

# Design Review Guide

Guidance for local governments to set up and operate  
design review processes



The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of this land. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, their descendants who are with us today, and those who will follow in their footsteps.

## Acknowledgment

This document was developed as a collaboration between the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and the Office of Government Architect, drawing on best practice models from South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the UK (CABE).

An extensive consultation process with existing design review panels, local governments and practitioners has informed the content.

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ODASA Design Review [image: courtesy of the Office for Design and Architecture SA (ODASA); credit: Sam Noonan Photographer]

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# Contents

<b>1. ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. WHAT IS DESIGN REVIEW?</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 The role of design review in the planning system .....	8
2.2 Ten principles of effective design review .....	9
2.3 State Design Review Panel.....	9
<b>3. WHY UNDERTAKE DESIGN REVIEW?</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 The benefits of good design.....	10
3.2 The benefits of design review.....	11
3.3 Value of engaging in early design review .....	11
<b>4. SPP 7.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5. HOW TO ESTABLISH DESIGN REVIEW PROCESSES</b>	<b>16</b>
5.1 Funding .....	16
5.2 Role description .....	17
5.3 Status of advice .....	17
5.4 Timing and number of reviews .....	17
5.5 Membership expertise.....	18
5.6 Appointing the Design Review Panel.....	19
5.7 Remuneration guidelines.....	20
5.8 Member induction guidelines.....	21
5.9 Panel management and support.....	21
5.10 Roles and responsibilities .....	22

<b>6. RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL</b>	<b>24</b>
6.1 Meeting procedures .....	24
6.2 Drawing requirements for design review.....	25
6.3 Meeting format.....	26
6.4 Workshops .....	27
6.5 Language and consistency .....	27
6.6 Reporting.....	27
<b>7. DESIGN REVIEW MODES AND THRESHOLDS</b>	<b>28</b>
7.1 When a full Design Review Panel is not required.....	28
7.2 When the demand for design review is low .....	28
7.3 Interim procedures until a full Design Review Panel is appointed.....	28
7.4 City architect .....	29
<b>8. APPENDICES</b>	<b>30</b>
DR1 – Design Review Panel meeting agenda.....	31
DR2 – Development assessment overview.....	32
DR3 – Design review report and recommendations.....	33
DR4 – Model terms of reference.....	36

# 1

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# About this document

## › Planning reform

Previous planning reform identified the need for initiatives and actions to improve design and development, now being delivered as Design WA. Stage 1 will deliver elements with a direct planning reform mandate, including:

- State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment
- State Planning Policy 7.3 Residential Design Codes Volume 2 - Apartments
- Design Review Guide (this document)

## › About good design

Good design is not a subjective idea; it can be defined and measured. Notions of design quality extend beyond taste, style and appearance to encompass functionality, sustainability, response to context, structural integrity, flexibility in use, and cost efficiency, both during construction and over the life of the building. Most importantly, good design results in an environment that performs well for all users and the broader community.<sup>1</sup>

Good design endeavours to reconcile multiple concurrent and often competing objectives, and outcomes vary according to the circumstances of each site and project. The logic and rigour of the design process of a project may be more important than whether it meets predefined outcomes. This needs to be acknowledged in the conventions and methods for guidance, discussion and evaluation of design in the planning system.

## › Planning for design

Planning is often focussed on compliance with specific standards and metrics, but there are limits to how these prescriptive controls can be formulated and applied, especially for complex and site-specific developments. Performance-based controls offer greater flexibility and promote positive development outcomes, rather than simply defending against negative impacts. Flexible controls need to be applied with rigour and consistency to determine where standards could be appropriately varied or should be enforced. Well-managed design review processes can facilitate this evaluation to inform statutory planning.

1. *Better Places and Spaces, a policy for the built environment in Western Australia*, Office of the Government Architect, 2013

## ► Purpose of this guide

Design review involves obtaining independent, expert advice on the design quality of a proposal for the purpose of achieving good design outcomes. Local governments in Western Australia are increasingly using design review processes, via the establishment of design review panels, to review design proposals prior to lodgement.

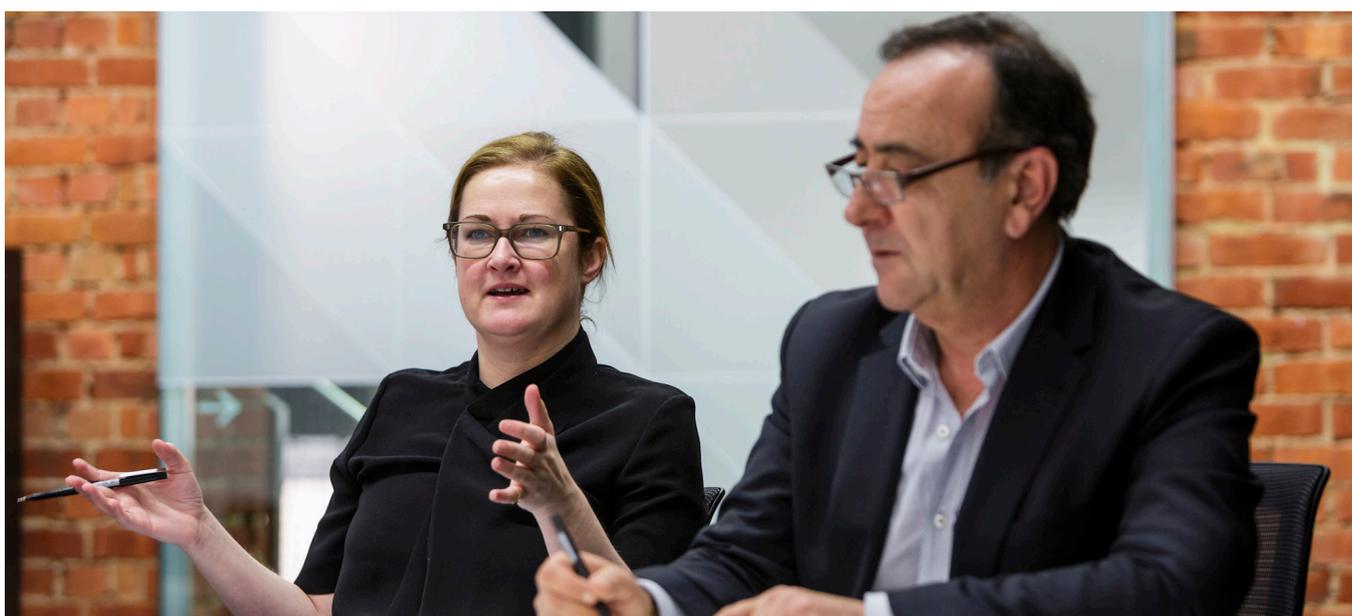
This guide sets a best-practice model for the establishment of new design review panels offering practical advice on how to establish and operate a panel and to encourage consistency, as existing design review processes evolve.

It has been prepared to assist local governments in meeting the requirement for design review outlined in State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment, and local planning schemes and policies.

The guide has been based on design review methodology developed by the UK Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), which is widely considered to represent international best practice and is utilised in successful design review processes throughout Australia.



CABE Design Review [image source: Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Design review, Principles and practice, 2009; credit: CABE]



ODASA Design Review [image: courtesy of the Office for Design and Architecture SA (ODASA); credit: Sam Noonan Photographer]

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# What is design review?

Design review is the process of independently evaluating the design quality of a built environment proposal. It is carried out by a panel of appropriately-trained, multi-disciplinary built environment professionals, who are experienced in offering objective and constructive design advice.

Design review provides independent expert advice and informed assessment of proposals, guided by a performance-based set of design quality principles. It offers feedback and observations that will lead to the improvement of proposals, but does not redesign them. A performance approach to evaluation provides the flexibility needed for the assessment of complex, multi-faceted projects.

Design review must also offer consistently high standards in the quality of its advice which gives decision makers the confidence and information to support innovative, high quality designs that meet the needs of all stakeholders and to resist poorly designed proposals.

The process of design review is typically applied to proposals that are significant - due to their size, use, location and/or community impact - where it is considered essential to ensure that minimum levels of design quality are being achieved. Suggested thresholds for when and where design review should occur are outlined in this document and can be adapted to suit local needs in local planning schemes and policies.

## ▶ 2.1 The role of design review in the planning system

Integrating design review into the planning system is a key component of the implementation and operation of State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment, as well as the State's 'Better Places and Spaces: a policy for the built environment in Western Australia' (adopted 2013).

Good design should be indivisible from good planning if better buildings and places are to be provided.

State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment includes performance-based design principles, which provide a guide to achieving good design, and the means for evaluating the merit of proposed solutions by professionals with appropriate levels of design expertise.

Performance-based design principles identify the objectives to be met without prescribing how to achieve them. They allow flexibility for developers and designers to provide innovative solutions to design challenges and better reconcile design requirements against the complexities of site and context.

Design review is an essential component of this approach, as qualitative assessment is required to determine whether the required performance outcomes have been achieved in a given proposal.

This approach provides flexibility for developers to deliver improved project and site-specific outcomes as well as benefits for the broader community. It provides latitude for skilled and experienced proponents to pursue innovative solutions. It also offers the opportunity for efficiency, as it allows for solutions to be considered collaboratively, generally enabling a smoother determination phase following the submission of an application. Skilled and experienced designers, working collaboratively with expert reviewers, typically require fewer design reviews.

## 2.2 Ten principles of effective design review

For design review to be effective, it must be resourced appropriately and conducted in a manner that is fair, robust and credible. The following 'best practice' principles of design review should be used to guide the review process and set an appropriately high standard of conduct from panel members.

