



DESIGN EXCELLENCE

City of Gosford Design Advisory Panel

Guide for proponents and stakeholders

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1 Purpose of this document

This document identifies the role and operation of the City of Gosford Design Advisory Panel and how the design excellence process will be applied in Gosford City Centre.

This document also serves as the design excellence guidelines applying to Gosford City Centre.

The panel has been established to support the revitalisation of Gosford City Centre and will provide advice on urban design, architecture and landscape issues for development proposals. This document will help stakeholders understand how the panel will operate and how it will ensure design excellence and quality design outcomes for Gosford City Centre.

2 Role and objectives of the panel

The panel has been formed to ensure design excellence and quality design outcomes for Gosford City Centre. The panel's role is advisory in nature – it will not have a role in the determination of developments. The panel's recommendations and advice will inform the preparation of development applications prior to lodgement, and the assessment and determination of applications.

The panel will:

- fulfil the functions of the 'design review panel' referenced under Clause 8.4 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Gosford City Centre) 2018 (the GCC SEPP)
- fulfil the functions of the Government Architect's State Design Review Panel insofar as they may have applied to the Gosford City Centre
- provide independent, expert and impartial advice on the design quality of significant development proposals
- guide the design of development proposals and inform the assessment process.

The objectives of the panel are to:

- support proponents and decision-makers to achieve design excellence by promoting a design-led approach to development
- support implementation of the NSW Government Architect's Urban Design Framework for Gosford
- support the aims and objectives of the GCC SEPP and support the implementation of the Gosford City Centre Development Control Plan 2018 (GCC DCP)
- provide advice in relation to urban design, architecture and landscape issues on significant development proposals, which will include:
 - pre-lodgement design advice to achieve high-quality development proposals upon lodgement and a streamlined development assessment process
 - design advice during assessment of applications to the assessment and determination authority
- determine if an architectural design competition is required and, if required, the format and process to be followed
- follow the principles of good design review adopted by the Government Architect (**Attachment A**)
- consider local context, design quality and relevant policies and plans in providing its advice.

The panel's role, operation and membership may be reviewed from time to time at the discretion of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

3 Development reviewed by the panel

The panel will review the following development proposals in Gosford City Centre:

- any development declared to be state significant development for the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* as specified by the State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011, being development with a capital investment value of more than \$75 million. The panel will operate in lieu of the Government Architect's State Design Review Panel for State Significant Developments
- any development proposals using clause 8.4(3) and (4) of the GCC SEPP, being developments on medium and large sites seeking a variation to height and/or floor space ratio
- key sites as identified in Chapter 6 of the GCC DCP where the proponent is proposing a variation from the principles applicable to the key site contained in the plan.

4 Design excellence

Design excellence is a term used in environmental planning instruments to refer to the design quality of a building or project.

The description of design excellence is broadly consistent across planning legislation where it is often summarised as 'the highest standard of architectural, urban and landscape design'. Design excellence descriptions vary in their detail but include references to context, accessibility, public domain, streetscape, massing and sustainability.

In Gosford City Centre, the GCC SEPP requires that 'all development' exhibit design excellence and contribute to the natural, cultural, visual and built character values of Gosford City Centre. Clause 8.3 of the GCC SEPP lists several matters the consent authority must take into account when considering if a development exhibits design excellence.

4.1 Design excellence statement

A design excellence statement prepared by the proponent will be considered by the panel in its review of a proposal, and in deciding whether the proposal exhibits design excellence and whether a design competition is needed (in accordance with clause 8.4(4) of the GCC SEPP).

For further information on design excellence statements, refer to **Attachment C** of this document.

5 Panel governance and advice

5.1 Panel membership

The City of Gosford Design Advisory Panel will consist of five permanently appointed members and a pool of rotational Design Reference Group members.

The permanently appointed members are the NSW Government Architect and Deputy Government Architect, a senior staff member (currently Executive Director, Local and Regional Planning) from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (or delegate), the Unit Manager of Development Assessment at Central Coast Council (or delegate), and an independent design expert.

