



EMBARGOED UNTIL 6 AM THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2003

PLANNING ASSESSMENT SURVEY REPORT 2003

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects has 8700 members of which approximately 5000 are registered practising architects.

The purpose of the survey was to gather data in order to gain a considered insight into what is happening at the coalface. A key objective was to discover whether the situation has improved or declined in terms of the time and cost of processing planning applications.

The high response rate to this survey reflected the seriousness of the issue of planning assessment amongst architects generally.

The results confirm what has been widely discussed anecdotally by our members, that there has been a significant increase across the major states in terms of the time taken and the cost to the community for processing in particular residential planning applications.

The issue is a complex one. I welcome the opportunity for Archicentre to present this information to enable considered discussion and debate about the planning system in Australia, which is clearly under stress. The first step to addressing the complexity of the issue is admitting to it, and then developing strategies in an open and collaborative way with organizations such as the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), Urban Design Institute of Australia (UDIA), Master Builders Association (MBA), the Housing Industry Association (HIA), and state and local governments.

Archicentre is a wholly owned subsidiary of the RAIA and is focused on delivering advisory services by architects to the community. Therefore it is in a unique position to facilitate this debate. The RAIA confirms its commitment to this task and the attached report has a number of suggestions and recommendations which deserve positive consideration by all concerned with the process.

David Parken, FRAIA
RAIA National President

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australian architects and planners have an enormous job ahead of them because over the next 30 years Australia can expect to house approximately 6,000,000 additional people. The majority of whom will be housed in our major cities. This population growth can be compared with annually building a city the size of Canberra, including its entire infrastructure, schools, hospitals, roads and amenities.

Burgeoning population growth means competent and responsible planning is essential.

In this context, the community needs to know that the planning assessment system, its rules and guidelines are clear concise and comprehensible.

Archicentre, under the auspices of the RAIA, has undertaken a nationwide survey of over 6,000 architects to determine the effective operations of the planning assessment and approval process. The results of the survey illustrate that in some states the amount of application work required by the planning process has more than doubled in three years, and much of the lengthy pre submission work requested by council planning compliance officers is immediately redundant.

The current planing assessment and approval system across the country is inconsistent, and has generated a range of poor outcomes including poor planning, mediocre or poor architecture, and lead to financial strains for everyone involved including local and state government, developers, builders and ultimately residents.

The findings and results generated through the survey, and accompanying focus group study, raise a number of progressive ideas and recommendations that will help simplify the planning process, ensure better quality design and environments and reduce the level of disputation that the current system fosters.

The architectural profession look forward to playing a valuable role in the process of change, which will lead to a better quality of life for all Australians.

Robert Caulfield, LFRAIA
Managing Director Archicentre

1. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Archicentre forwarded the survey to two groups of architects requesting that they complete them and fax back during June 2003. Twelve hundred survey forms were distributed to members of RAIAs Practice Services, which in general consists of architectural companies varying from small practices undertaking residential work to large national companies undertaking large building projects. A further 1,000 survey forms were forwarded to members of Archicentre Limited, consisting mostly of sole practitioners or small companies undertaking residential construction work.

Completed surveys were received from 550 respondents. The results of these were analysed and tabulated and formed the basis of the statistical data provided in this report. The RAIAs then emailed approximately 6,400 questionnaires to individual architects from its general member base, many of whom are employees of larger companies. The purpose of this electronic mail out was to obtain extra personal anecdotal information from individual architects about their planning experiences.

Insufficient responses were received from the ACT and the Northern Territory. Limited responses were received from Tasmania, however, there was an adequate level of response to calculate some state issues, but not issues applying at the local government level.

On completion of the survey's data analysis, and preparation of an initial report, a sample group of survey respondents were invited to participate in a focus group (termed an 'ideas workshop') with invited consultant planners to discuss the findings and develop recommendations, which were compared in each state and combined under general national recommendations. In the preparation of the recommendations, consultations were undertaken with members of the state real estate institutes, the Master Builders Association (MBA), the Housing Industry Association (HIA), the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), resident groups and developers, and the Planning Institute of Australia.

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The survey generated considerable feedback. The main findings, concerns, and topical issues can be grouped under the headings of *policy*, *process* and *people*, and are summarised as follows:

Policy

- Heritage issues triggering lengthy planning processes.
- Planning consent staff and councillors ruling on areas that they are unqualified in such as building, construction and architectural aesthetics. .
- Reports of unreasonable demands made on applicants for irrelevant or unnecessary material, especially for what are commonly accepted as technically simple jobs.
- The lack of uniformity of regulations and planning laws across municipalities.