Design review should be:

**Independent** – It is conducted by people who are not connected with the proposal's promoters and decision-makers and ensures that conflicts of interest do not arise.

**Expert** – It is carried out by suitably trained people who are experienced in design and know how to critique constructively. Review is usually most respected when it is carried out by professional peers of the project designers, because their standing and expertise will be acknowledged.

**Multi-disciplinary** – It combines the different perspectives of architects, urban designers, planners, landscape architects, engineers and other specialist experts to provide a complete, rounded assessment.

**Accountable** – The Design Review Panel, and the advice that it provides to the local government (or other approval authority) must be clearly seen to work for the benefit of the public.

**Transparent** – The Design Review Panel's remit, membership, governance processes and funding should always be in the public domain.

**Proportionate** – It is used on projects whose significance (either at local or State level) warrants the investment needed to provide the service.

**Timely** – It takes place as early as possible in the design process, because this can avoid a great deal of wasted time. It also costs less to make changes at an early stage.

**Advisory** – The Design Review Panel does not make decisions, but it offers impartial advice that informs recommendations to the people who do.

**Objective** – It appraises proposals according to measures that are reasoned and objective, rather than the stylistic tastes of individual panel members.

**Accessible** – The recommendations arising from design review are clearly expressed in terms that design teams, decision-makers and the public can all understand and make use of.

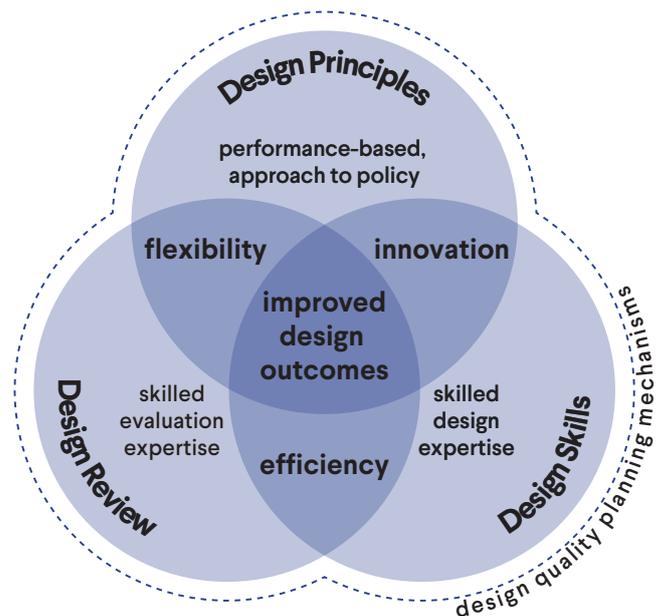
## 2.3 State Design Review Panel

The State Design Review Panel is a highly-experienced, multi-disciplinary panel of built environment professionals from industry and government tasked with undertaking design review on major projects of the State Government and significant or strategic private sector projects.

The State Design Review Panel operates in accordance with the best practice model of design review outlined within this guide.

In providing a working model of a design review panel in practice, the State panel has also established a pool of appointed design review professionals in whose skills local governments can have confidence in delivering appropriate design review outcomes.

The State Design Review Panel may also offer an interim means of design review for significant projects where mutually agreed with a local government until a local panel is operational, or on an "as needed" basis where demand for design review is, and will likely remain, low.



Effective design quality planning mechanisms

# 3

## Why undertake design review?

### ▶ 3.1 The benefits of good design

Improving the design quality of the built environment is proven to have a positive impact on local communities.

Research from the UK, Europe and the US demonstrates that investment in good design generates significant economic and social value. Collectively, the studies provide evidence that good design has positive impacts in the areas of crime prevention, housing amenity and resident well-being, healthcare and patient recovery, education outcomes, and business productivity.

It is clear that the benefits of good design are multiple and varied. Assessing design quality as part of the planning approval process allows local authorities to fully harness the opportunities offered by new development and ensure that maximum benefit is delivered to all.



Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) [image: courtesy of the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA); credit: OVGA]

### DESIGN REVIEW HELPS ACHIEVE GOOD DESIGN OUTCOMES

*“Good design results from a clearly discernible approach and must reconcile a number of often competing priorities – function, budget, site, performance and aesthetics... Well-designed buildings add more than aesthetic value to the public realm and have the potential to contribute positively to social interaction, economic activity, cultural vitality and deliver sound environmental performance.”*

Better Places and Spaces: a policy for the built environment in Western Australia, 2013

*“Good design is not just about the aesthetic improvement of our environments, it is as much about improved quality of life, equality of opportunity and economic growth.”*

The Value of Good Design, CABE UK, 2002

### ► 3.2 The benefits of design review

Engaging in design review improves the design quality of projects and can speed up the planning process, leading to quicker delivery of high-quality buildings and places that provide a wide range of benefits to occupants, neighbours and the broader community.

#### Design teams can benefit from design review by:

- confirming the validity of design approaches early, before detailed design occurs
- receiving constructive independent advice including recommendations for change early, when it is most likely to be useful and more easily implemented i.e. before too many project variables are set
- receiving support for good design and innovative proposals

#### Developers can benefit from design review by:

- receiving expert independent advice on the design quality of their project
- providing the flexibility needed to pursue improved outcomes
- reducing risks and costs of delays in the planning process that can result from inadequate design quality by identifying weaknesses within the design at the earliest possible opportunity, when changes are less costly
- increasing the confidence of clients and designers to pursue innovative solutions

#### Local governments can benefit from design review by:

Whether it is carried out at the pre-application stage or after an application has been lodged, design review enables local government to ensure that developers and design teams prioritise design quality producing high-quality, inspiring buildings and public spaces that are of benefit to their communities. It helps local government recognise outstanding and innovative design, supports them in resisting poor design and gives them a practical means of understanding where improvements need to be made.

The establishment of a Design Review Panel makes a public statement that design quality is an important consideration and gives local government access to independent expertise that may not otherwise be available in evaluating proposals. Design review allows for solutions to be considered collaboratively, generally enables a smoother determination phase following the submission of an application and promotes confidence in assessing and dealing with design issues. Design review also offers a valuable training opportunity for local government officers on design quality considerations.

In addition to the assessment of applications, design review panels can provide advice on the development of local policy, plans and strategy based on best practice knowledge and understanding of context, history and future desired character of the locality. Design review can also support local government in improving the design quality of public buildings (for example, libraries and community facilities) and in the streets and open spaces for which they are responsible.

#### Decision-makers (State and local government, Development Assessment Panels and the State Administrative Tribunal) can benefit from design review by:

- gaining expert, independent advice on the design quality of a proposal
- enabling the recognition of good design outcomes and, when exercising discretion, the appropriate weight that might be applied to outstanding or innovative solutions that benefit the area
- having confidence in resisting poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions

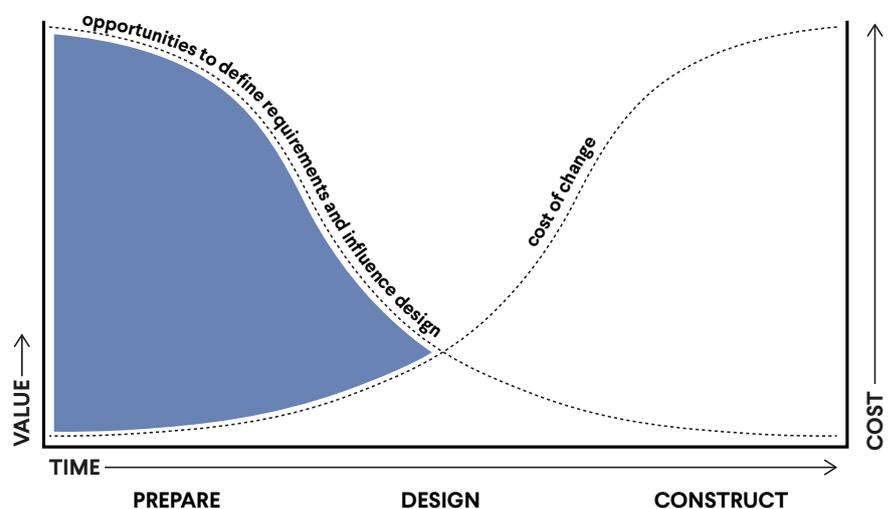
#### Communities benefit from design review by:

- gaining assurance that new developments will make a positive contribution to the public realm, adjacent development and the surrounding community
- developing confidence in urban infill development which will support the development and viability of neighbourhood centres

### ► 3.3 Value of engaging in early design review

Early design review offers the opportunity to increase the value and quality of a design proposal, before the cost of changes outweighs the benefits gained.

Well-run design review processes that promote early design review have been shown to improve the design quality of built outcomes and reduce project costs by identifying risks early, providing support for design concepts before investment in detailed design and expedited development application approvals following panel endorsement.



Opportunity to increase value [source: CABE, *Creating Excellent Buildings: A Guide for Clients*, 2003]

# 4

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# SPP 7.0

# Design Principles

State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment (SPP7.0) outlines a set of performance-based Design Principles that - used together - create a broad definition of what is meant by 'good design'. These have been developed from well-recognised national and international precedents and adjusted to the Western Australian context. These principles establish a definition of design quality and form the basis for design review.

Individual principles may not apply equally to all projects, due to their location or type. At the commencement of a design review, the panel should determine which principles should be prioritised in the evaluation process.

## 1. Context and character

Good design responds to and enhances the distinctive characteristics of a local area, contributing to a sense of place.