The Chair will be one of the Government Architect representatives or the senior staff member of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

5.2 Design Reference Group and rotational panel membership

The panel's secretariat will appoint at least two design experts along with the Unit Manager Strategic Planning at Central Coast Council (or delegate) to form the Design Reference Group. One of the design experts will chair the workshop.

These Design Reference Group members will then become the rotational members on the panel when it considers that development proposal.

5.3 Panel quorum

A quorum of three panel members is needed for a panel meeting to take place. It must include the Chair and two additional panel members. Each panel meeting must have a majority of design experts present.

5.4 Panel Chair

The panel's Chair must be either one of the Government Architect representatives or the senior staff member of the department. The Chair is responsible for chairing the meetings and endorsing the panel's final advice and recommendations.

5.5 Secretariat

The panel's secretariat function will be performed by officers of the department to be determined by the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (or delegate).

The secretariat will support the panel's operation by, providing administrative support, coordinating and documenting meetings, coordinating the City of Gosford Design Reference Group and advice to the panel, and distributing the panel's final advice.

The secretariat must be present at all panel meetings.

5.6 Case manager

The case manager is the Director of the Central Coast and Hunter Region from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

The case manager oversees the operation of the City of Gosford Design Advisory Panel and the design excellence process. The proponent may request a meeting with the case manager to discuss their development proposal by contacting the Secretariat.

5.7 Remuneration

Remuneration for eligible panel and reference group members will be provided on a fixed-fee basis determined by the number of review sessions they are required to attend. The following fees exclude GST and include preparation time and travel costs (except in the case of remote or interstate panel members): \$1,000 for a half day and \$1,800 for a full day.

5.8 Panel advice and timing

Once endorsed by the Chair, the panel's final advice will be distributed by the secretariat as follows:

- pre-lodgement design review will be sent to the proponent and the regional assessment team from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

- development application design advice will be provided directly to the regional assessment team for consideration.

The panel's advice will be issued within 10 working days of the meeting.

The panel's pre-lodgement recommendations and advice will be made publicly available during the development assessment exhibition period once an application has been lodged with the department.

5.9 Design Reference Group advice and timing

Design Reference Group reviews or workshops may be held at various times throughout the design excellence process (that is, pre- and post-lodgement). The purpose of this process is to provide design excellence advice to assist proponents in preparing proposals and associated design documentation that is adequate for review by the panel.

The secretariat will send the Design Reference Group advice to the proponent and the assessment team within 10 working days of the workshop.

6 Panel meetings and Design Reference Group workshops

6.1 Occurrence and format

Panel meetings or Design Reference Group workshops will be scheduled monthly. Extraordinary meetings may be required depending on the availability of members to ensure continuity and consistent design excellence advice on projects. The panel's secretariat will provide guidance about whether a workshop or panel meeting is the most appropriate option moving forward, determine the location for the meeting/workshop and distribute the agenda.

Preference is for the meetings/workshops to be based in Gosford City Centre, except where this cannot occur due to panel membership commitments or other reasons.

6.2 Typical panel meeting agenda

Table 1 shows the items generally included in panel meeting agenda.

Table 1 Typical panel meeting agenda

Number	Agenda item	Responsibility	Time allotted ¹
0	Site visit (optional)	Panel members	Prior to meeting
1	Site briefing to the panel – Outline key planning controls and any pre-lodgement design review advice (in camera)	Panel secretariat, assessment team and Design Reference Group members	10 minutes
2	Presentation on the scheme	Proponent's lead architect	30 minutes
3	Panel review and discussion	Panel members	30 minutes
4	Panel review (in camera)	Panel members	20 minutes

¹ The time allocations are a guide only.

Number	Agenda item	Responsibility	Time allotted ¹
5	Summary of advice	Panel Chair and secretariat	10 minutes
6	Panel debrief (in camera)	Panel members	10 minutes

6.3 Proponent's consultation team

The lead architect or project designer will present the proponent's proposal to the panel. Up to five members of the proponent team (including lead architect) are invited to the review session.

6.4 Observers and invited stakeholders

Key stakeholders may be invited to attend the review session as observers.

