

Expert Assessment Program

This document answers frequently asked questions about the Expert Assessment Program, one of the initiatives of the Unblocking Homes suite of initiatives to support councils to move the backlog of development applications to unblock delivery of tens of thousands of homes in the planning system.

What is the Expert Assessment Program?

A program that provides help for councils to progress large and complex housing development applications 'in the system, that have the potential to significantly increase the supply of new housing.

Expert Assessment is part of the [Unblocking Homes Program](#), an \$11.5 million (for the 2022/23 Financial Year) coordinated package of initiatives to boost resourcing for councils to help progress the backlog of planning proposals and development applications to help drive the supply of new houses needed in the state over the next 4 years.

Why is the department offering support to councils?

Providing a sufficient housing supply to meet the needs of NSW's growing communities is a key priority for the NSW Government as reflected in the Premier's Priorities and the NSW 2022-23 Budget. Councils play a critical role in helping to plan for and support the delivery of these homes.

Through our own data and what we've heard directly from councils, we know that many LGAs are experiencing challenges in finding and retaining planning staff to process the large amounts of assessments in the planning system that have the potential to unlock tens of thousands of new homes.

What type of development applications are eligible for assistance?

For a development application to be eligible for the program it must:

1. Be lodged with council as a local or regionally significant development application
2. Be one of three identified categories of development:
 - Residential subdivision applications containing 100 or more lots
 - Multi-dwelling applications containing 100 or more dwellings
 - Seniors housing applications containing 50 or more dwellings.
3. Have been nominated as a project that requires support by council.

Why are only three types of development eligible?

These types of projects are capable of significantly contributing to housing supply and diversity but are resource-intensive and have lengthy assessment timeframes. The department's assistance with these types of projects will likely reduce the time taken to determine the application.

What support is available for identified projects?

The type of support provided will be determined in consultation with council. In general, the program offers the following types of assistance:

- Leveraging the Department's capability in assessing complex development applications to prepare assessment reports
- Engaging consultants to prepare technical reports or studies,
- Case management services to resolve outstanding issues
- Negotiating with other NSW agencies to resolve issues and expedite outstanding concurrence or referral matters.

How were projects identified?

An initial shortlist of projects meeting the eligibility criteria were identified from the NSW Planning Portal on 15 September 2022. The department will consult with the identified councils to determine what type of support will best assist them.

Can I nominate a project for the program?

No. The department will work with councils to identify projects and the support needed. Proponents cannot nominate projects for inclusion in the program.

Which councils are involved in the program?

Based on the data snapshot from the NSW Planning Portal, the following councils will be offered support as part of the Expert Assessment Program:

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|------------------------|----------------------|
| ▪ Camden | ▪ Liverpool |
| ▪ Campbelltown | ▪ Mid-Coast Regional |
| ▪ Central Coast | ▪ Orange |
| ▪ Clarence Valley | ▪ Port Stephens |
| ▪ Cootamundra-Gundagai | ▪ The Hills Shire |
| ▪ Hornsby | ▪ Tweed Shire |
| ▪ Kempsey Shire | ▪ Wingecaribee |
| ▪ Lake Macquarie | ▪ Wollongong |

What role will the Planning Delivery Unit play in the program?

The Planning Delivery Unit (PDU) will be the key point of contact between the department and councils. The team will be responsible for confirmation of applications to be included in the program and for coordinating ongoing support for each development application, until determination.

Who will determine the development application if it is part of the Expert Assessment Program?

The consent authority role for each application will remain the same. Depending on the type of development application, this will be either the council or the relevant planning panel.

How can I find out more about the Expert Assessment Program?

- Visit the [Expert Assessment website](#) for details and the [Unblocking Homes website](#) for more details on the suite of programs and the relevant contacts for each.
- Contact the team via email: unblocking.homes@dpie.nsw.gov.au.