State significant development guidelines – preparing an amendment report

Appendix D to the state significant development guidelines

This guideline has been updated following the introduction of the Planning Systems Reform Act 2025 (PSR Act) and reflects current government policy. The guideline will be updated further as new provisions begin, and additional policy changes are made to support the reforms.

March 2026

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Title: State significant development guidelines – preparing an amendment report

Subtitle: Appendix D to the state significant development guidelines

First published: July 2021

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Preface

Purpose of these guidelines

These guidelines provide a detailed explanation of the form and content requirements for amendment reports as set out by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (the Department).

They seek to ensure the amendment reports submitted to the Department to support amendments to a state significant development (SSD) application are consistent and prepared to a high standard. They also seek to ensure that all amendment reports:

- are as succinct as possible and easy to understand
- clearly describe the proposed amendments
- reflect community views
- contain a technically robust and proportionate assessment of the impacts of the amendments, including an analysis of the significant likely impacts
- justify and evaluate the amended project as a whole, having regard to the significant likely economic, environmental and social impacts of the amended project and the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

These guidelines set clear expectations for the preparation of all amendment reports for SSD projects and will help to promote robust debate on the merits of amended SSD projects.

Application of these guidelines

Under the Environmental Planning & Assessment Regulation 2021 (EP&A Regulation), the amendment report submitted to the Department in support of an SSD amendment application must be prepared having regard to the SSD guidelines prepared by the Planning Secretary.[1]

These guidelines form part of the relevant SSD guidelines, and applicants must have regard to the requirements in these guidelines when they prepare an amendment report for an SSD project.

1. Introduction

1.1 Amending an SSD application

Under the Environmental Planning & Assessment Regulation 2021 (EP&A Regulation), the applicant for an SSD project may – with the agreement of the consent authority – amend or vary an application at any time before it is determined[2].

This applies to development applications (DA) for consent as well as applications seeking to modify a development consent.

Amendments to an SSD DA or modification application are only required if the applicant wants to change what it is seeking consent for and needs to amend the project description in the relevant environmental impact statement (EIS) or modification report.

These amendments may be necessary to improve the design of the project, respond to issues raised by the community in public submissions or further mitigate the impacts of the project.

Refinements are separate to amendments, being changes that fit within the limits set by the project description and do not change what the applicant is seeking consent for or require an amendment to the DA for the project.

To seek the consent authority's agreement for any proposed amendments to an SSD application, the applicant must lodge the amendment application and amendment report on the Major Projects website. The amendment application must be in the form approved by the Planning Secretary[3].

1.2 Purpose of an amendment report

The purpose of an amendment report is to assess the significant likely economic, environmental and social impacts of the amended project and to help the community, councils, government agencies and the consent authority to get a better understanding of the proposed amendments and their impacts so they can make informed submissions (if the report is exhibited) or decisions on the merits of the amended project.

1.3 Assessing and determining an amended application

As soon as it is received, the Department will publish the amendment report on the Major Projects website[4] and proceed to complete its assessment of the application.

The Department will need to consider if there is a material environmental impact beyond the impacts expected by the initially proposed project in determining whether the amendment report will be publicly exhibited. If the amendment report is to be publicly exhibited, the Department will do so for at least 14 days before completing its assessment. This is to give the community an opportunity to read the amendment report and make a submission on the merits of the amended project.

If the amendment report is exhibited, the Department will publish all the submissions it receives during exhibition on the Major Projects website and ask the applicant to respond to the issues raised in submissions. The applicant must document its response to submissions[5] in a submissions report having regard to the relevant guidance in the Department's State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Submissions Report.

As soon as it is received, the Department will publish the submissions report on the Major Projects website and complete its assessment of the amended DA or modification application.

Prior to determining the DA or modification application, the consent authority is required to evaluate the merits of the amended project, having regard to matters including the significant likely economic, environmental and social impacts of the amended project and the principles of ecologically sustainable development[6].

After determining the application, the consent authority is required to publish a notice setting out the reasons for the decision and how community views were taken into account during the making of the decision[7].