Observers may be invited to brief the panel on specific issues relating to their respective roles. Invitees may include (but are not limited to) the case manager, regional assessment team, Central Coast Council staff, Government Architect staff and other parties, as required.

6.5 Design Reference Group review/workshop

Design Reference Group reviews or workshops may be held at various times throughout the design excellence process. The Design Reference Group will provide design advice to the proponent, and if required, a meeting (in a workshop format) between the Design Reference Group and the proponent's consultant team may be held.

6.6 Typical workshop agenda

Table 2 shows the items generally included in a Design Reference Group workshop agenda.

Table 2. Typical workshop agenda

Number	Agenda item	Responsibility	Time allotted ²
0	Site visit (optional)	Design Reference Group members	Prior to workshop
1	Site briefing to DRG members – Outline key planning controls and any background information (in camera)	Panel secretariat and assessment team	10 minutes
2	Presentation on the scheme	Proponent's lead architect	30 minutes
3	Workshop discussion	All stakeholders	30 minutes

² The time allocations are a guide only.

Number	Agenda item	Responsibility	Time allotted ²
4	Summary of advice	Design Reference Group Chair and secretariat	10 minutes

7 Scope of panel review and advice

The panel is guided by:

- the aims and objectives of the GCC SEPP
- State Environmental Planning Policy No. 65 (Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development)
- 'Better Placed – an integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW' by the Government Architect and the seven design objectives for NSW
- the Government Architect's Urban Design Framework for Gosford
- the aims and objectives of the GCC DCP
- the Principles of Good Design Review adopted by the Government Architect
- the department's 'code of conduct'
- the departments 'Managing Interests and Disclosing Conflicts of Interest Policy'
- the National Urban Design Protocol
- any other policy, guideline, document or instrument deemed relevant by the panel, the department or Government Architect.

The panel will also consider any relevant local, state or national plans, policies and guidelines. Any other relevant documents will be provided to the panel prior to advising on/or reviewing any project.

7.1 Pre-lodgement design review

The panel may consider a proponent's development proposal prior to formal lodgement of an application with the department. For the types of development referred to the panel before lodgement, see **section 3** of this document.

After consideration of a proponent's scheme at the panel meeting, the panel's secretariat will issue the panel's advice to the proponent and the department's assessment team. The panel's advice may include several outcomes depending on the extent to which the proposal demonstrates design excellence. Potential outcomes include that the panel:

- endorses the proposal, with any design recommendations to be addressed prior to the development proposal being submitted
- recommends substantive changes to a proposal and requests that it be brought back to the panel for a further review once design issues have been addressed
- requires that the proponent undertakes a design excellence competition (in accordance with clause 8.4(4) of the GCC SEPP).

7.2 Design advice to assessing or determining authority

The assessing or determining authority may request design advice from the panel in respect of applications lodged with, and currently under assessment by, the department. For the types of development referred to the panel by the consent authority (see **section 3** of this document).

These types of applications will be reviewed by the panel and formal advice will be issued to the consent authority for its consideration.

Where further panel advice is required in response to submissions, this should be obtained before the proponent resubmits the proposal via the planning portal.

7.3 Pre-lodgement design review (step by step)

Prior to being eligible to go before the panel for a pre-lodgement design review, the proponent must undertake the steps detailed in Table 3. A flow chart for this process is provided at **Attachment B**.