The distinctive characteristics of a local area include its prominent natural and built features, social, economic and environmental conditions, the overall qualities of its built environment, local Aboriginal culture and history and significant post-settlement heritage. Successful places are distinctive and memorable, with a character that people can appreciate easily.

Good design responds intelligently and sensitively to these factors in order to positively contribute to the identity of an area including adjacent sites, streetscapes and the surrounding neighbourhood. Interpretative responses to context are encouraged; imitation of existing features should be avoided. New development should integrate into its landscape/townscape setting, reinforcing local distinctiveness and responding sympathetically to local building forms and patterns of development. Building materials, construction techniques and details should, where appropriate, enhance local distinctiveness.

Good design also responds positively to the intended future character of an area. It delivers appropriate densities that are consistent with projected population growth, and able to be sustained by existing or proposed transport, green and social infrastructure.

Consideration of local context is particularly important for sites in established areas that are undergoing change or identified for change. Context is also important for greenfield development, to ensure a site-specific response to existing landscape and topographical features.

## 2. Landscape quality

Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, within a broader ecological context.

Outdoor spaces are important. Public spaces can include parks and nature reserves, as well as more formal squares, paved areas and streets. Designed with people in mind, they should be attractive and comfortable, offering opportunities for people to meet and socialise, bringing vitality and identity to a place.

Good landscape design protects existing environmental features and ecosystems, promotes biodiversity, offers a variety of habitats for flora and fauna, enhances the local environmental context and restores lost or damaged ecosystems, where possible. It considers environmental factors such as water and soil management, ground and site conditions, solar access, microclimate, tree canopy, urban heat island impacts, habitat creation and preservation of green infrastructure – balancing these against social, cultural and economic conditions.

Good landscape design employs hard and soft landscape and urban design elements to create external environments that interact in a considered manner with built form, resulting in well-integrated, engaging places that contribute to local identity and streetscape character.

Good landscape design provides optimal levels of external amenity, functionality and weather protection while encouraging social inclusion, equitable access and respect for the public and neighbours. Well-designed landscape environments ensure effective establishment and facilitate ease of long term management and maintenance.

### 3. Built form and scale

Good design ensures that the massing and height of development is appropriate to its setting and successfully negotiates between existing built form and the intended future character of the local area.

Buildings can define open spaces by enclosing them. Good design delivers buildings and places of a scale that responds to landform characteristics and existing built fabric in a considered manner, mitigating the potential for negative amenity impacts on both private land and the public realm.

The scale, massing and height of new development should respond positively to that of the adjoining buildings, the topography, the general pattern of heights, and the views, vistas and landmarks of the place, reinforcing a coherent local identity. The orientation, proportion, composition, and articulation of built form elements should deliver an outcome that is suited to the purpose, defines the public domain, contributes to the character of adjacent streetscapes and parks, and provides good amenity for people at ground level.

### 4. Functionality and build quality

Good design meets the needs of users efficiently and effectively, balancing functional requirements to perform well and deliver optimum benefit over the full life-cycle.

Well-designed functional environments provide spaces that are suited to their intended purpose and arranged to facilitate good relationships to other spaces, and ease of use. Good design provides flexible and adaptable spaces to maximise their utilisation and accommodate appropriate future requirements without the need for major modifications.

Good build quality is achieved by using durable materials, finishes, elements and systems that are easy to maintain and weather well over time. The outcome should be a development that is well-detailed, resilient to the wear and tear expected from its intended use, is easy to upgrade and without excessive maintenance requirements. Consideration should be given to the full life-cycle of the proposal and mitigation of potential climate change impacts.

Good design accommodates services in an integrated manner, without detriment to the appearance, functionality and serviceability of the final outcome.

### 5. Sustainability

Good design optimises the sustainability of the built environment, delivering positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.

Sustainable landscape and urban design adheres to established water-sensitive urban design principles, minimises negative impacts on existing natural features and ecological processes and facilitates green infrastructure at all project scales.

Sustainable built environments use passive environmental design measures at various scales, responding to local climate and site conditions by providing optimal orientation, shading, thermal performance and natural ventilation. Reducing reliance on technology for heating and cooling minimises energy use, resource consumption and operating costs over the life-cycle of the project.

Sustainable design also includes the use of sustainable construction materials, recycling, good waste management practices, re-use of materials and existing structures, harnessing of renewable energy sources, and total water cycle management.

### 6. Amenity

Good design provides successful places that offer a variety of uses and activities while optimising internal and external amenity for occupants, visitors and neighbours, providing environments that are comfortable, productive and healthy.

Places should incorporate a mix of uses that work together to create viable environments that respond to the diversity of the local community and its culture. New development should offer a range of uses and activities that contribute to the vitality of the place at different times of the day and week and provide choices of housing, shopping, employment and entertainment.

Well-designed external spaces provide welcoming, comfortable environments that are universally accessible, with effective shade as well as protection from unwanted wind, rain, traffic and noise. Good design mitigates negative impacts on surrounding buildings and places, including overshadowing, overlooking, glare, reflection and noise.

Good design provides internal rooms and spaces that are adequately sized, comfortable and easy to use and furnish, with good levels of daylight, natural ventilation and outlook. Delivering good levels of internal amenity also includes the provision of appropriate levels of acoustic protection and visual privacy, adequate storage space, and ease of access for all.

### 7. Legibility

Good design results in buildings and places that are legible, with clear connections and easily identifiable elements to help people find their way around.

Good urban design makes places easy to navigate, with recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks while being well-connected to existing movement networks. Sightlines are well-considered, with built form responding to important vantage points. Movement through a place should always be easy for everyone who uses it, whether they are on foot or by bicycle, public transport or private vehicle. Efforts should always be made to giving pedestrian movement priority over vehicular movement.

Good design provides environments that are logical and intuitive to use, at the scales of building, site and precinct. Consideration should be given to how the urban design of street environments can provide visual cues as to the street hierarchy.

Access and circulation within developments should contribute to a fine-grain network of direct and connected routes within and beyond the site and avoid creating large non-permeable blocks.

Within buildings, legibility is served by a clear hierarchy of spaces with identifiable entries and clear wayfinding. Externally, buildings and spaces should allow their purpose to be easily understood, and provide clear distinction between public and private spaces.

### 8. Safety

Good design optimises safety and security, minimising the risk of personal harm and supporting safe behaviour and use.

Safety and security is promoted by maximising opportunities for passive surveillance of public and communal areas and providing clearly defined, well-lit, secure access points that are easily maintained and appropriate to the purpose of the development.

Good design provides a positive, clearly defined relationship between public and private spaces and addresses the need to provide optimal safety and security both within a development and to the adjacent public realm.

The design of vehicular transport routes should integrate safety requirements in a manner that mitigates negative impacts on pedestrian amenity.

### 9. Community

Good design responds to local community needs as well as the wider social context, providing environments that support a diverse range of people and facilitate social interaction.

Good design encourages social engagement and physical activity in an inclusive, equitable manner and considers how the activities inside buildings can bring life and activity to public spaces. Places should be able to accommodate change over time, create continuity with the past and respond to new social, market or environmental demands.

New development should have some capacity to adapt to changing demographics, an ageing population, new uses and people with disability. In residential proposals, good design achieves a mix of dwelling types, providing housing choice for different demographics, living needs and household budgets, and accommodating all ages and abilities.

### 10. Aesthetics

Good design is the product of a skilled, judicious design process that results in attractive and inviting buildings and places that engage the senses.

Good design resolves the many competing challenges of a project into an elegant and coherent outcome. At the precinct scale, good design delivers outcomes that are logical and guided by a consideration of the experiential qualities that it will provide. Consideration should be given to how the arrangement of built form and spaces can contribute to the setting of important buildings and landmarks, including public art. A well-conceived design addresses all scales, from the articulation of building form through to the selection and detailing of materials and building elements, enabling sophisticated, integrated responses to the character of the place.

In assessing design quality, consideration of aesthetics should not be limited to style and appearance; the coherence of the design concept and the cultural relevance of the proposal should also be taken into account.



CABE design review [credit: Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)]



CABE Design Review [image source: Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Design review, Principles and practice, 2009; credit: CABE]



City of Vincent Design Review [image: Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage/Office of the Government Architect]



[image: Office of the Government Architect/DPLH]

# 5

## How to establish design review processes

Once the decision is made to form a Design Review Panel, resources must be committed to make it happen. It is important to be clear how the panel is run, the processes by which design review is accessed and how the advice and recommendations are provided and used.

It is critical that the Design Review Panel remains impartial, apolitical and independent. The panel's role is to provide information and advice to decision makers, not to make a decision. For this reason, a panel should not be a committee of Council under the *Local Government Act 1995* but should be established as an independent panel with separate membership and terms of reference. The Council should endorse the terms of reference for the panel and may endorse panel appointments through reports presented by the Chief Executive Officer.

Consistent terminology is encouraged with regard to the naming of 'Design Review Panels'. It is also recommended that the model templates included within this guide are used for consistency in the reporting of advice and recommendations from panels. This will help foster and maintain a common understanding of language, terminology and reporting used in design review processes across the State.

### ► 5.1 Funding

Local governments are responsible for the funding of their Design Review Panels. Where a panel is established by an agency that is not a local government, then that agency is responsible for funding the panel. Local governments with Design Review Panel processes in operation report that the investment in design review is considered good value as it offers broad and long-term benefits to the community.

Funding costs are generally associated with the appointment (or re-appointment) of the panel and operational costs (including member remuneration). Decisions made regarding the frequency of meetings and the number/s of panel members will impact the costs of each panel and experience suggests that these requirements will differ between local governments.

