

May 2020

Fast-tracked assessments

The planning system has a vital role to play during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following provides responses to frequently asked questions about the initiative.

Why is the NSW Government fast-tracking assessments?

The purpose of the Planning System Acceleration Program is to accelerate the assessment and determination of projects that inject investment into the NSW economy and keep people in jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim is to get to the point of determination on shovel-ready projects as quickly as possible.

How are projects selected for fast-tracking?

Projects that require State planning approval are being considered including State Significant Developments, State Significant Infrastructure, major projects, and planning proposals.

To be considered a project must already be in the system, it must be able to demonstrate public benefit through new public open spaces or affordable housing, it must demonstrate an ability to create jobs both during construction and once complete, and it must be able to commence construction within six months if it's a DA, or proceed to the DA phase within six months if it's a rezoning.

This includes commercial projects that will drive employment as well as public projects that deliver critical public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, rail upgrades, housing and public space.

How have the criteria been determined?

Specific criteria have been created to identify and progress projects for a fast-tracked assessment.

The criteria have been informed by government, industry and community stakeholders.

The criteria have also been reviewed by an independent probity advisor and the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The three essential criteria are:

1. Jobs – does the project create jobs during construction and ongoing?

2. Timing

- can a decision on the project be made quickly?
- for DAs, can the project commence within six months?
- for planning proposals, can the project proceed to DA within six months?

3. Public benefit – can the project deliver or support public benefits (e.g affordable housing or new public space and parklands)?

Will the community still get to have a say on projects that are being fast-tracked?

All projects will be considered in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and will be subject to the same level of rigorous assessment and opportunity for consultation as at any other time.

All of the projects identified have completed the substantive planning work and are post the exhibition and community consultation phase.

Due to the need to meet requirements under Public Health Orders, a range of digital engagement tools will be used to communicate with the community and stakeholders to seek any comment or feedback.

For how long will you be fast-tracking projects?

Fast-tracked projects will play a key role in the economic recovery as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fast-tracked assessments will occur over the next 6 months to ensure we have a sustained pipeline of economic investment and job creation now and in the coming months.

How are you fast-tracking projects?

All projects will continue to be considered in accordance with the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and as such will undertake the same level of rigorous assessment as at any other time.

Coordination is occurring across all key State Government agencies, as well as within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and a new 'one-stop-shop' has been created ensure to streamline agency approvals and ensure any inter-agency road-blocks are identified and mitigated.

Resources have also been redirected within the Department to ensure all projects identified for fast-tracked assessment are determined within 4 weeks.

My project isn't in the latest tranche. How do I get my project fast-tracked?

Projects will be tiered into tranches for action – so if a project is not on the list now, it may be considered in future tranches.

Proponents should work with peak stakeholder groups to determine if your project is compatible with the criteria for fast-tracking before contacting the Department – if everyone puts all of their projects forward nothing can be prioritised and it will slow down the selection process.

Who do I contact about this process?

Stakeholders with questions can contact us on planning.covidresponse@planning.nsw.gov.au or call 13 77 88.

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