

Fact sheet

Changes to the planning panel system in NSW

January 2026

Immediate changes

The NSW Government is simplifying the State's planning panel framework as part of landmark changes aimed at delivering a faster, fairer and modern planning system.

These reforms are being rolled out gradually. Initial changes to planning panels commenced on 16 January 2026 and apply to council areas with an established Local Planning Panel.

For these areas, new regionally significant development applications are delegated to that Local Planning Panel for determination on behalf of the relevant Sydney District or Regional Planning Panel. Many existing applications were also delegated to Local Planning Panels.

These changes will streamline the structure of planning panels and return more development applications to council staff for assessment, ensuring decisions are made closer to the communities they affect.

As councils already run the existing Local Planning Panels and undertake assessment and exhibition of regionally significant development applications, it is not anticipated that this change will significantly increase council workloads. However, there may be a need to run additional Local Planning Panel meetings as required.

The City of Sydney is not covered by a Sydney District planning panel and is therefore not affected by these changes.

What does this mean for:

Council areas where a Local Planning Panel hasn't been established

The 4 Regional Planning Panels will continue to determine regionally significant development applications for council areas without an established local planning panel.

Council areas where a Local Planning Panel has been established

Local Planning Panels have been established in all local government areas of Greater Sydney, as well as Wingecarribee, Central Coast, and Wollongong local government areas. Most existing

regionally significant development applications in these areas have been returned to councils for determination by the relevant Local Planning Panel. Councils and applicants have been notified of any applications that were delegated to the Local Planning Panels.

All regionally significant development applications lodged after 16 January 2026 are delegated to the relevant Local Planning Panel for determination on behalf of the relevant Sydney District or Regional Planning Panel. These changes are expected to improve efficiency and reduce assessment delays.

Development applications that will remain with the Sydney District and Regional Planning Panels for determination

Existing regionally significant development applications will still be determined by the relevant Sydney District or Regional Planning Panel if one or more of these criteria apply:

- A Local Planning Panel has not been established for the council area
- The development application was lodged before 4 September 2024
- A council assessment report has been provided to the relevant Sydney District or Regional Planning Panel before 16 January 2026
- Applications that are the subject of a deemed refusal appeal.

Rezoning reviews

Rezoning reviews will remain with the relevant Sydney District and Regional Planning Panel. We're currently investigating options to allow rezoning reviews to continue for planning proposals.

Future changes

For most councils in regional NSW, the changes introduced in January 2026 will have no impact. The three councils with established Local Planning Panels located within an area covered by a Regional Planning Panel will be contacted by the department to discuss the impact of these changes.

We will be consulting with regional councils about the potential establishment of new Local Planning Panels and are currently considering the timing of that consultation. Regional Planning Panels will continue to operate in these areas until Local Planning Panels are established.

More information

You can find more information about Local Planning Panels [on our website](#).