Where local governments fund design review, proponents may be more likely to seek design review earlier in the design process. However, a local government may consider setting a fee for the recovery, or part thereof, of the costs associated with the design review process as permitted by legislation.

## 5.2 Role description

The role of a Design Review Panel is to provide independent, expert design advice:

- to proponents and local government officers on the design quality of proposals
- to decision-makers (State and local governments, Development Assessment Panels, the State Administrative Tribunal) on eligible development applications or other proposals
- to local governments, where requested, on strategies, policies, master plans, precinct plans, local development plans, structure plans, activity centre plans, local planning schemes and amendments or other matters

## 5.3 Status of advice

Design Review Panels are advisory only and do not have a decision-making function. The panel advises on the design quality of proposals with reference to Design Principles (from SPP7.0, refer to Part 4) and supporting State Planning Policies, as well as local planning schemes and policies. Decision-makers should have due regard to the design review advice and recommendations in their deliberations.

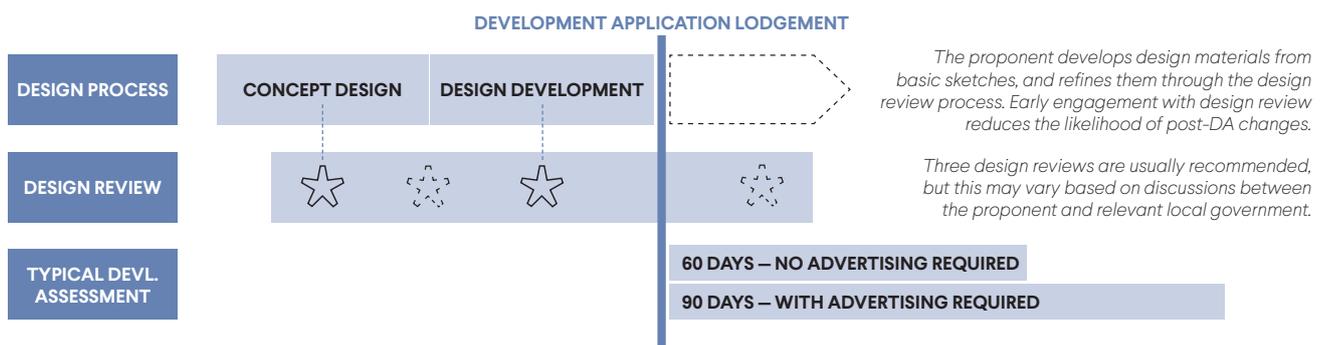
For continuity between design review and local government and Development Assessment Panel assessment procedures, the Design Review Panel Chair may be requested to brief decision makers either through preparation of a briefing note or attendance at a meeting. Where a matter is referred to the State Administrative Tribunal for review, the Design Review Panel Chair may also be invited to attend proceedings as required by the Tribunal.

## 5.4 Timing and number of reviews

The number of reviews needed will vary depending on the complexity of a proposal; however three reviews are typically needed for the process to be effective.

Design reviews should occur before a development application is submitted. It is strongly recommended that the first design review takes place during the **concept design stage** to ensure that proponents can take advantage of the advice offered at a time where the design is flexible enough to accommodate change without impacting on time and cost constraints. A subsequent review should typically occur at a stage when the design has been further progressed. Depending on the outcome of the initial meeting, this review session will typically occur during **design development** or prior to the proposal being submitted for development approval (**Pre-DA stage**).

At **building permit stage** (after development approval) it is suggested that a check takes place by the Design Review Panel Chair or delegate, to ensure that the design quality of the proposal is consistent with the approved development application and any relevant conditions related to design quality.



The relationship of design review with development application lodgement and typical development assessment statutory time frames.

### ► 5.5 Membership expertise

Local governments should ensure that panel members have a range of design and built environment expertise in one or more of the following disciplines:

- Architecture (essential)
- Landscape architecture (essential)
- Urban design (essential)
- Heritage
- Sustainability and environmental design
- Services engineering
- Accessibility
- Transport planning
- Planning
- Public art
- Civil and/or structural engineering

While local knowledge is useful, a balance between local and subject expertise from outside the local government area should be sought in order to optimise the range and calibre of expertise available. All Design Review Panel members should be eligible for registration and maintain good standing with their respective professional bodies.

To be independent and apolitical, the local government should not appoint decision-makers, its own elected members or officers to its Design Review Panel. However, key local government planning (and other) officers should participate in all design reviews in an advisory capacity and to provide administrative and governance support.



Practitioner Forum on Best-Practice for Design Review Panels, convened by the Department of Planning and the Office of the Government Architect, in collaboration with the PIA and AIA .

## ► 5.6 Appointing the Design Review Panel

Local governments should determine the number of members required to constitute a Design Review Panel. Member appointment processes should demonstrate transparency and rigour to ensure a high degree of confidence in the panel.

Section 5.6.2 contains a list of suggested selection criteria for panel members. When advertising for panel members, the local government should carefully consider whether all of the suggested selection criteria are relevant for the required appointment/s and should particularly be mindful of the skills, background and expertise that may be required to complement any current panel members. Local governments are also encouraged to consider the appointment of academics and other non-practicing professionals who specialise in design review to ensure a wide range of panel expertise.

The panel should consist of not less than four and not more than six members. Panel members are appointed for an agreed term – usually two years. To optimise consistency of membership between reviews, consideration should be given to establishing a pool from which the panel is appointed with the remaining members appointed to deputise where required. The quorum for a Design Review Panel meeting is at least two thirds of the total number of panel members.

Local governments that do not already have a Design Review Panel in place may consider appointing a panel by:

- accessing appropriate membership through the State Design Review Panel; or
- undertaking an independent appointment process

Where a local government undertakes an independent appointment process, it is recommended that it includes:

- public advertising of a formal Expression of Interest (EOI)
- consideration of EOIs by an appropriate selection panel
- if required, an interview process to confirm appropriate design review expertise
- a report with recommendation/s for appointment presented to the Chief Executive Officer

Following completion of the selection process, all details of the appointment are confirmed in writing and member induction is scheduled.

Where a local government has an established Design Review Panel in place, it may utilise some or all of the above steps when filling vacancies on the panel.

### 5.6.1 Guidelines for Expression of Interest

Expressions of Interest (EOI) for panel membership should be sought from suitably capable professionals to determine a short-list of applicants. Suggestions for managing this process include:

- **Timing** – Consider the timeframe within which the appointment is required and structure the advertising and appointment process to ensure that the panel may continue to operate until the new appointment/s is made
- **Advertise in the right place** – Notices calling for EOIs should be advertised where they are most likely to be viewed by the required professions. Contact the relevant professional peak bodies to include advertisements in regular member newsletters or journals
- **Allow sufficient advertising timeframes** – Repeat advertisements may be necessary, to ensure an adequate response

### 5.6.2 Guidelines for selection criteria

EOIs for Design Review Panel members should include a brief professional profile addressing the following selection criteria:

- appropriate qualifications and demonstrated expertise in the relevant professional area (refer to section 5.5)
- ability to work in a multi-disciplinary team
- highly regarded among professional peers
- demonstrated expertise in design review, design critique or the provision of strategic advice on design quality issues
- knowledge or understanding of the State's Planning Framework, relevant local government policies, development controls and design issues in the local area
- ability to analyse, evaluate and offer objective and constructive feedback on complex design quality issues in design review, for evaluation of complex development applications and on strategic planning matters
- good written and verbal communication to ensure that advice provided to proponents is clear and concise
- where relevant, it is desirable that the applicant is eligible for registration with an appropriate professional body or organisation in Western Australia and/or holds good standing with the relevant professional body

## 5 How to establish design review processes

### 5.6.3 Selection panel

Where appropriate, a competent selection panel should be formed to assess the applications and make recommendations for panel appointment.

It is essential that the selection panel includes members with design review expertise. A representative of the Office of the Government Architect or member of the State Design Review Panel, or another established Design Review Panel, would be appropriate and it is recommended that the Office of the Government Architect is contacted for assistance and advice. The selection panel should also include appropriate local government officer representation.

### 5.6.4 Guidelines for shortlisting and interview process

If necessary, the selection panel should meet to undertake the shortlisting process. At this meeting there is the opportunity to formulate interview questions based on any local interests and the nature of the EOIs received. The interview may include a design review task to confirm design review skills in short-listed applicants.

## ➤ 5.7 Remuneration guidelines

It is important that remuneration for Design Review Panel members is fair and equitable. Remuneration should reflect the professional standing of panel members and their time taken to prepare for and participate in meetings. The local government should determine the remuneration for panel members at the time of appointment. It is recommended that one of the following approaches is utilised however when setting remuneration, consideration should also be given to a range of matters including current professional hourly rates, the range of expertise of members, the number and length of meetings outside of normal business hours.

#### (a) Per Hour

- The panel Chair is paid an above-standard hourly fee\* in recognition of the additional responsibility of the role, plus preparation, and time spent advising and editing reporting as needed
- Panel members – a set standard professional rate\* per hour for the duration of the design review, plus one hour of preparation

#### (b) Per Meeting

In local governments where a higher number of proposals are anticipated, the maximum meeting duration of three hours could be assumed and a “per meeting” remuneration could be set using the above rationale, plus an hourly rate\* for the panel Chair for time spent on additional briefings.

*\* Contact the Office of the Government Architect for guidance on current recommended rates.*



Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) [image: courtesy of the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA); credit: OVGA]

## ◆ 5.8 Member induction guidelines

It is recommended that an induction process be undertaken when new panels are established, or when new members are appointed, to confirm general operating and meeting procedures. This will allow the local government (or authority responsible for panel management) to clarify any new member queries, prior to the first panel meeting. The Office of the Government Architect may be able to assist with panel induction meetings, if required.

