



Small Business Service Charter



ACT Planning &
Land Authority

This Charter

This Charter sets out the services and standards that small businesses in the ACT can expect from us and what business people can do if our standards are not met.

Who we are, what we do


The ACT Planning and Land Authority is responsible for long term strategic planning, assessing development and lease variation applications, monitoring compliance with approvals and regulating the construction industry. The Authority also provides high quality spatial information, mapping products and data to facilitate decision-making across government and the community.

Our Service Commitment to Small Businesses in the ACT

The three main areas of the Authority's activities that you are most likely to encounter are described over the following pages. We have also included information on what you need to provide to assist us in delivering timely service to you.



1. Operating a business from home



Recognising that over 75 per cent of small businesses in the ACT operate from home, the Authority has put in place a number of planning policies which are designed to foster business activity in residential areas as long as they don't unreasonably interfere with the amenity of the residential locality and, in particular, adjoining residences. Our legislation allows home occupations and home businesses to operate from residential premises, subject to specific planning criteria being met.

Home Occupation

Approval is not required if you conduct a home occupation that complies at all times with each of the prescribed conditions relating to the amenity of the neighbourhood, including parking, on site storage, structures, coupled with a maximum allocation of 40sqm (including storage) for the business. All of the conditions can be found on our web site or by contacting our Customer Service Centre included in this charter.

Home Business

If your business is conducted on a 'larger scale' and either:

- employs anyone who is not a resident of the land; or
- does not meet any one of the home occupation criteria, you still may be able to operate a business from home, but you will need approval from the Authority. This is known as a home business. Approvals can be for a term up to five years, must relate to the applicant only and are not transferable.

Full details of the conditions applying to home occupations and homes businesses, and what you need to do, can be found on the Authority's web site in the Design and build section or by contacting the Customer Service Centre on the phone numbers included in this Charter.

2. Undertaking development (including the variation of a crown lease)

As the owner or operator of a small business, and particularly as your business grows, you may want to relocate from your home premises to a larger, more suitable, building in a commercial or industrial area. You may also want or need to extend the allowable uses under your existing commercial/industrial lease. Alternatively, you may have in mind extending an existing building, or constructing a new one to accommodate your business.

In these cases, development approval (by lodging a development application – DA) must be obtained before any development can commence. In some cases, your Crown Lease may have to be revised to include conditions that you will have to comply with to obtain approval.

“Development” in relation to land is defined in legislation and the details are specified on the web site.

Examples include

- the erection, alteration or demolition of a building or structure on the land;
- a variation of the Crown Lease of the land; and
- the use or change of use of a building or works on land.


Contact the ACT Planning and Land Authority’s Customer Service Centre in Dickson to check if a DA is needed for your situation (refer to phone numbers and address details included in this Charter).

What information will I have to provide?

If you are required to submit an application, the DA form has an accompanying information package including a checklist for your type of application. This information package will help you complete the DA and advise you what additional information you should include in your application for it to be considered against applicable policies and guidelines. It is available in hard copy from our Customer Service Centres or online in the Information packs section of the Authority’s website.



3. Construction Occupations Licensing



As a small business you may be providing services in a construction occupation that requires you to hold an appropriate licence. For example, you may be a builder, gas fitter, plumber, or electrician who has recently moved to the ACT.

The ACT's construction occupation's licensing legislation sets out the grades of licences which must be held by individuals engaged in the construction industry and the requirements for applying for licences and renewing them. The Authority's website has a detailed section on licensing.

Other Relevant Service Providers

ACT Health - For advice on health issues and requirements for conducting a business within the ACT.

www.health.act.gov.au

Territory and Municipal Services - For advice on environmental and heritage issues within the ACT relevant to small business.

www.tams.act.gov.au

ACTEWAGL - for advise on electricity, gas and water supplies and related services.

www.actewagl.com.au

Service Delivery Targets

Many of the services we provide our customers are governed by statutory timeframes;

Additionally, other service timeframes will be advised at time of application or commencement of processing documentation.

It should be noted that customer service does not always mean that the Authority, which must act in an impartial manner having regard to a range of policy settings and community expectations, will agree with your proposal, but in these circumstances we will explore alternatives and explain them to you.



Service	Service Delivery Targets (business days)
Assessment of application to conduct a home business or to undertake a development activity	30 days no objections received 45 days if objections received
Issuing/renewal of construction occupation licences	10 days



Innovative Service Initiatives

The Authority is committed to the identification of initiatives aimed at making access to our services and information easier and more cost effective for small business. A range of electronic services, including a 'Plumbing Tie Search' and the provision of building file documents for certain inquiries have been put on line through the Authority's web site.

A current project, supported by the Commonwealth Government, is further extending the range of electronic services specifically targeted to making dealings with the Authority easier and less costly for small business in the ACT, in relation to lodging DAs.

Helping us to help you

To help us provide you, as a small business, with quality service tailored to your needs, we ask that you:

- seek advice from our Customer Services Centre if you are unsure of any of our processes or procedures as they affect your business;
- speak to one of our officers about your particular project or needs early in the process so that you can allow time to action anything that is likely to be required in order for us to process your request;
- provide timely information that is accurate and complete;
- allow adequate time for us to respond to your requests; and
- wherever possible, utilise the online services we offer at www.actpla.act.gov.au.

How you can give us feedback

We conduct customer surveys with various questions specifically tailored to the needs of small business. Your feedback is taken into account in helping us to improve our business operations and services to you.

We will ensure that positive feedback is passed on to appropriate staff. On the other hand, if you have concerns about the service provided to you by our staff, we will discuss them to ensure staff are conscious of their obligations and the standard of service expected of them.

For any comments or complaints about our services, you can use the Feedback section of our web site, or contact the Customer Services Centre on 6207 1923.

If you are not satisfied with a complaint resolution, you can contact:

- The Chief Planning Executive
ACT Planning and Land Authority
GPO Box 1908
Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: 6207 1712

Review of this charter

We review this document periodically to ensure accuracy of information.



How You Can Contact Us

By phone

- Customer Service Centre, Dickson
(including DAs and licensing)
6207 1923
- Customer Service Centre, Mitchell
(House & Drainage Plans)
6207 6262
- TTY Telephone – Restricted to TTY
users 6207 2622

By email

- actpla.customer.services@act.gov.au

Online

- www.actpla.act.gov.au

In person

- Customer Services Centre Dickson,
16 Challis Street, Dickson ACT
- Customer Services Centre Mitchell,
Corner Hoskins and Lysaght
Streets, Mitchell ACT

By mail

- GPO Box 1908 Canberra City ACT
2601