

The Government has consulted the community about changes proposed for the ACT planning system. These changes are intended to make the system simpler, faster and more effective. The main areas that are being addressed in the reform package are:

- development assessment and building approvals,
- leasehold administration,
- the Territory Plan,
- environmental impact assessments, and
- concessional leases.

The Government has considered the community's comments in deciding what policies it wants implemented. Some further consultation will be undertaken before the policies take effect.

What has the Government decided to do after considering submissions made in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment?

- Provision will be made for strategic environmental assessment of major proposals.
- The Minister for Planning will continue to administer the environmental impact statement process and the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Health will keep their powers to initiate environmental impact statements under certain circumstances.
- Preliminary Assessments will no longer be required.
- Environmental assessment will be tailored to the potential impact of a development. For most developments, environmental requirements will be specified in codes. For high impact developments, there will be additional assessment requirements through an Environmental Impact Statement.
- A schedule of development types for which an environmental impact statement is required will be included in regulations.
- Planning studies will be broadened into more comprehensive strategic environmental assessments to determine urban capability and associated environmental impact on proposed future urban areas.
- Potential applicants will need to use a consultant to prepare an environmental impact statement. The consultant will need to be from a list of qualified consultants. Members of the professional institutes and associations with relevant experience and qualifications may be designated as qualified.
- Draft Environmental Impact Statements will be exhibited for public consultation.
- An Environmental Impact Statement will have a scoping stage and a full response stage. Matters raised during consultation will be addressed in the final Environmental Impact Statement. The ACT Planning and Land Authority must advise the relevant Minister if any matters are not adequately addressed.
- The ACT Planning and Land Authority will be able to initiate roundtable conferences in relation to an Environmental Impact Statement to resolve outstanding scientific or technical matters.

What do the changes mean for the community and for industry?

- The sustainability of major proposals will be assessed through strategic environmental assessment and Environmental Impact Statements.
- Codes will include requirements that will contribute to the sustainability of small-scale development.
- Reduced time and cost as the level of assessment will be more closely matched to the potential environmental impact of developments.
- Simplification of the process will reduce duplication in the assessment process and give greater clarity and certainty for everyone.

What further consultation is planned?

The next stage of consultation will occur early in 2006, with the scheduled release of an exposure draft of new legislation. A draft structure of the new Territory Plan will also be exhibited together with a sample development assessment code.

When will the changes take effect?

The changes will be implemented with the commencement of the new legislation in 2007. Shorter-term reforms that do not require legislative change are being introduced earlier.

Where do I get more information?

These proposed changes are detailed in the Government Response to Community Comment on the Planning System Reform Project. A copy of this paper is available from all ACT Government and ACT Planning and Land Authority customer service centres. A copy can also be accessed via our website www.actpla.act.gov.au, or by phoning (02) 6207 1923.

Inquiries can be made to the ACT Planning and Land Authority. You can:

- email planning.systemreform@act.gov.au
- write to The Planning System Reform Project, GPO Box 1908, Canberra, ACT, 2601
- visit 16 Challis Street, Dickson, ACT, or
- phone (02) 6207 1923.

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