2. General requirements

The applicant should prepare the amendment report to a high standard and comply with the following general requirements.

2.1 Form

The amendment report should be divided into two parts[8]:

The first part is made up of the main report. This report describes the proposed amendments, summarises the findings of any community engagement and the detailed assessment of the impacts of the amendments. It justifies and evaluates the amended project as a whole having regard to the significant likely economic, environmental and social impacts of the amended project and the principles of ecologically sustainable development

The second part is made up of the appendices to the main report. This should include:

- an updated project description, incorporating the proposed amendments
- an updated statutory compliance table
- an updated table of the approved mitigation measures for the project (excluding any measures that form part of the physical design and layout of the project)
- any supporting information, including any detailed community engagement or technical reports.

The main report should contain an accurate summary of the detailed reports in the appendices and use suitable cross-referencing to reduce repetition between the two parts of the amendment report.

2.2 Structure and length

A recommended structure for an amendment report is shown in Appendix A. If some sections are not relevant, the applicant should adjust the structure of the report accordingly.

Amendment reports should be concise and proportionate to the nature of the amendment and its significant likely impacts. This means they should provide all the information necessary to support effective environmental assessment, but no more.

2.3 Presentation

The amendment report should clearly describe the proposed amendments, community views on these amendments and the likely impacts of the amendments. This will ensure people can make informed submissions or decisions on the merits of the amendments.

To ensure the amendment report is prepared to a high standard, the applicant should:

- ensure the amendment report has a clear narrative, explaining why the proposed amendments are necessary through the findings of any community engagement and the detailed assessment of the potential impacts of the amendments to the justification and evaluation of the amended project as a whole
- structure the information in the amendment report in a clear and logical way, making it easy for readers to draw a clear link between the summary of the findings of the detailed assessment in the main report and the appendices of the amendment report, and between these findings and the justification and evaluation of the amended project as a whole which integrates the findings of each section of the amendment report
- use objective analysis and provide reasons and evidence to support any conclusions reached
- use plain English to explain complex information simply
- avoid using jargon
- use maps, photographs, interactive digital tools, figures, graphics and tables to improve the presentation of information where possible
- ensure the visual presentation of material is consistent with the text presentation of the same material and that both presentations are located close to one another
- ensure the amendment report does not contain any false or misleading information[9].

2.4 GIS data specifications

The applicant must:

- maintain appropriate geo-referenced file formats of all the maps in the amendment report
- supply the relevant GIS data to the Department as polygon datasets in one of the following file formats:
  - shapefile
  - file geodatabase or
  - MapInfo TAB
- use the following coordinate system details:
  - Datum: GDA 1994
  - Projection: GCS GDA 1994.

2.5 General map requirements

Maps in the amendment report must build on a standard base map for the project and include:

- a north arrow (for maps in plan-view)
- a scale (or where a cross section is not to scale, an indication of the elevation of key features and vertical exaggeration)
- a legend clearly indicating each line type that is not labelled on the map
- the source data of the base map (where applicable).

2.6 Accessibility and navigation

The amendment report must generally conform with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and material relevant to creating accessible documents on the NSW Government's website.

In particular, the amendment report must:

- be provided as accessible PDF file[10] (commonly referred to as "tagged" PDF files)
- have a navigable table of contents
- present information in a linear and easy to follow format
- use headings – in Microsoft Word this means using heading styles (e.g. Heading 1, Heading 2, Normal)
- use captions for tables, pictures and figures
- include a header row in any tables
- provide alternate text descriptions for all images, preferably under 100 characters, except for images that are decorative -
- use text to convey information rather than, or in addition to, images where possible
- use a contrast ratio of 3:1 for large text (18+ points or 14+ points bold) and at least 4.5:1 for text and images of text, unless the text is decorative or unimportant (use the Vision Australia colour contrast analyser to check the contrast ratio of colour combinations)
- not rely on colour to convey information and instead use text labels, patterns and symbols to supplement colour.

