Fact sheet – Guidance for applicants

Working with the Development Coordination Authority

October 2026

The Development Coordination Authority

The Development Coordination Authority (DCA) is a planning entity within the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI).

DCA streamlines NSW Government involvement in the planning system. For local development applications (DAs), DCA acts as a one-stop shop, managing referrals and agency interactions through a single front door. For all other planning pathways, including local plan-making, State significant projects and State significant rezonings, DCA provides technical advice in areas where we have in-house expertise and coordinate input from relevant agencies where required, offering a consistent and efficient mechanism for government engagement.

Overview of the DCA framework

- Integrated development, concurrence and consultation requirements for local DAs and modifications are collectively known as 'referrals'.
- The referral provisions for DAs and modifications have been consolidated and revised and are set out in Chapter 4 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021*.
- The referral provisions are supported by the 'State Referral Provisions' (SRPs), a guidance document that sets out how referrals are considered under the new framework.
- DCA brings together technical expertise and specialist functions that were previously distributed across multiple NSW Government agencies.
- DCA has technical expertise in transport, biodiversity, heritage, flooding and evacuation, bushfire, water management, environmental protection, natural resources (mining), fisheries and agriculture, and planning and building for natural disasters and fire safety.
- DCA provides a single, coordinated response to all statutory referrals relevant to NSW Government DA and modification applications, where it holds the relevant referral functions and in-house technical expertise (subject to applicable savings and transitional provisions). For other

planning pathways, DCA provides technical advice in areas where we have in-house expertise. Where DCA requires technical agency input, it will contact agencies for advice.

- DCA is an agency engagement option in the Planning Portal and Major Projects Portal.
- A *referral check* process has been established, where DCA reviews nominated NSW Government DA and modification referrals before a formal referral is made.
- The DA and modification referral submission period for DCA and other referral authorities has been harmonised to 28 calendar days.
- The referral fee structure for applicants has been revised.
- Applicants can request a review of a DCA decision required under a condition of consent.

Development applications and modifications

Integrated development, concurrence and consultation requirements are collectively called 'referrals'

Referral is the collective term for integrated development, concurrence and consultation requirements.

Referral authority is the collective term for consultation bodies, concurrence authorities, and DCA in relation to integrated development or if it is a consultation body or concurrence authority.

Each of these three input types involves referring a DA or modification application to another body for a response before the consent authority[1] determines it. Given they share this common purpose, they are treated as a single category and share collective terms under the new framework.

Legislative reforms introduced on 1 July 2026, establish DCA and a new referrals framework

The referrals framework came into effect on 1 July 2026, simplifying requirements for when a DA or modification application must be referred by a consent authority for consultation or concurrence. The amendment refines and updates over 800 concurrence and consultation provisions across 175 environmental planning instruments and consolidates them into a single, clear list that focuses on managing significant risks to matters of State interest.

The framework is supported by the State Referral Provisions, which provides clear and consistent guidance on how referrals are considered.

Under the framework DCA is responsible for responding to most concurrence and consultation requirements and for issuing all general terms of approval for integrated development under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act 1979.*

[1] In most cases, the consent authority is the local council the application was submitted to.

DCA provides a single, consolidated response for all NSW Government referral matters relevant to the issue of development consent, via the NSW Planning Portal

All provisions applicable to NSW Government matters, relating to the issue of consent, are referred by the consent authority to DCA. Referrals can be made throughout the DA or modification process up until the application is determined.

DCA will respond to referrals and provide the consent authority with expert advice in the form of a single, consolidated response within 28 calendar days. This may include DCA advice, concurrences or general terms of approval that are needed for the DA or modification.

Where DCA does not have the relevant expertise, it will liaise with experts in the relevant agency to obtain advice and still provide a single, consolidated response.

Pre-lodgement advice - Local development

DCA does not currently provide a formal pre-lodgement service or written pre-lodgement advice for local development, including designated development. Our primary focus is providing timely technical advice through statutory referrals and other formal assessment processes.

Applicants seeking advice on a proposed development should contact the relevant local council in the first instance, as they remain the primary point of contact for pre-lodgement discussions and may seek informal engagement with DCA where appropriate.

Requests for informal engagement are considered on a case-by-case basis. Priority may be given to proposals involving significant complexity or where early technical input within DCA's areas of expertise is likely to provide the greatest benefit to the assessment process.