Table 3. Pre-lodgement design review step-by-step guide

Step	Description	Details
1	Contact the regional office	Contact the panel secretariat by email at centralcoast@planning.nsw.gov.au to arrange an informal pre-application meeting with departmental representatives.
2	Meet with department representatives	Attend an initial meeting with department representatives to discuss the proposed development, including the panel's expectations and process, as part of an informal pre-application meeting.
3	Pay fees	Pay the relevant fee before the Design Reference Group review proceeds.
4	Design Reference Group review and/or workshop	Submit a draft scheme to the Design Reference Group for review. The group will provide design advice to the proponent, and if required may request a meeting (in a workshop format) with the proponent's consultant team. The purpose of this review/workshop is to help proponents prepare proposals and associated design documentation that are adequate for review by the panel.
5	Submit documentation	Submit the design documentation and presentation for the panel via email at least two weeks prior to the preferred panel meeting. This documentation will be reviewed for adequacy in accordance with Attachment C before confirmation of the listing is provided to the proponent. The panel's secretariat will determine the adequacy of the documentation supplied. If inadequate, a Design Reference Group member will work with the proponent to ensure the documentation is brought up to an appropriate standard.
6	Receive confirmation of panel listing	You will receive confirmation of the panel meeting and agenda one week before the meeting.
7	Panel receives design documentation and meeting agenda	The panel will receive the design documentation and agenda one week before the panel meeting, for their consideration.
8	Arrange panel site visit (optional)	The panel members may elect to undertake a site visit prior to the meeting
9	Address the panel meeting	Address the panel and the panel will consider the proposal. Refer to section 6 for a typical panel meeting agenda.

Step	Description	Details
10	Receive panel advice	The secretariat will issue the panel's endorsed advice to the proponent and the assessment team within 10 working days.

8 Information required by the panel

8.1 Proponent's design documentation

All design documentation required by the panel in order to review a proposal can be found in **Attachment C**. The panel may request additional documentation as necessary to support consideration of the proposal.

The panel or secretariat can refuse the listing of a proposal for design review if insufficient material is provided, or for another reason.

All documentation needs to be provided via email or by using services such as [Hightail](#), [Dropbox](#) or similar.

8.2 Site briefing on key planning controls

An officer of the department will:

- prepare a one-page briefing for the panel one week prior to the meeting on key planning controls applying to the site
- if required, be present at the meeting to present the site briefing to the panel.

9 Fees

All costs associated with the assessment and review of any development application are to be borne by the applicant. Fees for referral to the panel and Design Reference Group must be paid in full at least two weeks prior to the initial meeting.

9.1 Fees for design review and design excellence competitions

The following fees, excluding GST, are payable by the applicant to the department.

Contact the panel's secretariat by email at centralcoast@planning.nsw.gov.au to arrange an informal pre-application meeting with department representatives.

City of Gosford Design Advisory Panel and Design Reference Group fees:

- Initial panel meeting \$11,200³
- Additional Design Reference Group review \$2,800
- Additional panel meeting(s) \$5,400⁴

Architectural design competition fees:

- Pre-competition advice meeting No fee payable
- Architectural design competition \$11,200⁵

Development and state significant development application referrals:

- Referral to panel \$5,400
- Additional Design Reference Group review \$2,800
- Additional referral to panel \$5,400

10 Design excellence competitions

This document will act as the Design Excellence Guidelines applying to Gosford City Centre.

It is at the panel's discretion when it requires an architectural design competition. In determining whether a design excellence competition is required, the panel will consider whether the proposal sufficiently meets the objectives of the Gosford Urban Design Framework and design excellence considerations in the GCC SEPP and GCC DCP. The panel is not limited to these considerations and other factors may be used in determining whether a design excellence competition is required.

10.1 What is a design excellence competition?

A design competition is a competitive design process in which an organisation, private or public, invites designers to submit a proposal for a precinct, site or building.

In these guidelines, any architectural design competition of this type is referred to as a design excellence competition.

Undertaking a design excellence competition alone does not guarantee the achievement of design excellence. A design excellence competition is one stage in a process intended to lift the design quality of a project to achieve overall design excellence. Pre-competition processes such as

³ Includes advice from and one meeting with the Design Reference Group plus a full meeting of the panel

⁴ Includes advice from the Design Reference Group plus an additional panel meeting

⁵ Includes advice on outcomes of the competition and one meeting with the Design Reference Group plus a full meeting of the panel as competition jury (does not include payments to competitors, consultants, etc.)

preparation of a reference design, and post competition design integrity are also critical to achieving design excellence.

Importantly, approval of a scheme remains with the assessment and determination authority.

10.2 When is a design excellence competition required?

All developments within the Gosford City Centre must achieve design excellence (clause 8.3 GCC SEPP).

It is at the panel's discretion when it requires an architectural design competition. A design excellence competition is only needed if the panel determines that one is warranted (refer clause 8.4 (4) GCC SEPP).