Suggested topics to be covered in the induction meeting are outlined below. Where individual new members are appointed to a panel at a later time, it is recommended that they be briefed jointly by the panel coordinator and Chair on this information.

Suggested induction meeting actions:

- introduce panel members and relevant local government officers, clarification of roles and responsibilities and contact details
- explain all administrative procedures including circulation of agendas, minutes and reports, procedures for requesting additional information or seeking clarification on proposals before the panel and arrangements for site inspections
- provide background on local planning and design issues and access to relevant policies and other documents
- advise of annual meeting schedule and reporting timeframes (where required)
- introduce members to the SPP7.0 Design Principles and how they will be used to guide the design review process
- confirm member responsibility to declare any conflicts of interests and other governance requirements including media protocols
- clarify the scope of advice required from the panel. i.e. advice should be objective and aligned with the design quality principles. Prescriptive design advice and subjective commentary are inappropriate in design review
- confirm contact details for remuneration matters, and frequency of invoicing
- appoint a Chair for the agreed term (unless the Chair is appointed separately)

## ◆ 5.9 Panel management and support

The local government will provide panel support to manage the scheduling, preparation, coordination, reporting and monitoring of Design Review Panel meetings. It is recommended that these roles are clearly outlined to ensure that all participants understand their roles and responsibilities when dealing with the Design Review Panel.



City of Vincent Design Review [image: Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage/Office of the Government Architect]



ODASA Design Review [image: courtesy of the Office for Design and Architecture SA (ODASA); credit: Sam Noonan Photographer]

### ► 5.10 Roles and responsibilities

A good working relationship between local government planners and Design Review Panel members is essential, as it's important to have regular, consistent and clear communication between those involved in the design review and assessment processes.

#### 5.10.1 Guidelines for local government officers

Local governments are responsible for coordinating the operation of the Design Review Panel and support is required from suitably qualified local government officers, including senior officers. The local government should nominate a panel coordinator to assist in smooth communication regarding meetings and other panel matters.

##### *Panel coordinator*

- circulate the annual meeting schedule, panel contact details and other material
- act as the central point of contact between the panel members and other local government officers or stakeholders
- prepare agendas, ensuring sufficient notice is provided to all parties (seven days is recommended)
- arrange site inspections where appropriate
- respond to requests for additional information from panel members in accordance with the established administrative procedures
- arrange for relevant local government officers to attend meetings
- arrange for notes or minutes to be taken at meetings and work with the report writer and arrange Chair endorsement of the notes, minutes and/or design review report
- distribute the notes, minutes and/or report to relevant parties and make panel advice and/or recommendations available to the proponent within a specified time period (recommended 10 working days) of the panel meeting
- arrange for the administration of fees, where charged, and membership remuneration payments
- prepare a summary of council, Development Assessment Panel and State Administrative Tribunal decisions on applications considered by the panel, as a means of providing feedback and optimising awareness of any other relevant matters

##### *Senior planning staff (Director/Manager)*

Senior planning staff should provide the necessary administrative support and advice to the meeting including managing the meeting opening and closing proceedings and providing governance advice where requested by the panel Chair. The Chair should manage and facilitate the interactive design review discussion and identify the key recommendations for reporting.

##### *Planning officer*

For each proposal under consideration, a planning officer should present an overview of the site (or proposal) including history, current and future surrounding context as well as compliance with planning controls and relevant design criteria. They will also convey any concerns raised through internal referral pathways (e.g. heritage, stormwater, traffic/parking) if available.

##### *Report writer (local government role)*

Local government is responsible for ensuring that notes or minutes are taken for all panel meetings. The notes will be used to formulate a design review report for the local government's use in reporting to Council, JDAP or other decision maker. If the person is not a planning staff member, it is recommended that they are familiar with meeting procedures, planning and design terminology, the SPP7.0 Design Principles and the local planning scheme and policies. Notes and reporting needs to be clear and unambiguous to all parties with appropriate terminology and phrasing. The report writer should liaise with the panel coordinator in the preparation and finalisation of the meeting notes and the design review report.

*Please refer to Reporting section in this guide.*

### 5.10.2 Guidelines for panel members

All panel members are required to:

- provide independent, fair and reasonable professional advice relative to the SPP7.0 Design Principles and relevant State and local policies and schemes
- treat all discussions and information about applications with sensitivity and confidentiality
- respond to and comment on material presented, providing clear and constructive feedback
- disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest in writing for the record. Where an interest exists, the member must:
  - disclose the interest to the Chair as soon as possible, and before the meeting to ensure there is a quorum for all items
  - if the interest is a pecuniary interest, the member must not take part in the consideration or discussion of the matter

#### Panel Chair

The panel Chair is primarily tasked with running panel meetings and is responsible for:

- liaising with the nominated local government officer about the operation of the panel including advice regarding additional briefing material or requirements
- ensuring new members have been inducted and are briefed about panel operations
- ensuring that the meeting agenda is followed
- welcoming and introducing the panel, proponents and any observers present in the meeting
- facilitating interactive discussion and participation of all panel members, key local government attendees and proponents, enabling solutions to be brokered collaboratively
- ensuring that discussions remain focussed on the application being considered and that advice relates to matters covered by the SPP7.0 Design Principles, relevant State and local policies and schemes
- ensuring consistency of panel advice between reviews
- summarising the consensus view of the panel at the conclusion of the meeting
- endorsing the final design review report or meeting minutes post meeting
- briefing decision-makers on panel advice when required



Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) [image: courtesy of the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA); credit: OVGA]



CABE Design Review [image source: Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Design review, Principles and practice, 2009; credit: CABE]

# 6

## Running a successful Design Review Panel

Panel meetings will run more smoothly if they follow a clear structure. It is also important that meetings take place in a suitable location, in a suitable room, using suitable materials with sufficient space for all participants.

### ► 6.1 Meeting procedures

The following design review meeting procedures have been developed to ensure consistency and effectiveness of the process. Meetings should be scheduled to occur regularly with frequency to approximate demand and may be cancelled if there are no items to review. It is recommended meeting procedures are made publicly available, to ensure proponents know what to expect.

A local government may choose to include additional operating procedures to address local circumstances.

#### 6.1.1 Quorum and attendance

The local government will issue notice of a Design Review Panel meeting to all appointed panel members.

It is recommended that all members review the proposed agenda and advise the local government as soon as possible of:

- a. their ability to attend the meeting
- b. any interest to be declared in any matter listed on the agenda

If the minimum number of members required to reach a quorum is unable to attend or a quorum cannot be achieved for part of the meeting, the local government will contact the deputy members in accordance with the procedure adopted by that local government for deputies. If a quorum cannot be achieved, the meeting cannot proceed and should be re-scheduled.

All panel members should have an opportunity to regularly attend meetings, however it is important to optimise the consistency of the panel and advice across subsequent reviews for the same proposal. Local governments may replace panel members who are regularly unavailable for meetings.

#### 6.1.2 Observers

Design review meetings should be closed to members of the public as information discussed can be commercially confidential. Persons who may later be required to consider and determine an application that is undergoing design review should not attend panel meetings in order to preserve the transparency and integrity of the planning decision-making process.

Local governments are encouraged to allow planning and other officers to attend review sessions as observers, as it can offer valuable training on design quality considerations, familiarity with the design review process and understanding of how it can benefit a range of projects.

#### 6.1.3 Site inspection

Panel members should be familiar with each site on the agenda prior to the meeting. A site visit may be arranged if considered necessary by the local government or panel Chair.

#### 6.1.4 Panel member preparation

All panel members should ensure that they are familiar with all information provided prior to the meeting and prepare comments in advance, to enable effective use of session time. If additional information is required prior to the meeting, a request should be submitted to the local government in accordance with the procedures advised during the induction.

### 6.1.5 Agenda

The agenda for each meeting (along with submitted drawings and other relevant documentation) should be circulated to all panel members and meeting attendees at least one week prior to the meeting.

A meeting agenda template is included in this guide.

The priority of agenda items for each meeting should be determined by the local government ensuring the scheduling of items has regard for the relevant statutory timeframes.

Each item should be allocated an appropriate duration on the agenda, to allow for the recommended design review meeting format. Additional time may be required for complex projects where this is appropriate. It is recommended that the meeting agenda does not exceed three hours.

## ► 6.2 Drawing requirements for design review

It is recommended that initial design reviews occur early, prior to the submission of a formal application, to ensure better design outcomes (refer to 3.3 The value of engaging in early design review).

The material required for design review should sufficiently reflect the stage of development of the proposal and illustrate site analysis, site design response and the intended design proposal. For early design reviews, drawings may be conceptual and diagrammatic.

### 6.2.1 Site analysis

It is particularly important to provide contextual information on drawings and information submitted for review, to assist the panel in assessing how well a proposal responds to its site and context.

The key elements of a site analysis include:

- site location / wider context plan
- aerial photograph
- local context plan
- site context and survey plan
- streetscape elevations and sections

For residential proposals refer to the relevant volume of the Residential Design Codes for more detail.

### 6.2.2 Site design response

A thorough site design response demonstrates a balanced consideration of a proposals context, site, building configuration and opportunities to optimise building performance. Site design response drawings, 3D studies and diagrams identify site and context opportunities and constraints that generate design parameters. These drawings should clearly articulate the considerations that have informed the broader site design approach.

For residential proposals refer to the relevant volume of the Residential Design Codes for more detail.

