



**Australian  
Institute of  
Architects**

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

WA Chapter  
33 Broadway  
Nedlands, Perth, WA, 6009

P: (08) 6324 3100  
wa@architecture.com.au  
[architecture.com.au](http://architecture.com.au)

26 November 2024

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

Via email: [tim.greenhill@dplh.wa.gov.au](mailto:tim.greenhill@dplh.wa.gov.au)

Dear Reform, Design and State Assessment Team,

## **RE: DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT DESIGN REVIEW MANUAL**

### **Introduction**

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation representing over 14,000 members across Australia and overseas. More than 1,300 of these are based in Western Australia and are supported by the Western Australian Chapter.

### **The Institute supports the draft Local Government Design Review Manual**

The Institute commends the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) on developing the draft Local Government DRP Manual and proforma documents. The Manual is generally clear, well-structured, and legible to multiple user groups. The supporting proforma documents are an excellent resource for local governments and will assist in setting a consistency in the application, process, and administration of DRP's in Western Australia. 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).

### **The Institute supports Design Review Panels**

The Institute endorses Design Review Panels for reviewing Infrastructure projects and Development Applications. These panels provide specialised knowledge and experience that 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 Draft DRP process and associated Manual as a best practice model. The DPLH is encouraged to actively recommend and support the model process and Manual as a template for Local Governments to establish and/or review their own DRP's.



## **Detailed Response**

### ***Legibility***

The Institute recommends a final edit of the document to resolve some grammatical and typographical issues to enhance readability:

- Page 8 “L” missing from LGDRP’s under ‘Status of Advice’
- Page 27 “Proponent” misspelt with two t’s
- Many of the hyperlinks in the draft Manual currently either do not work or direct readers to blank websites. It is assumed that this issue will be rectified in the final published version.

### ***Roles and responsibilities for different user groups (proponents, referral bodies, etc.) in the DRP process***

The panel pool expertise and structure, outlined on page 21, and the ‘Guide to Panel Composition’ on page 28, is well outlined and appropriately identifies the matching process of panel expertise with project typologies. Within the ‘Guide to Panel Composition’ where reference to High density development or Medium density development is made, articulating this is residential development would assist with legibility.

The roles and responsibilities outlined in the “For the Panel” section are well-outlined and appropriately address the need for preparedness of panel members.

It is recommended that for councils with specialised industry, guidance is provided:

- With regards to the thresholds for “state or regional significance” that will determine if the design review will be undertaken by the local or state DRP, and
- To ensure best efforts are taken that this specialist industry is represented in the pool specialist members and appropriately matched to these projects.

The Institute highly commends and supports the Manual’s guidance on panel remuneration. Design advice has value to both the local governments and their constituents, and proponents. It has been observed that some local authorities in Western Australia have set up DRP’s on a volunteer basis, however, rely upon and benefit from the expert design advice. This does not demonstrate best practice or demonstrate the value of the DRP and it’s panel members.

### ***Resources***

- Generally, the template resources provided are an excellent resource for all stakeholders involved in DRP processes and for Local Governments establishing/reviewing their own DRP processes.



- Likewise, the “tip highlights” throughout the document are helpful and provide additional practical advice in relation to the DRP process.
- With regards to the Matrix\_example, it is recommended that more certainty is given in the assessment by using numerical matrix and more clearly articulated bands, in lieu of colour scale. Example markup attached.

### ***Diagrams***

- Generally, some of the diagrams are too small and low resolution – recommend resizing the diagram to ensure font size is 10-point text minimum. For example, Figure 6 on page 13 is barely readable when printed.
- Alternatively, providing an appendix with a copy of high-resolution figures within the Manual would be helpful.
- Figure 9 on page 38: it is recommended that the project evolution arrow continue beyond the Design Review 3 stage and indicate the next process: Development Application submission. As the Manual recommends 2-3 Design Review sessions, it will be helpful to see a second diagram demonstrating a 2-stage process. A second diagram is recommended to demonstrate this scenario.

### ***Information or process gaps***

The Institute recommends the expansion of the document to include:

- Complaints and dispute resolutions processes.
- Concerning the pros and cons listed in the DRP session types on page 20, 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 DRP 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.

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

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