Clause 8.4 (4) of the GCC SEPP specifies that the panel may determine an architectural design competition will be held in relation to a development if:

- the land is zoned B3 Commercial Core, B4 Mixed Use or B6 Enterprise Corridor
- the site area of the development is at least 5,600 square metres
- the development results in a building that exceeds the height and/or floor space controls applying to the land.

An architectural design competition means 'a competitive process conducted in accordance with the Design Excellence Guidelines'. This document acts as the Design Excellence Guidelines applying to Gosford City Centre.

In determining whether a design excellence competition is required, the panel will consider whether the proposal sufficiently meets the objectives of the Government Architect's Gosford Urban Design Framework and the design excellence considerations in the GCC SEPP and GCC DCP. The panel is not limited to these considerations and other factors may be used in determining whether a design excellence competition is needed.

A design excellence statement prepared by the proponent will be considered by the panel in making this decision. For further information on design excellence statements, refer to **section 4 Design Excellence** and also **Attachment C** of this document.

10.3 Competition jury (the panel)

In Gosford City Centre, the City of Gosford Design Advisory Panel will preside as the jury for design excellence competitions.

10.4 Competition type and process

Should the panel require a competition, it will determine the competition type and process.

If a design competition is required, the proponent must develop a design excellence competition strategy for the site or areas on the site as required by the panel. This strategy must be endorsed by the panel.

Generally, where the panel requires a competition, it will be a 'Type A, single-stage design excellence competition'. Type A competitions involve:

- a single stage competition with a minimum of three and maximum of five designers or design teams invited to participate
- selection of the entrants by direct invitation by the proponent
- the invited design teams should all being of a high standard, demonstrating a past body of work that has been awarded, critically reviewed or by other means able to show a

commitment to design excellence. The list should display a diversity of experience and approach across the selected design teams

- all entrants being paid by the proponent.

The panel has discretion to recommend another type of competition for a proposal, including B, C or bespoke design excellence competition (as defined in the Government Architect's draft Design Excellence Competition Guidelines). The panel, at their discretion, may limit the competition to an individual building or buildings on a site, or for large sites may recommend a design excellence masterplan competition.

For further information, please refer to the Government Architect's draft Design Excellence Competition Guidelines. Some sections of these guidelines are superseded by this document (for example the section on competition juries).

10.5 Competition fees

The applicant must bear all costs associated with the competition.

Fees for the panel meetings and pre-qualification steps associated with the architectural design competition must be paid in full at least two weeks prior to a related meeting taking place. These fees are set out in **section 9** of this document.

10.6 Competition process (step-by-step)

The following table identifies the typical process for architectural design competitions.

Table 4. Architectural design competition process

Step	Description	Details
1	Panel meeting and advice determines that a design competition is required	At the panel meeting, and in the subsequent advice issued, the panel determines whether a design competition needs to be held in relation to the development. Where a competition is required, the panel's advice will recommend the type, process, form and content of the competition brief and strategy.
2	Preparation and endorsement of competition brief and strategy	The proponent must confirm the competition process with the panel secretariat. The proponent will prepare a competition strategy first, followed by the competition brief. Both must be submitted to the panel secretariat for review and endorsement before proceeding.
3	Design excellence competition and competition report	The applicant conducts the design excellence competition (in accordance with the endorsed strategy and brief).
4	Review by competition jury (the panel)	Competition entrants present proposals to the competition jury.
5	Competition report	The secretariat prepares a draft competition report identifying the outcomes of the competition process, including design recommendations for the winning scheme.
6	Review of competition report	The competition report is reviewed and endorsed by the jury.
7	Post-competition process	The proponent will progress the preferred scheme and incorporate the panel's recommendations, prior to lodgement of an application for consent.