### 6.2.3 Design proposal

Sufficient drawing material should be presented to outline the intended design proposal; however, the emphasis should be on having enough information rather than having fully-resolved drawings of every aspect of the proposal.

The key elements of a pre-development application design proposal include:

- development details
- precedents and context that have informed the design proposal
- site plan
- floor plans
- elevations of the proposal in context
- sections of the proposal in context
- draft design quality statement outlining how the proposal responds to the SPP7.0 Design Principles
- 3D images or visualisations if available

For residential proposals refer to the relevant volume of the Residential Design Codes for more detail.



Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) [image: courtesy of the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA); credit: OVGA]

### ➤ 6.3 Meeting format

The panel Chair should conduct the meeting in accordance with the agenda, following the meeting format outlined below. The recommended meeting duration for each item is 45 to 50 minutes, including a briefing. A longer duration can be allowed for complex projects.

A suggested format for individual items may include:

#### **1. Briefing and pre-review panel discussion (panel only) – 10 minutes**

- Overview by the local government planning officer, including:
  - relevant site history and background
  - surrounding context and proposed (if known) or approved developments
  - compliance with planning controls and relevant design criteria
  - internal referral comments if available (e.g. heritage, stormwater, traffic/parking)
  - where appropriate, briefings from relevant State Government agencies also invited to attend the meeting
- Panel pre-review discussion determining key questions to ask / key issues to raise

#### **2. Welcome and introductions – 2 minutes**

- Proponents are invited into the meeting room. Chair welcomes them and introduces the panel. Panel coordinator may assist with proponent setup

#### **3. Proponent presentation – 10 minutes**

- Proponent/client provides their vision for the project
- Proponent/design team presentation, explaining the project background and outlining how the proposal addresses the SPP7.0 Design Principles and other relevant matters

#### **4. Panel questions and clarifications – 5 minutes**

- Panel members are able to seek clarification on any points

#### **5. Panel discussion – 10 minutes**

- Chair invites panel members to provide individual comment on the proposal
- Discussion should be referred back to the SPP7.0 Design Principles

#### **6. Confirmation of advice/ recommendations – 3 minutes**

- Chair summarises panel comments and may confirm advice and recommendations or may indicate the timeframe within which this should be expected to be provided
- Chair thanks the proponent and the proponent leaves the meeting

#### **7. Post review discussion (panel only) – 5-10 minutes**

- Chair identifies key issues and recommendations for reporting
- Any new issues or recommendations that arise in post review discussions should be noted as such and communicated promptly to the proponent

## ➤ 6.4 Workshops

For large complex projects, an early workshop can offer opportunity for a dedicated and extended review to highlight key considerations prior to design work commencing, which can significantly reduce project risk. The need to hold a workshop will generally be determined by the local government in consultation with the panel Chair.

## ➤ 6.5 Language and consistency

The report writer and Chair should be aware of the following points when providing advice and finalising recommendations:

- advice should be in plain English that is readily understood by the proponent, consent authority, and the community. Avoid jargon, obscure terminology and long-winded descriptions
- consistency in advice across design reviews is important. As a design proposal develops, different questions become relevant, however raising entirely new design concerns late in the process should generally be avoided

## ➤ 6.6 Reporting

The meeting notes and/or report should:

- be compiled as a draft during the meeting, (a suitable template is provided in this guide)
- record conflicts of interest of panel members
- record key discussion points and panel recommendations
- be finalised out-of-session by the panel coordinator and panel Chair
- be available for issue of advice and recommendations to proponents as soon as possible (recommended within 10 working days of the meeting)

Design review reporting should be included with all development application reports and, where a proposal is to be determined by a Development Assessment Panel for deliberation, is included in full as an appendix to the Responsible Authority Report.

*Also refer to 5.10 Roles and responsibilities, where the roles of report writer and panel coordinator are outlined.*

**Aim for 40 minutes of design review for a standard proposal, more for a complex one.**



### 10 MINUTES

Briefing and pre-review panel discussion; Overview by the local government planning staff, followed by panel pre-review discussion determining key questions to ask/key issues to raise.

**PROPONENT ENTERS THE ROOM**



### 2 MINUTES

Chairperson welcomes the proponent team and introduces the Panel. Panel coordinator assists with proponent setup.



### 10 MINUTES

Proponent provides their vision for the project, followed by design team presentation.



### 5 MINUTES

Panel members are able to seek clarification on any points.



### 10 MINUTES

Chairperson invites panel members to provide individual comment on the proposal.



### 3 MINUTES

Chairperson summarises panel comments and confirms advice and recommendations. Chairperson thanks the proponent.

**PROPONENT LEAVES THE ROOM**

# Design review modes and thresholds

For the design review of larger projects, the multi-disciplined expertise and independent advice of a full Design Review Panel is recommended. However, design review mechanisms may be applied in different modes to provide advice on a range of development types and scales.

The types of proposals and the scale/s of design review (if available) should be determined in by the local government and may be included in the terms of reference and/or an appropriate local planning policy. The design review threshold table may be used as a guide for determining the mode of design review best suited to a particular development.

## ▶ 7.1 When a full Design Review Panel is not required

As outlined within the design review threshold table, there may be cases where a full Design Review Panel is not warranted, with assessment instead being carried out by an individual panel member or, where available, by an in-house town or city architect.

Where neither of these avenues exist and there is no reasonable opportunity to refer the matter to the Design Review Panel, the local government may engage a suitably qualified consultant, giving consideration to the selection criteria outlined for the establishment of a Design Review Panel.

Local governments that rarely assess complex applications may not need to form a dedicated Design Review Panel. In these instances they may consider a shared Design Review Panel (with another local government) or use an 'as-required' design review consultant.

## ▶ 7.2 When the demand for design review is low

In smaller or regional local governments, the number of anticipated complex proposals or proposals requiring design review may be low. In these circumstances, consideration should be given to:

- The **State Design Review Panel** will offer a pool of appointed design reviewers that may be accessed by local governments on an "as needs" basis.
- A **city architect** can also be a valuable resource in smaller or regional local governments where demand for a full panel is low. Where an architect is not available on staff, a local architect could be appointed to provide this advice as required.

- **Shared panels** could be formed where demand is low, or where smaller contiguous local governments (or local governments with similar characteristics, development types, issues and/or visions) may benefit from a common panel.

## ▶ 7.3 Interim procedures until a full Design Review Panel is appointed

The design review thresholds table also contains suggestions for interim review mechanisms that could be utilised where a local government has yet to appoint a Design Review Panel.

The State Design Review Panel's (SDRP) core focus will be major State Government projects and significant or strategic private sector projects. However, the SDRP may also assist local governments to expedite local panel appointments and provide interim modes of design review:

- subject to legislative requirements, local governments may directly engage SDRP members, reducing appointment timeframes and administrative load
- the SDRP may also offer an interim means of carrying out design review on eligible larger projects for local government (where mutually agreed) until a local Design Review Panel is operational. Applications for design review by the SDRP can be made through the Office of the Government Architect

## 7.4 City architect

Some larger local governments have appointed a city (or town) architect. This is usually a permanent, part-time role.

City architects can:

- provide built form expertise to local government planning staff, Design Review Panel coordinators and elected members on day-to-day issues of design quality
- provide informed advice on local government urban design and strategic planning initiatives
- support the local government, advising on major local government funded, and State-funded projects to ensure they meet strategic built form objectives for that local government
- brief local government Design Review Panels on the built form objectives of local government strategic planning and initiatives relevant to proposals reviewed by the panel
- offer assistance in discussions between planners and proponents regarding design review recommendations
- be an in-house advocate and champion for design quality

In addition to the roles above, city architects can assist the local government by offering expert advice on the design quality of smaller proposals if a Design Review Panel has not been appointed, or if they do not meet the thresholds for review by a full panel. Refer to the Design Review Threshold Table.

INDICATIVE DESIGN REVIEW THRESHOLD TABLE											
	Projects of State significance	Public works of State significance	Public works of regional significance	Commercial development – DAP threshold	Commercial development – under DAP threshold	Apartment development DAP threshold or more than 10 dwellings	Apartment development less than 10 dwellings	Activity centre plans and structure plans	Commercial development low threshold	Detached and grouped dwellings	Other proposal as determined by local govt.
State Design Review Panel (SDRP)	◆	◆	◆	◇		◇					
Local Design Review Panel (LDRP)			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Local govt. 'city/town architect'					◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Local Govt. 'as-required' design review consultant					◆	◇	◇	◇	◆	◆	◆

◆ Recommended design review process

◆ Discretionary design review process

◇ Interim design review process

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# Appendices

The appendices provide model templates for the following:

- **DR1** *Design Review Panel meeting agenda*
- **DR2** *Development assessment overview*
- **DR3** *Design review report and recommendations (Parts 1-4)*
- **DR4** *Model terms of reference*

These templates are provided as a guide only and local governments should adjust the templates as required for the purposes of their local government.

# DR1

## DR1 – Design Review Panel meeting agenda

Prepared by the responsible local government officer and distributed to the Design Review Panel members with the DR2-Development assessment overview at least one week before the meeting.

