Australian Institute of Architects TAS

ABN 72 000 023 012
The Royal Australian Institute of Architects
trading as Australian Institute of Architects

1/19a Hunter Street
nipaluna/Hobart, Tasmania 7000

P: (03) 6214 1500
tas@architecture.com.au
architecture.com.au

State Planning Office
Department of State Growth
GPO Box 536
Hobart TAS 7001

15 May 2026

By email to: haveyoursay@stateplanning.tas.gov.au

Re: Preventing Delays in Development Assessment Timeframes

To whom this concerns,

The Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the discussion paper regarding preventing delays in development assessment timeframes.

The Institute acknowledges the importance of maintaining robust planning assessment processes that support good development outcomes, public confidence, and appropriate consideration of environmental, infrastructure, and community impacts. However, feedback received from members indicates that delays are frequently arising not simply from statutory timeframes themselves, but from inconsistency in process, lack of transparency, fragmented information requests, and differing administrative practices across councils, referral authorities, and departments.

A strong and recurring theme throughout member feedback was the need for greater clarity and consistency regarding what constitutes a “valid” application, what information is reasonably required at planning stage, and how requests for further information (RFIs) are managed throughout the assessment process. Members expressed concern that RFIs are sometimes issued progressively or inconsistently, resulting in uncertainty, duplicated work, and unnecessary delays for applicants and assessment authorities alike.

The Institute strongly supports approaches that encourage earlier identification of information requirements, greater coordination between referral authorities, and more transparent communication throughout the assessment process. Members consistently supported the principle that RFIs should, where possible, be consolidated and issued within clear and defined timeframes. Members indicated that RFIs could be grouped and issued by discipline, enabling

responses to be undertaken quickly, rather than being drip-fed throughout assessment process. Member feedback also indicated that there is currently no statutory timeframe application when general manager consent is required as part of development applications. A suggestion from members was that there could be internal council reviews prior to RFIs being issued to ensure consistency.

Member feedback received regarding RFIs and condition endorsements suggested that applicants, or architects, should be able to decide whether they would prefer to have a condition endorsement placed on a development approval, or whether this should be addressed through an RFI.

Feedback received from members discussed the pre-application advice process, and suggested that this should provide more clarity, including noting the consultant reports that will be required for a particular planning application. It was suggested that this advice should be provided in writing, rather than just being issued verbally.

The Institute also notes strong support for improved transparency and accountability within digital assessment systems such as PlanBuild. Members considered that applicants should be able to clearly identify:

- the current status of an application;
- which authority or officer is responsible for assessment at a given time;
- what information is outstanding;
- when information has been received and acknowledged; and
- how statutory timeframes are being managed.

Many members considered that improved digital functionality and dashboard-style visibility within PlanBuild could significantly improve transparency, communication, and administrative efficiency across the system. The Institute notes that a session with some of the PlanBuild team and Institute members was held in November 2025, which served to pass on feedback about the functionality of PlanBuild and the issues that were occurring when using it to submit planning applications, and further feedback from members was passed on following this meeting.

Members also highlighted the importance of ensuring that planning assessment processes remain proportionate to the scale and complexity of development proposals with the potential for shorter duration for assessment for small projects, and longer assessment timeframes for larger projects. Concerns were raised that some requests for information extend beyond genuine planning matters into detailed engineering, drafting, or buildability issues more appropriately resolved at later stages of project delivery. The Institute considers that clearer guidance, better alignment between authorities, and improved consistency in assessment expectations could assist in reducing unnecessary process complexity and duplication.

The Institute also notes the importance of supporting consistency in decision-making and interpretation across councils, departments, and planning officers. Members identified value in clearer guidance material, standardised expectations, improved planner training, and greater use of professional judgement and common-sense assessment approaches where appropriate.

The Institute supports ongoing work to improve the efficiency, clarity, transparency, and consistency of Tasmania's planning assessment system while maintaining the quality and integrity of planning outcomes. The Institute considers that successful reform should focus not only on statutory timeframes, but also on improving coordination, communication, digital systems, and administrative practices across the broader assessment process.

The Institute looks forward to continuing to contribute constructively to future work in this area.

For further information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Daniel Lane
President, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects

Jennifer Nichols
Executive Lead, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with over 13,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture. The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design. To learn more about the Institute, log on to www.architecture.com.au.