Attachment A – Design review principles

For a design review to bring benefits to everyone, it must offer consistently high standards in the quality of the advice it offers. These high standards are summarised as eleven principles of good design review:

- 1) **Independent** – Good design review is independent. It is conducted by people who are separate from the project promoters, decision-makers or any other parties that may have an interest. The panel acts as an independent body to provide advice free from any potential conflict of interest. It offers impartial advice that is not influenced by the client, the local authority or the design team and is based solely on the design quality.
- 2) **Accountable** – The panel records and explains the advice it gives and is transparent about potential conflicts of interest. The members are bound by the codes of conduct applicable to their profession.
- 3) **Expert** – The panel must comprise a diverse range of individuals with an equally diverse variety of professional skills and backgrounds. They are experts who are highly competent in their fields and can appraise schemes objectively. Members must be registered with relevant professional bodies (in their home state).
- 4) **Advisory** – The panel does not make decisions but offers impartial advice to decision-makers that will lead to improvement of schemes reviewed. The panel will help assess designs from a broader perspective and identify any fundamental weaknesses while supporting decision-makers to construct a strong design-based argument to resist poorly designed schemes.
- 5) **Accessible** – Findings must be clearly expressed in language that decision-makers and clients can understand and use. Residents, action groups and the media are likely to be interested in the panel's views. Design review staff and panel members should be prepared for scrutiny of their work, so the process needs to be as transparent as possible.
- 6) **Proportionate** – Design review is used where projects are significant enough to warrant the investment needed to provide the service (taxpayer-funded or otherwise). Other methods of appraising design quality should be used for less significant projects.
- 7) **Timely** – Review takes place as early as possible in the life of a design – ideally at concept design stage – because this is when changes can be made with minimal time and cost implications. The panel feedback is communicated through the Government Architect recommendations quickly so that these can be incorporated into the project.
- 8) **Objective** – The panel appraises projects 'in the round' according to reasoned, objective criteria. It is not influenced by the stylistic tastes of individual panel members. The panel can assess a scheme within the widest context of good practice and exemplars from further afield. It offers an objective critique of the quality of the design, whatever its style. The expert advice given by the panel is unbiased and free of subjectivity.
- 9) **For public benefit** – Design review is focused on outcomes for people. It evaluates how a building or place can better meet the needs of the people using it and of anyone who is affected by it.
- 10) **Improves quality** – The panel constructively seeks to raise the quality of all design-based projects. When reviewing design quality, it considers how schemes will realise best value from public investment.
- 11) **Consistent** – Every effort will be made to keep the same panel members throughout the life of the project. This will ensure consistency of comments as the project evolves.