Local government:		
Meeting date:		Meeting time:
Location		
Panel members	[Chair] [Members]	[details]
Local government officers	[names]	[details]
Proponent/s	[names]	[details]
Observer/s	[names]	[details]
Time	Item No.	Subject
[time]	1.	Attendance and apologies
	2.	Declarations of interest
	3.	Confirmation of previous reporting
	4.	Design review/s
	4.1	<b>Proposed development</b>
[time]		[Address, development description] [Proponent]
(10mins)		<b>Pre-meeting</b> (panel members and local government officers) Briefings and pre-review panel discussion: – development assessment overview – technical issues
(30mins)		<b>Design review meeting</b> (all) Proponent welcome (2 mins) Presentation/response to prior recommendations (10mins) Questions and clarification (5mins) Discussion (10mins) Summary by the Chair (3mins)
(5-10mins)		<b>Post meeting</b> (panel members and local government officers) Post-review discussion
	5.	Strategic planning/policy items [where required]
	6.	Other business
	7.	Next meeting [time/date]
	8.	Close

# DR2

## DR2 – Development assessment overview

*This overview is to be prepared by the responsible local government officer and distributed to the Design Review Panel members with DR1 - Design review panel meeting agenda at least one week before the meeting.*

Proposed development	
Street address	
Applicant/owner	
Reported by	
Proposal	[Brief and succinct summary of proposal]
Background	[A summary of relevant background information establishing history of the proposal to date including response to context and site; photos may also be useful]

Assessment summary:

### Key objectives/standards of planning policies relevant to this proposal

*Example only – shown for apartment development referencing elements of SPP7.3 R-Codes Volume 2 - Apartments*

	Proposed	Assessment
<i>Building height</i>		
<i>Street setbacks</i>		
<i>Side setbacks</i>		
<i>Rear setback</i>		
<i>Other (e.g. building depths, building separation)</i>		
<i>Part 3 Elements (e.g. orientation, tree canopy and deep soil area, communal open space etc.)</i>		
<i>Part 4 Elements (e.g. solar and daylight access, natural ventilation, size and layout of dwellings etc.)</i>		
Key issues	[Summary/dot points]	

# DR3

## DR3 – Design review report and recommendations (Part 1/4)

*This report is prepared by the panel coordinator and checked by the design review Chair.  
To maintain the integrity and independence of the design review process this report should be attached, unedited to Council reports and (if applicable) the Development Assessment Panel Responsible Authority Report.*

Local government		
Item no.	[Address, development, description]	
Date		
Time		
Location		
Panel members:	[Chair] [Members]	[details if required]
Local government officers	[names]	[details]
Proponent/s	[names]	[details]
Observer/s	[names]	[details]
<b>Briefings</b>		
Development assessment overview	[name]	[details]
Technical issues		
<b>Design review</b>		
Proposed development		
Property address		
Background		
Proposal	[Succinct summary of proposal]	
Applicant/representative address to the design review panel	[name]	[details]
Key issues/recommendations	[Summary of key issues and recommendations discussed]	
Chair signature		

# DR3

## DR3 – Design review report and recommendations (Part 2/4)

### Design quality evaluation

		<i>Supported</i>
		<i>Pending further attention</i>
		<i>Not supported</i>
Principle 1 – Context and character		<p><i>Good design responds to and enhances the distinctive characteristics of a local area, contributing to a sense of place.</i></p> <p><b>1a.</b> [comments] <b>1b.</b></p>
Principle 2 – Landscape quality		<p><i>Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, within a broader ecological context.</i></p> <p><b>2a.</b> [comments] <b>2b.</b></p>
Principle 3 – Built form and scale		<p><i>Good design ensures that the massing and height of development is appropriate to its setting and successfully negotiates between existing built form and the intended future character of the local area.</i></p> <p><b>3a.</b> [comments] <b>3b.</b></p>
Principle 4 – Functionality and build quality		<p><i>Good design meets the needs of users efficiently and effectively, balancing functional requirements to perform well and deliver optimum benefit over the full life-cycle.</i></p> <p><b>4a.</b> [comments] <b>4b.</b></p>
Principle 5 – Sustainability		<p><i>Good design optimises the sustainability of the built environment, delivering positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.</i></p> <p><b>5a.</b> [comments] <b>5b.</b></p>
Principle 6 – Amenity		<p><i>Good design optimises internal and external amenity for occupants, visitors and neighbours, providing environments that are comfortable, productive and healthy.</i></p> <p><b>6a.</b> [comments] <b>6b.</b></p>
Principle 7 – Legibility		<p><i>Good design results in buildings and places that are legible, with clear connections and easily identifiable elements to help people find their way around.</i></p> <p><b>7a.</b> [comments] <b>7b.</b></p>
Principle 8 – Safety		<p><i>Good design optimises safety and security, minimising the risk of personal harm and supporting safe behaviour and use.</i></p> <p><b>8a.</b> [comments] <b>8b.</b></p>
Principle 9 – Community		<p><i>Good design responds to local community needs as well as the wider social context, providing environments that support a diverse range of people and facilitate social interaction.</i></p> <p><b>9a.</b> [comments] <b>9b.</b></p>
Principle 10 – Aesthetics		<p><i>Good design is the product of a skilled, judicious design process that results in attractive and inviting buildings and places that engage the senses.</i></p> <p><b>10a.</b> [comments] <b>10b.</b></p>

# DR3

## DR3 – Design review report and recommendations (Part 3/4)

### Design review progress

	<i>Supported</i>		
	<i>Pending further attention</i>		
	<i>Not supported</i>		
	<i>DR1</i>	<i>DR2</i>	<i>DR3</i>
Principle 1 – Context and character			
Principle 2 – Landscape quality			
Principle 3 – Built form and scale			
Principle 4 – Functionality and build quality			
Principle 5 – Sustainability			
Principle 6 – Amenity			
Principle 7 – Legibility			
Principle 8 – Safety			
Principle 9 – Community			
Principle 10 – Aesthetics			

## DR3 – Design review report and recommendations (Part 4/4)

### Recommendations summary

DR1 - Recommendations	DR2 - Response	DR2 - Recommendations	DR3 - Response
1.	[SUPPORTED/PENDING FURTHER ATTENTION/ NOT SUPPORTED] [explanatory text]		[SUPPORTED/PENDING FURTHER ATTENTION/ NOT SUPPORTED] [explanatory text]
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

## DR4 – Model terms of reference (1/5)

*Model ToR for local government Design Review Panels. Local governments should adjust the model ToR as required for their individual purposes.*

### The role of design review in the planning system

Integrating design review into the planning system is a key component of the implementation and operation of State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment, as well as the State's 'Better Places and Spaces: a policy for the built environment in Western Australia' (adopted 2013).

Good design should be indivisible from good planning if better buildings and places are to result.

State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment includes performance-based design principles, which provide a guide to achieving good design, and the means for evaluating the merit of proposed solutions through design review, which uses professionals with appropriate levels of design expertise.

Performance-based design principles identify the objectives to be met without prescribing how to achieve them. Design review is an essential component of this approach, as qualitative assessment is required to determine whether the required performance outcomes have been achieved in a given proposal.

This approach provides flexibility for developers to deliver improved project and site-specific outcomes as well as benefits for the broader community. It provides latitude for skilled and experienced designers to pursue innovative solutions. It also offers the opportunity for efficiency, allowing for solutions to be considered collaboratively, and generally enabling a smoother determination phase following the submission of an application. Skilled and experienced designers, working collaboratively with expert reviewers, typically require fewer design reviews.

### Ten principles of effective design review

For design review to be effective, it must be resourced appropriately and conducted in a manner that is fair, robust and credible. The following 'best practice' principles of design review should be used to guide the review process and set an appropriately high standard of conduct from panel members.

Design review should be:

**Independent** – It is conducted by people who are not connected with the proposal's promoters and decision-makers and ensures that conflicts of interest do not arise.

**Expert** – It is carried out by suitably trained people who are experienced in design and know how to critique constructively. Review is usually most respected when it is carried out by professional peers of the project designers, because their standing and expertise will be acknowledged.

**Multi-disciplinary** – It combines the different perspectives of architects, urban designers, planners, landscape architects, engineers and other specialist experts to provide a complete, rounded assessment.

**Accountable** – The Design Review Panel, and the advice that it provides to the local government (or other approval authority) must be clearly seen to work for the benefit of the community.

**Transparent** – The Design Review Panel's remit, membership, governance processes and funding should always be in the public domain.

**Proportionate** – It is used on projects whose significance (either at local or State level) warrants the investment needed to provide the service.

**Timely** – It takes place as early as possible in the design process, because this can avoid a great deal of wasted time. It also costs less to make changes at an early stage.

**Advisory** – The Design Review Panel does not make decisions, but it offers impartial advice that informs recommendations to the people who do.

**Objective** – It appraises proposals according to measures that are reasoned and objective, rather than the stylistic tastes of individual panel members.

**Accessible** – The recommendations arising from design review are clearly expressed in terms that design teams, decision-makers and the community can all understand and make use of.

## DR4 – Model terms of reference (2/5)

### Role description

The role of a Design Review Panel (DRP) is to provide independent, impartial, expert design advice:

- to proponents and local government officers on the design quality of proposals
- to decision-makers (State and local governments, Development Assessment Panels, the State Administrative Tribunal) on eligible development applications or other proposals
- to local governments, where requested, on strategic policy, master plans, precinct plans, local development plans, structure plans, activity centre plans, local planning schemes and amendments or other matters

Reviews will be undertaken in accordance with the model process outlined in the State's **Design WA: Design Review Guide**.

The 10 Design Principles from the State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment will be used as the basis for design review.

### Status of advice

Design Review Panels are advisory only and do not have a decision-making function. The panel advises on the design quality of proposals with reference to design principles (from SPP7.0, refer to Part 4) and supporting State Planning Policies, as well as local planning schemes and policies. Decision-makers shall have due regard to the design review advice and recommendations in their deliberations.

