA and SSI projects to determine whether they should be selected as part of the program. Proponents can alert the Department about a particular project, by completing [this form](#).

### How long is the Priority Assessment Program anticipated to run?

The Priority Assessment Program is intended to operate over the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.

### Will resources be taken away from other planning or assessment processes to service this Program?

The Priority Assessment Program will receive resources in addition to those already in place. The Program will have no impact on the ongoing planning assessment processes of the Department.

### What if I miss out? What are my options to fast track my project if not considered for the Priority Assessment Program?

Just because a project is not identified as being a Priority Assessment Project as part of the medium-term response to COVID-19, it does not mean it is not a priority. Since 2015, the Department has halved the assessment timeframes for major projects and is continuing to improve current timeframes and add new programs to further improve the planning system.

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