3. Content of an amendment report

The amendment report must contain the following information.

3.1 Introduction

This section should set the context for the assessment of the amended project that follows later in the amendment report and include:

- the applicant's details
- an explanation of the previous steps in the assessment
- a short summary of the project in the original application, including a map of the site in its regional setting
- a simple description of the proposed amendments, including:
  - the background to the amendments
  - why the amendments are required.

3.2 Strategic context

This section must describe the strategic context for the amendments.

In most cases, this will involve summarising the description of the strategic context in the original EIS or modification report for the project.

However, if the strategic context has changed since the original application was submitted, the changes should be described in detail in this section of the amendment report. The applicant should prepare this detailed description having regard to the relevant guidance in the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement.

3.3 Description of the amendments

This section must describe the proposed amendments to the project using suitable maps, plans, figures and tables.

This description should include:

- a simple overview of the amendments, including a table comparing the amended project to the original project (see example in Appendix B)
- a detailed description of each of the amendments, having regard to the relevant guidance in the Department's State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement.

A consolidated, detailed description of the amended project must be included in the appendices of the amendment report.

3.4 Statutory context

This section must identify the relevant statutory requirements for assessing and evaluating the proposed amendments to the project, having regard to the relevant guidance in the Department's State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement.

If the statutory context has changed since the original application was submitted, or the amendments trigger new statutory requirements, these changes should be highlighted in this section of the report.

Finally, the applicant should include an updated statutory compliance table for the amended project as an appendix to the amendment report. This table should identify all the relevant statutory requirements for the amended project and indicate where they have been addressed either in the amendment report or the associated EIS or modification report.

3.5 Community engagement

If community engagement was carried out for the amendments, this section must summarise the:

- engagement that was carried out
- key issues raised during this engagement and where they have been addressed in the amendment report
- engagement to be carried out if the amended project is approved.

This summary should be prepared having regard to the relevant guidance in the Department's Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects and State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement.

Any detailed community engagement reports should be included as an appendix to the amendment report.

3.6 Assessment of impacts

This section must provide a detailed summary of the findings of any further assessment of the impacts of the proposed amendments, including details about the impacts of the amendments and the impacts of the amended project. Any significant likely impacts must be clearly identified and appropriately addressed, including any proposed mitigation measures.

This summary should be prepared having regard to the relevant guidance in the Department's State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement.

In preparing the summary in this section, the applicant should consider

- any relevant:
  - strategic issues
  - statutory requirements
  - community views
  - government plans, policies and guidelines governing the assessment of key matters and setting standard or performance measures for evaluating the acceptability of any impacts of the amended project (e.g. NSW Noise Policy for Industry, Approved Methods for the Modelling and Assessment of Air Pollutants, Water Sharing Plans)
  - the Department's Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects
- the findings of any specialist studies or investigations undertaken for the project.

Finally, the applicant must include an updated table of the proposed mitigation measures for the amended project and any detailed technical reports as appendices to the amendment report.

3.7 Justification of the amended project

This section must provide a justification and evaluation of the amended project as a whole, having regard to the significant likely economic, environmental and social impacts of the amended project and the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

The justification and evaluation should be prepared having regard to the relevant guidance in the Department's State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. It should summarise the relevant findings from the EIS or modification report and incorporate any new findings relating to the amendments.