Modification applications requiring referral

There are two situations where modification applications may need to be referred. These occur when a modification application:

- triggers a referral requirement that did not apply to the original development application or a prior modification application.
- proposes to modify the development in a way that would affect a condition of consent that was imposed because of a previous referral.

Generally, the consent authority will be required to consult with DCA for modification applications with a referral requirement. However, for non-NSW Government referrals, the relevant non-NSW Government agency will be consulted.

The consent authority will request a referral check before referring a DA to DCA

Prior to formally referring a DA or modification to DCA, the consent authority will need to nominate which referrals they intend to make to DCA and request a referral check through the NSW Planning Portal (the Portal).

Within two business days, DCA will review the nominated referrals and advise:

- whether it agrees or disagrees with the nominated referrals, or whether any have been missed
- if the necessary documentation for the referral has been provided (for example, if a Bush Fire Risk Assessment is required as part of the application).

If DCA has not responded within the two-business day period, the consent authority can proceed with formally referring the application to DCA, ensuring the referral check does not delay the assessment process.

After a referral check is completed, the relevant consent authority will make the final decision on which referrals, if any, need to be made as part of the DA or modification.

The consent authority remains the key point of contact for applicants

For applicants and developers, the consent authority remains your key point of contact before, during, and after the DA or modification process. Where a referral to DCA is needed, the consent authority will liaise directly with DCA.

Separately, general enquiries to DCA can be made by contacting dca.enquiries@dphi.nsw.gov.au.

When submitting an application, applicants are asked to indicate if a referral to an agency is required

When submitting your application through the Portal's Online DA service, applicants must indicate whether a referral to any State, Commonwealth or other agency is required and select the relevant referral provision for their application.

If you are unsure which referral provisions apply, the referrals you identify will be reviewed by the consent authority during its review of the development application and by the DCA during its referral check.

A 28-day timeframe applies to referrals

From 1 July 2026, DCA and other referral authorities have 28 calendar days to respond to referrals.

The 28-day period starts when the consent authority refers the application through the Planning Portal to DCA and any required fees are paid by the applicant. The clock pauses if additional information is requested and restarts once it has been provided.

If an application is referred under a new provision during assessment, or if an application is re-referred, the 28-day period for the application will reset.

If no response is received within 28 days, the consent authority may proceed with determining the application. However, if DCA is unlikely to be able to provide a response within the statutory timeframe, it will endeavour to communicate the expected timeframe for a response.

Fees apply to most referrals

The following fee structure applies to DAs and modifications lodged on or after 1 July 2026. Fees will need to be paid by the applicant before DCA undertakes its assessment.

Fee	Activity
$1,100	Each unique* referral for most development applications.
$550	Each unique* referral for modifications made under s 4.55(2) of the EP&A Act
No fee	All other inputs, including: • any consultation or advice on modifications made under s 4.55(1) or (1A) of the EP&A Act • any referral required under the *Sydney Water Act 1994* or *Hunter Water Act 1991*.

Fee	Activity
	• development in the resort areas of Kosciusko National Park made under section 4.39 of SEPP (Planning Systems) 2021 • development for new places of public worship made under section 4.40 of SEPP (Planning Systems) 2021

* Re-referring the same clause will not attract a fee.

Applicants can request a review of a DCA decision required under a condition of consent

Applicants can request a review of a DCA decision. This only applies to decisions where conditions of consent are required to be carried out to the satisfaction of the DCA. The review will be undertaken by DCA.

Other pathways

The relevant DPHI team remain the key point of contact for applicants

For State significant development (SSD), State significant infrastructure (SSI), State led rezonings (SLR), and State assessed rezoning proposals (SARP), the relevant DPHI team is the key point of contact for your development.

For planning proposals (PPs), the planning proposal authority is your key point of contact.

DCA is responsible for issuing BDAR waivers

DCA is responsible for issuing Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) waivers for SSDs and SSIs that are unlikely to have a significant impact on biodiversity values.

BDAR waiver requests should be submitted to the Major Projects Hub or by email at information@planning.nsw.gov.au.

DCA provides advice during SEARs preparation

DCA provides technical input into the preparation of Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) for SDD, SSI and designated development projects, on matters that would previously have been referred to the agencies listed in **Appendix A – Technical expertise now available in DCA.**

Requests for SEARs should be lodged through:

- the Major Projects Hub for SSD and SSI projects
- information@planning.nsw.gov.au for designated development.