For continuity between design review and local government and Development Assessment Panel assessment procedures, the Design Review Panel Chair may be requested to brief decision makers either through preparation of a briefing note or attendance at a meeting. Where a matter is referred to the State Administrative Tribunal for review, the panel Chair may also be required by the Tribunal to attend proceedings.

### Governance

The Design Review Panel is an independent, advisory panel funded by the local government.

The local government will be responsible for the establishment, operation and management of the DRP. Dedicated DRP support will exist within the local government for this purpose.

### Panel management and support

The local government will provide panel support to manage the scheduling, preparation, coordination, reporting and monitoring of Design Review Panel meetings.

Panel support will provide notice of the agenda and meeting times. To enable preparation by panel members, relevant material will be issued to the panel a week prior to the design review meeting.

DRP meetings will be held at the local government civic centre.

DRP support will issue reporting to proponents within 10 working days of the meeting.

### Membership

Local governments should ensure that the panel includes members with expertise in one or more of the following disciplines:

- Architecture (essential)
- Sustainability and environmental design
- Transport planning
- Landscape architecture (essential)
- Services engineering
- Planning
- Urban design (essential)
- Accessibility
- Public art
- Heritage
- Civil and/or structural engineering

While local knowledge is useful, a balance between locals and expertise from outside the local government area should be sought in order to optimise the range and calibre of skills available. All Design Review Panel members should be eligible for registration and maintain good standing with their respective professional bodies.

To be independent and apolitical, the local government should not appoint decision-makers, its own elected members or officers to its Design Review Panel. However, key local government planning (and other) officers should participate in all design reviews in an advisory capacity and to provide administrative and governance support.

## DR4 – Model terms of reference (3/5)

### Proposals for review

Proposals eligible for design review should include:

- proposals that are significant because of their size or the uses they support
- proposals that are significant because of their site or location
- proposals that are significant because of their community impact

The Design Review Panel is to provide impartial architectural and design advice on:

- proposals including a building that is three storeys or greater in height (above natural ground level)
- proposals with [LG to nominate] or more multiple dwellings (apartments)
- proposals of [LG to nominate] or more grouped dwellings
- proposals that meet the mandatory requirement to be determined by the Joint Development Assessment Panel any other proposal referred to the panel by the Director of Planning
- any relevant scheme amendment, activity centre plan, structure plan, policy, precinct plan, local development plan or design guidelines referred by the Director of Planning

Please refer to the **Design WA: Design Review Guide** (7.5 Design review threshold table) for additional guidance on the sorts of proposals recommended for review by a Design Review Panel.

### Timing and number of reviews

The number of reviews needed will vary depending on the complexity of a proposal; however three reviews are typically needed for the process to be effective.

Design reviews should occur before a development application is submitted. It is strongly recommended that the first design review takes place during the **concept design stage** to ensure that proponents can take advantage of the advice offered at a time where the design is flexible enough to accommodate change without impacting on time and cost constraints. A subsequent review should typically occur at a stage when the design has been further progressed. Depending on the outcome of the initial meeting, this review session will typically occur during **design development** or prior to the proposal being submitted for development approval (**Pre-DA stage**).

At **building permit stage** (after development approval) it is suggested that a check takes place by the Design Review Panel Chair or delegate, to ensure that the design quality of the proposal is consistent with the approved development application and any relevant conditions related to design quality.

### SPP7.0 Design Principles

State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment (SPP7.0) outlines a set of performance-based design principles. These principles establish a broad definition of 'good design' and form the basis of design review consideration.

**Context and character** – *Good design responds to and enhances the distinctive characteristics of a local area, contributing to a sense of place.*

**Landscape quality** – *Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, within a broader ecological context.*

**Built form and scale** – *Good design ensures that the massing and height of development is appropriate to its setting and successfully negotiates between existing built form and the intended future character of the local area.*

**Functionality and build quality** – *Good design meets the needs of users efficiently and effectively, balancing functional requirements to perform well and deliver optimum benefit over the full life-cycle.*

**Sustainability** – *Good design optimises the sustainability of the built environment, delivering positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.*

**Amenity** – *Good design provides successful places that offer a variety of uses and activities while optimising internal and external amenity for occupants, visitors and neighbours, providing environments that are comfortable, productive and healthy.*

**Legibility** – *Good design results in buildings and places that are legible, with clear connections and easily identifiable elements to help people find their way around.*

**Safety** – *Good design optimises safety and security, minimising the risk of personal harm and supporting safe behaviour and use.*

## DR4 – Model terms of reference (4/5)

**Community** – Good design responds to local community needs as well as the wider social context, providing environments that support a diverse range of people and facilitate social interaction.

**Aesthetics** – Good design is the product of a skilled, judicious design process that results in attractive and inviting buildings and places that engage the senses.

Refer to Design WA State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment for the Design Principles in full.

### Design Review Panel appointment

Suitable candidates will be recruited through an appointment process, which includes:

- public advertising seeking formal Expressions of Interest (EOI)
- consideration of EOIs by an appropriate selection panel
- an interview process, if required, to confirm appropriate design review expertise
- a report with recommendation/s for appointment presented to the Chief Executive Officer

Following completion of the selection process, all details of the appointment will be confirmed in writing and a member induction will be scheduled.

The term of office for a panel member shall be two years and run concurrently with the Council election cycle. Council may appoint a pool of suitable persons to serve on the Panel however each Design Review Panel meeting shall comprise a maximum of six members.

A person who is currently employed by, or who is an elected member of the local government, is not eligible for appointment as a member of the panel. All panel appointments are endorsed by Council.

### Panel roles and responsibilities

All panel members are required to:

- provide independent, fair and reasonable professional advice relative to the SPP7.0 Design Principles and relevant State and local policies and schemes
- treat all discussions and information about applications with sensitivity and confidentiality
- respond to and comment on material presented, providing clear and constructive feedback
- disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest in writing for the record. Where an interest exists, the member must:
  - disclose the interest to the Chair as soon as possible, and before the meeting to ensure there is a quorum for all items
  - if the interest is a pecuniary interest, the member must not take part in the consideration or discussion of the matter

All disclosures of interest will be recorded in the panel meeting notes

#### Panel Chair

The panel Chair is primarily tasked with running panel meetings and is responsible for:

- liaising with the nominated local government officer about the operation of the panel including advice regarding additional briefing material or requirements
- ensuring new members have been inducted and are briefed about panel operations,
- ensuring that the meeting agenda is followed
- welcoming and introducing the panel, proponents and any observers present in the meeting
- facilitating interactive discussion and participation of all Design Review Panel members, key local government attendees and proponents, enabling solutions to be brokered collaboratively
- ensuring that discussions remain focussed on the application being considered and that advice relates to matters covered by the SPP7.0 Design Principles, relevant State and local policies and schemes
- ensuring consistency of panel advice between reviews
- summarising the consensus view of the panel at the conclusion of the meeting
- endorsing the final design review report or meeting minutes post meeting
- briefing decision-makers on panel advice when required

## DR4 – Model terms of reference (5/5)

### Remuneration

Members will receive standard professional rates up to a maximum of three hours review time, plus one hour of preparation.

The Chair will receive an above-standard fee due to the additional responsibility of the role, plus preparation, time spent advising and editing reporting as needed, and time spent on additional briefings.

Where a member of the panel is requested to appear on the local government's behalf as an expert witness at the State Administrative Tribunal, the member is to be paid at a mutually agreed hourly rate consistent with the qualifications, experience and professional status of the member.

### Meeting procedures

#### Quorum and attendance

The local government will issue notice of a Design Review Panel meeting to all appointed panel members.

It is recommended that all members review the proposed agenda and advise the local government as soon as possible of:

- a. their ability to attend the meeting
- b. any interest to be declared in any matter listed on the agenda.

A Design Review Panel meeting may not proceed unless a quorum comprising a minimum of four members is present. If a quorum cannot be achieved for all or part of the meeting, the local government will contact suitable members from the pool in accordance with the procedure adopted by that local government for those circumstances. If a quorum cannot be achieved, the meeting cannot proceed and should be re-scheduled.

It is important to optimise the consistency of the panel and advice particularly across subsequent reviews for the same proposal. The local government may replace panel members who are regularly unavailable for meetings.

#### Observers

Design review meetings should be closed to members of the public as information discussed can be commercially confidential. Persons who may later be required to consider and determine an application that is undergoing design review should not attend panel meetings in order to preserve the transparency and integrity of the planning decision making process.

Local governments are encouraged to allow planning and other officers to attend review sessions as observers, as it can offer valuable training on design quality considerations, familiarity with the design review process and an understanding of how it can benefit a range of projects.

#### Site inspection

Panel members should be familiar with each site on the agenda prior to the meeting. A site visit may be arranged if considered necessary by the local government or panel Chair.

#### Panel member preparation

Where an application has already been submitted prior to referral to the panel, an initial officer assessment will be undertaken, the results of which will be provided to the panel as part of the agenda preparation process.

It is expected that panel members will familiarise themselves with all information provided prior to the meeting and prepare comments in advance, to enable effective use of session time. If additional information is required prior to the meeting, a request should be submitted to the local government in accordance with the procedures advised during the induction.

#### Frequency of meetings

Meetings will generally be held on quarterly/monthly/fortnightly, but can be scheduled at the any time in response to urgent matters. Advice of a scheduled meeting, the agenda and information associated with each proposal shall be provided to panel members one week prior to the intended meeting date.

#### Agenda

The agenda for each meeting (along with submitted drawings and other relevant documentation) will be circulated to all panel members and meeting attendees at least one week prior to the meeting.

Meeting agendas should not exceed three hours.

#### Code of Conduct

All panel members are required to abide by the local government's Code of Conduct.

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