4. Glossary

Term	Meaning
Amendment	A change in what the applicant is seeking consent for made during the assessment. It requires changes to the project description in the EIS or modification report and amendments to the associated DA or modification application. Applications can only be amended with the agreement of the consent authority.
Amendment report	A report prepared by the applicant to support amendments to a development application or modification application.
Applicant	The applicant of an SSD project seeking consent for a DA or modification application.
Consent authority	The consent authority for a DA or modification application. This will be the Independent Planning Commission or the Minister.
Department	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.
Development application (DA)	A development application seeking consent for SSD under division 4.7 of the EP&A Act.
Environmental impact statement (EIS)	An environmental impact statement prepared by or on behalf of the applicant to accompany an SSD DA (see the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement).
EP&A Act	*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.*
EP&A Regulation	Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.
Major projects website	The Major Projects website (www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects) forms part of the NSW planning portal
Matter	An element of the environment that may be affected by an SSD (e.g. air, amenity, biodiversity, economic, social).
Minister	The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.
Mitigation	Actions or measures to reduce the impacts of the project.
Modification	Changing the scope or terms of an SSD development consent, including revoking or varying a condition of consent. A modification requires consent under the EP&A Act.
Modification application	An application seeking to modify an SSD development consent under section 4.55 or section 4.56 of the EP&A Act.
Modification report	A report prepared by the applicant to support a modification application under s 4.55(1A), s4.55(2) or s4.56 of the EP&A Act (see the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Modification Report).
Modification statement	A statement prepared by the applicant to support a modification application under s4.55(1) of the EP&A Act (see the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Modification Report).
NSW planning portal	The website with the URL of www.planning.nsw.gov.au or any other website used by the Planning Secretary to provide public access to documents or other information in the NSW planning database.
Planning Secretary	The Secretary of the Department.
Project	Refers to state significant development (SSD).
Refinement	A change that fits within the limits set by the project description and does not change what the applicant is seeking consent for or require an amendment to the DA for the project.
State significant development (SSD)	Development that is declared to be state significant development under section 4.36 of the EP&A Act.

Term	Meaning
Submission	A written response from an individual or organisation, which is submitted to the Department during the public exhibition of an EIS, amendment report or modification report for State significant development.
Submissions report	A report prepared by the applicant to respond to the issues raised in submissions (see the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Submissions Report).

Appendix A – Recommended structure of an amendment report

A recommended structure for an amendment is included below.

As a general guide an amendment report should not exceed 30 pages in total with an additional allowance for the assessment of significant likely impacts assessment of significant likely impacts of 1-8 pages for each specific matter*. Maps, plans, and figures are not included in this limit and should be used in place of text where they can aid understanding.

Amendment report	
Section	
	Executive summary
1	Introduction
2	Strategic context
3	Description of amendments
4	Statutory context
5	Engagement
6	Assessment of impacts
7	Justification of amendment project
8	References
Appendices	
A	Updated project description
B	Updated statutory compliance table
C	Updated mitigation measures table
D	Supporting information, including any detailed engagement or technical reports

* It may be possible to report the findings of a standard assessment in one page whereas a detailed assessment may require up to 10 pages. For an explanation of standard and detailed assessments, see Appendix D “Levels of assessment” in the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report.

Appendix B – Amended project summary table

Element	Original project	Amended project
Project area		
Project footprint	33ha	50ha
Excavation depth	30m	25m
Physical layout and design		
Building height	28m	31m
Gross floor area	202 000m^2	250 000m^2
Site access	Site access from Water Road	Site access from River Road
Parking spaces	50	45
Key uses and activities		
Land Use	Industrial	Industrial + commercial
Annual waste generated	90 000 tonnes per annum	100 000 tonnes per annum
Rate of production	50 000 tonnes per annum	60 000 tonnes per annum
Spoil exported	15 000 tonnes per annum	12 500 tonnes per annum
Related development		
Energy generation facility	Seek approval following project approval	Seek approval under amended project
Road upgrade	No upgrade proposed	Road upgrade to River Road
Project sequencing		
	Construct Building A before Building B	Construct Building A and B at same time

Endnotes

1. See section 37 of the EP&A Regulation.
2. See section 37 of the EP&A Regulation.
3. See section 37 of the EP&A Regulation.
4. See section 59(6) of the EP&A Regulation.
5. See section 59 of the EP&A Regulation.
6. See sections 1.3 and 4.15 of the EP&A Act, in particular.
7. See Schedule 1, section 20 of the EP&A Act.
8. Despite the division of the amendment report into two parts, the appendices form part of the amendment report.
9. See section 10.6 of the EP&A Act.
10. An accessible PDF file provides hidden, structured, textual representation of the PDF content that is presented to screen readers.

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