

Environmental impact assessment

The ACT Government has made a clear commitment to make changes to the current planning system to make it simpler to use, faster and more effective for residents, industry and business.

The four key planning areas that will be addressed in the reform process are:

- The development assessment system;
- The Territory Plan and other planning instruments;
- Environmental impact assessment; and
- The leasehold system

Why is there a need for reform of environment impact assessments?

- The present system of environmental impact assessment is not always effective or efficient; and
- The level of environmental assessment applied is often inappropriate for the nature and scale of development.

What reforms are proposed?

- Environmental impact assessments will be better integrated into the development application process, with the level of environmental impact assessment required based on the nature and scale of proposed development;
- As the level of environmental impact of a development rises, the level of assessment required will rise accordingly;
- Development types requiring mandatory environmental assessment will be identified in advance;
- Environmental impact assessment requirements will be more clearly communicated to the community, with consultation occurring in the draft stage of an assessment; and
- If there is a high level of public concern about an environmental impact assessment on a development application, the Planning Minister will be able to establish a panel of experts to review the development and report back to the Minister.

What does this mean to me as an individual or a community group?

- For most home builders or renovators who submit a development application, there will not be a requirement for an environmental assessment;
- There will be no reduction of the protection provided by the assessment of environmental impacts;
- Environmental impact assessment will be better targeted to the proposals that are most likely to have an impact with the level of assessment requirement rising with the level of assessed risk;
- Consultation with the community will occur at the beginning stage of an environmental impact assessment; and
- Areas currently subject to environmental protection policies will continue to be protected.



What does this mean to me as an industry, business or professional organisation?

- Environmental impact assessments will be better integrated into the development application process;
- As the level of environmental impact of a development rises, the level of assessment required will increase; and
- For lower impact developments, an assessment may not be required, or may be appropriately less onerous than under the current system, creating greater certainty, minimising time delays and better targeting proposals that have the greatest impact.

Where do I get more information?

These proposed changes are detailed in the Review of Environmental Impact Assessments in the ACT Technical Paper, supported by a Directions paper and three additional technical papers addressing each of the priority planning areas. These papers have been released for public consultation for an eight-week period, giving the Canberra community an opportunity to comment on the reforms proposed in each paper.

Copies of the papers are available at all ACT Government and ACT Planning and Land Authority customer service centre, ACT Libraries and on the ACT Planning and Land Authority website. For further information, contact the ACT Planning and Land Authority on 02 6207 1923 or visit our website: www.actpla.act.gov.au

How do I contribute to the new planning system?

Community consultation is taking place over an eight-week period from 27 May to 22 July 2005. Public comment can be provided through submissions to the ACT Planning and Land Authority via email: planning.systemreform@act.gov.au or posted to The Planning System Reform Project, GPO Box 1908 Canberra ACT 2601. Submissions close on Friday 22 July 2005. Persons making submissions should be aware that all submissions will be made public. For further details please refer to the Planning System Reform Project Directions paper.

Indicative timetable for the reform process:

May – July 2005	Public release of the Directions paper, with an eight-week community consultation period
February 2006	Exposure draft legislation tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly
August 2006	Legislation introduced to the ACT Legislative Assembly to make reforms to the current planning system
2007/2008	Implementation of the new planning system

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