Consultation on issued SEARs

Where issued SEARs require consultation with the agencies listed in **Appendix A- Technical expertise now available in DCA**, proponents, should now refer those matters to the DCA.

However, where consultation requirements specifically nominate the following agencies, proponents should continue to refer the matter directly to the relevant agency:

- TfNSW

- Hunter Water Corporation
- WaterNSW

DCA does not currently coordinate SEARs matters for Sydney Water. Proponents and consent authorities should continue to refer Sydney Water matters directly through the agency's established pathways.

Applicants can directly engage with DCA to seek clarification or advice on issued SEARs, as follows:

- for designated development, send requests to the DCA's front door at dca.enquiries@dphi.nsw.gov.au
- for SSD and SSI projects, via the pre-lodgement function in in Major Projects.

Pre-lodgement advice for State significant projects and planning proposals

DCA will provide formal scoping and technical input for SSD, SSI, planning proposals and State led rezonings through established assessment pathways. Applicants should contact the DPHI planner in the relevant assessment or LPCS team, who will coordinate advice with DCA if required.

DCA does not coordinate pre-lodgement advice across all agencies for these pathways. Refer to **Appendix A- Technical expertise now available in DCA**.

DCA is exploring opportunities to establish a formal pre-lodgement service in the future that provides a consistent approach across all technical disciplines.

Post approval matters

DCA may also provide advice and input into some post approval matters required to satisfy conditions of consent, including input into Independent Environmental Audits. Request for DCA involvement in these matters should be submitted, as follows:

- **Independent Environmental Audits** at dca.ieaudits@dphi.nsw.gov.au
- **State significant projects** through the Major Projects Portal
- **all other matters** through the DCA's Front Door at dca.enquiries@dphi.nsw.gov.au.

DCA should be consulted under Part 5, Division 5.1 and 5.2 of the EP&A Act 1979

DCA should be consulted on Review of Environmental Factors (REFs) or Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), prepared for activities under Division 5.1 or 5.2 of the *EP&A Act 1979*, where legislation identifies DCA as a consultation agency, or where technical expertise within DCA is required to support the assessment of environmental impacts.

DCA should be consulted under the following provisions:

- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, s 7.11 and 7.12
- *Marine Estate Management Act 2014*, s 55 and 56
- *Fisheries Management Act 1994*, s 221ZY and 221ZZ
- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s2.13(1)
- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s2.15(2)(g)
- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s2.62A(2)

- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s 2.122(3)
- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s 2.182(3)
- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s3.10(1)
- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s3.12(3)
- SEPP (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021, s3.38A(2)
- SEPP (Precincts — Central River City) 2021, s 3.24(2)
- SEPP (Precincts — Western Parkland City) 2021, s 3.24(2)
- SEPP (Precincts — Western Parkland City) 2021, s 4.25A(4)

Request for DCA involvement in these matters should be made to dca.part5assessments@dphi.nsw.gov.au.

Some approvals and advice remain outside the DCA's role

Not all matters involving NSW Government agencies are managed by DCA. Where legislation assigns the decision-making responsibility to another Minister, agency or approval authority, that organisation remains responsible for receiving, assessing and issuing the relevant advice or approval

DCA does not administer these functions and applicants, councils or relevant DPHI teams should continue to deal directly with the relevant agency or approval authority. Examples include:

- the Minister for Water's approval under section 256 of the *Water Management Act 2000*
- the Office of Local Government Chief Executive's approval under section 82 of the *Local Government Act 1993*
- approvals required from Transport for NSW under the *Roads Act 1993* (e.g. section 138)
- integrated development approvals issued under other Acts. While DCA issues general terms of approval for inclusion in a development consent, the subsequent approvals remain the responsibility of the relevant Minister or agency remains under the relevant legislation.

Frequently asked questions

DCA represents a major change to the planning system, and we are committed to supporting applicants and other stakeholders through this change. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) fact sheet provides answers to some frequently asked questions.

For more information on anything not covered in this fact sheet, you can check the DCA webpage at planning.nsw.gov.au/development-coordination-authority or contact dca.enquiries@dphi.nsw.gov.au.

Appendix

Appendix A – Technical expertise now available in DCA