



30 July 2024

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage
140 William Street
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Reform, Design and State Assessment Team,

RE: DRAFT STATE DESIGN REVIEW MANUAL

Introduction

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. In Western Australia our members employ thousands of people in our state's building and construction sector, working to deliver over a billion dollars' worth of public and private sector projects each year.

The contribution of Western Australian architects is incredibly diverse - from CBD high rises through to multi and single residential projects, community infrastructure, state of the art schools and much more spanning the breadth of our State.

As a critical part of the construction sector, the Institute in WA is dedicated to improving our built environment and our diverse communities across the State by promoting quality, responsible, resilient design and advocating for the benefit of all Western Australians.

The Institute supports the draft State Design Review Manual

The Institute commends the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) on developing the draft SDRP Manual. The Manual is generally clear, well-structured and legible to multiple user groups. There is great potential for the Manual to have a broader educational function about the role and benefits of good design and the planning process more generally to a range of stakeholders (including the general public).

Consultation Questions

Is the information in the Manual clear and easy to understand? If no, please elaborate.

The information in the Manual is clear and easy to understand. However, it may benefit from a final edit to resolve some minor grammatical and typographical errors, for example:

- Page 8 "Role of SDRP": insert the word 'by' to sentence: *The SDRP is administered by the [DPLH].*
- Page 19 "When the SDRP may be suitable": typographical error "a default" to be amended to "as a default" in final sentence: *The SDRP cannot be used as a default resource for Local Governments without a DRP.*
- Page 20 "The review process": concerning attendance of the project team, it may be confusing to some users of the Manual for the introductory sentence to recommend not exceeding attendance by 8 people and then listing 10 potential essential members to attend.



- Page 21 "Design review material": issue raising party missing in final sentence: *Each review presentation should clearly build on the issues raised by **the Panel** in the previous review...*

Are roles and responsibilities for different user groups (proponents, referral bodies, etc.) in the SDRP process well defined? In no, please explain why.

We suggest that further discussion in relation to the panel members is included in the Manual to enable SDRP participants to better understand:

- First, the matching process of panel expertise with project typologies (for example, panel professionals with heritage expertise being assigned to review projects with heritage components, or panel professionals with rail expertise being assigned to review rail infrastructure projects); and
- Secondly, the preparedness of panel members (in particular, the recommended guidance for panel members to adequately review the project materials and prepare before the SDRP sessions).

Are the processes clear and easy to follow? If no, please provide suggestions below.

While processes are generally clear and easy to follow, we have a few further suggestions to enhance the document:

- Inclusion of a flow diagram on page 10 to demonstrate the multiple pathways available to access the SDRP process. The diagram does not need to be all-inclusive but could demonstrate common pathways. For example, referred by the local authority, etc.
- Expand the information in relation to the "Design review material" on pages 21-22 to define or list the types of material submitted by proponents/project teams at the different stages of design review. Differentiation of types of materials recommended for a 2-stage process versus a 3-stage process would also be helpful. Feedback from our members indicates that often the preparation required by project teams for design review is extensive, involving several months of design process. Further articulation of the materials required at each stage will help minimise design resolution work by project teams that is later discarded and will minimise the time and cost impacts of this process.
- Further articulation of the period between the SDRP sessions is also recommended to be included in the Manual, to better allow understanding of project time frames and cost implications.

Are the diagrams clear and communicative? If no, please provide suggestions below.

- Some of the diagrams are too small. We recommend resizing diagrams to ensure font is 10point text minimum. For example, Figure 4 on page 14 is difficult to read when printed.
- We suggest including the infographics used in SPP 7.0 adjacent the design principles to assist with readability (page 6).



- Figure 6 on page 22 appears to be incomplete or cut off from the page. We suggest that the project evolution arrow continue beyond the Design Review 3 stage and indicate the next process: Development Application submission. Further, as the Manual recommends 2 to 3 Design Review sessions, it will be helpful to see a second diagram demonstrating a 2 stage process.

Are there any information or process gaps in the document? If yes, what are they.

The Institute recommends the expansion of the document to include:

- Referencing the governing legislation and policy in the "About this document: Application" section on page 2.
- Complaints and dispute resolutions processes.
- Reporting advice: include example of a typical SDRP report including layout, commentary inclusion and visual example. We recommend that the layout does not strictly follow the 10 Design Principles, to minimise repetition of comments/advice.
- Concerning the pros and cons listed in the SDRP session types on page 15, specifically the potential for recording sessions, we recommend adding a reference to the Department's recording guidelines. It is foreseeable that instances will occur where project sensitivity will require users of the SDRP process to clearly understand which sessions will be recorded (noting that some of the earlier DRP reports are listed as being confidential in the manual), the purpose of the recordings, who will have access to the recordings, how distribution and disposal of the recordings will be managed, etc.

Do you have any other thoughts on design review you would like to share?

- The Institute endorses Independent Panels for reviewing infrastructure projects and Development Applications. Panels provide specialised knowledge and experience and have been shown to lead to better outcomes. They can reduce overall cost and time by addressing problems early and ensuring proper standards and specifications are adhered to. Panels also reduce the risk of project failure, malfeasance and better ensure value for taxpayer money.
- The Institute views the SDRP process and associated Manual as a best practice model. The DPLH is encouraged to actively recommend the model process and Manual as a template for Local Governments to establish and/or review their own DRP's.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and we look forward to future engagement regarding the SDRP and ongoing planning reform in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Sandy Anghie RAIA
State President, Western Australia
Australian Institute of Architects