



Summary

Australians need cities and towns that are sustainable and liveable. An effective and efficient planning approval system is crucial in avoiding wasted time and costs.

The Australian Institute of Architects is concerned that overall, the current development assessment system is not working efficiently, resulting in lengthy delays, and additional compliance costs adding to the cost of development eventually approved.

The Institute believes that the *Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment in Australia*, developed by the Development Assessment Forum, needs to be adopted by the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council and in turn implemented by State/Territory and Local Governments.

Background

An efficient development assessment process is the foundation of effective town planning that manages the growth and sustainability of our cities and towns.

It is well recognised that reform of the current process across Australia is required.

While there are examples of planning processes that work reasonably well, overall, the current development assessment system is convoluted, inefficient and under resourced, resulting in lengthy delays and additional compliance cost, adding to the cost of development eventually approved.

The problems of an inefficient process are exacerbated by a lack of consistency between states and territories, but also, by inconsistency between local government area planning schemes, even when purportedly made under the same state or territory authority.



The trend towards local government use of planning rules to regulate what are essentially building regulation matters, no matter how well intentioned, in itself points to a failure of the system.

Ten years ago, the Development Assessment Forum (DAF), consisting of representatives from the three levels of government, the development industry and related professional associations, including the Australian Institute of Architects, began meeting to collectively consider what needed to be done. In 2005 DAF produced the *Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment in Australia* – (DAF model) designed to promote efficient, effective and nationally harmonised development assessment systems across Australia.

While one state has introduced part of the model, progress on implementation has so far been minimal.

The DAF model is on the agenda of governments, for example, through the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council and is well known to the planning departments.

The Australian Institute of Architects believes three components are needed for an improved and more efficient development approvals process.

- A sound planning policy framework
- Clear criteria for submitting and assessing applications (with appeals process), and
- Clear assessment tracks so that development applications can be streamlined to the track that corresponds with the level of assessment appropriate for a decision.

The Institute believes that with these three elements in place, the result will be certainty and accuracy in decision making, with planning outcomes more in tune with community expectations.



The Institute acknowledges that part of the elements of the DAF model are implemented in some States and Territories but the imperatives of issues such as housing affordability and sustainability make minimising unnecessary costs of planning assessment imperative.

The Institute also recognises that existing funding grants to state and territory governments, such as the Commonwealth's allocation for harmonisation and reduction of red tape (through the electronic development application system), have a part to play in planning system reform.

What Governments need to do

Implement as a priority the DAF model designed to promote efficient, effective and nationally harmonised development assessment systems across Australia.

The Local Government and Planning Ministers Council needs to adopt the Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment in Australian and encourage its implementation by State/ Territory and Local Governments.

However, faced with the political inertia of change to planning systems, the Commonwealth Government needs to take leadership and utilise such models as National Competition Policy to give the necessary incentives for change.

What all members of the community (including Institute members) can do

Write to their local Member and State or Territory Planning Minister about the need for reform to save the cost of inefficient planning in our communities.



Institute Initiatives and Activities

Surveys were conducted in 2003 and 2005 seeking Institute members' experience with the planning approvals process.

The Institute has actively participated in the development of the DAF Leading Practice model and DAF's electronic development assessment (eDA) cross platform communication protocol.

Further Information and Links

[DAF Leading Practice Model](#)