Attachment B – Pre-lodgement design review process

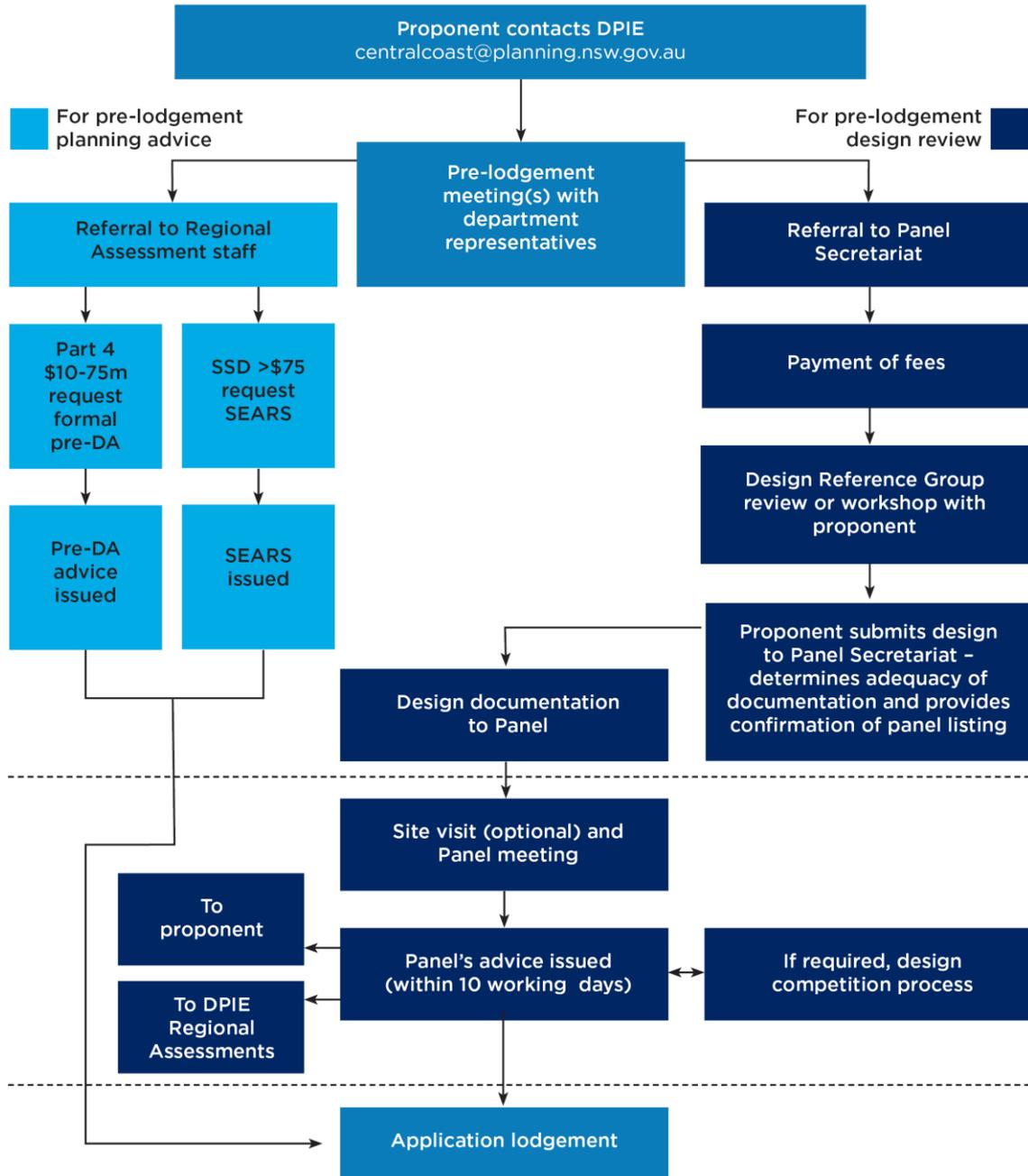


Figure 1 Pre-lodgement design review process flow chart

Attachment C – Proponent’s design documentation

The following sets out the minimum documentation requirements needed to address the panel.

Design documents

The panel requires the following information:

- site analysis (demonstrating understanding of the site and consideration of the Gosford Urban Design Framework, GCC SEPP and GCC DCP)
- a concept scheme that complies with the mapped height and floor space controls in GCC SEPP 2018
- design options considered in developing the preferred scheme (valid/realistic options)
- preferred design scheme accompanied by a design excellence statement.

Each scheme presented should include a set of plans that comprises:

- site plan
- concept plans – ground and typical floor plans, elevations, key site sections including topography and surrounding built form – existing and proposed
- 3D massing model
- sketch 3D views (for comparison)
- public domain plan
- the gross floor area, floor space ratio and heights of the scheme.

For the preferred scheme, proponents will be required to:

- submit a design excellence statement demonstrating how the proposal meets the requirements of Clause 8.3(4) of the GCC SEPP 2018
- outline the proposed approach to materiality, form and aesthetics
- provide solar access testing/shadow diagrams
- provide view analysis/photomontages
- for large sites, demonstrate how proponents intend to deliver a variety of architectural responses, for example by using different architects for different sites.

Design excellence statement

A design excellence statement must accompany the preferred scheme. At a minimum, the statement should demonstrate:

- consideration of the Gosford Urban Design Framework
- how the proposal responds to development standards within the GCC SEPP and planning controls within the GCC DCP
- the proposed approach to materiality, form and aesthetics
- for large sites, how proponents intend to demonstrate a variety of architectural response
- how the proposal meets the design excellence considerations listed in Clause 8.3(4) of the GCC SEPP.

Additional issues may be required by the Design Reference Group prior to addressing the panel.

The design excellence statement will be considered by the panel when determining whether an architectural design competition is required in relation to the development (in accordance with Clause 8.4(4) of the GCC SEPP) and whether the proposal exhibits design excellence.