Process

- Examples of some councillors and planning consent staff not being fully across their own guidelines.
- Examples of under resourced council planning departments.
- Examples of unhelpful staff, refusing to give pre application advice.
- Indications of inexperienced planning consent staff having carriage of major planning assessment activities.
- Lack of consistency of advice between council staff, councillors and others.
- Some councils regularly misplacing documents.

- Some planning consent staff not answering or returning calls.
- The use of delaying tactics to create extra time for processing the enormous volume of applications. This results in extra unnecessary work and costs to the applicants.
- Widespread examples of high turnover of planning compliance staff.

People

- Reporting of regular planning disputes between councillors and planning consent staff.
- Reports of some councillors overturning the advice received from their planning consent staff to cater for local political considerations.

3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations drawn from this study can be grouped under the headings of *policy* and *process*.

Policy

1. State government agencies responsible for local planning need to establish common procedural guidelines for all local governments to follow.
2. Local government councillors should be involved in establishing local policies, but once established compliance or otherwise should be determined by an assessment panel comprised of council staff professionals and external assessors, not by the councillors themselves.
The Royal Australian Institute of Architects would be prepared to nominate independent architect assessors to participate on the assessment panel.
3. State governments should establish “planning zones” which may relate to specific interest points such as heritage, landscape etc. These zones should not be confined by local government boundaries.
4. Leading on from recommendation 3, a local government assessment panel should be able to assess an application even for applications that span across planning zones or boundaries.
5. Aesthetic judgments should not be considered in the planning assessment.
6. Heritage and landscape overlays and other similar planning constraints should not trigger the need for planning approval for home renovations and new homes, they should form part of the building approval process.

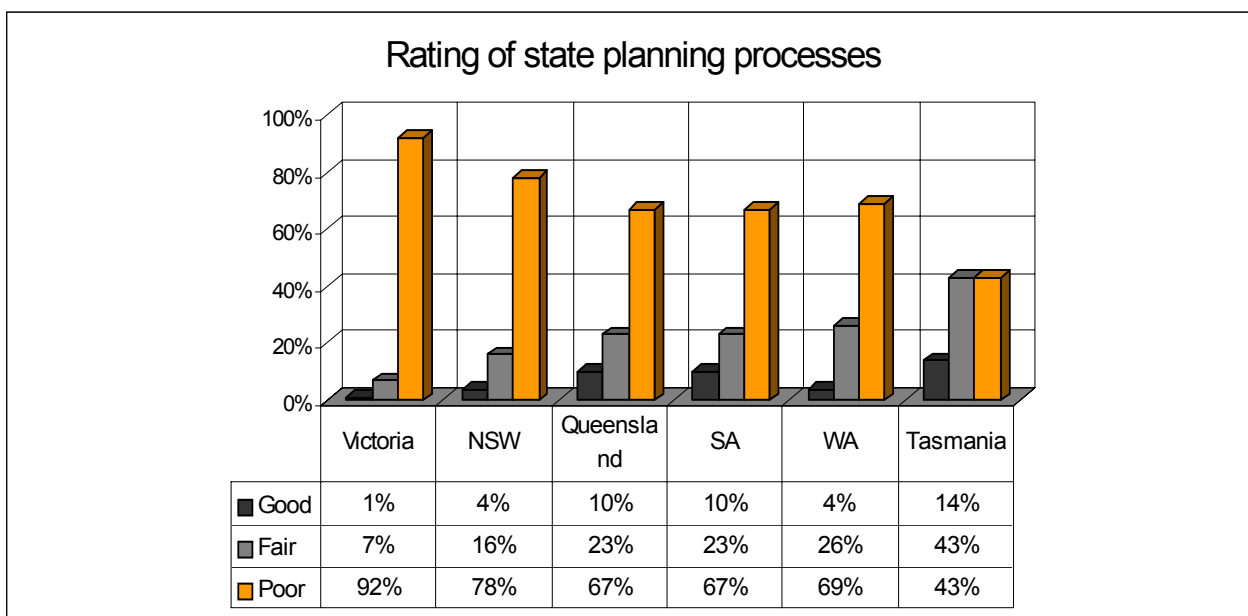
Process

7. All local government development control plans, guidelines, overlays etc. should be available on the internet.
8. All local governments should move towards an electronic lodgement system whereby applications can be lodged and advertised on the internet and objections received electronically. This will considerably free up council officers’ time.
9. The local government planning assessment report on an application should be completed before public advertising and should form part of the advertising package.
10. Councils should “stream” applications so that for example all commercial applications go to one planning consent officer, all medium density housing to another etc.
11. As an interim measure (before objective 1 is achieved) seminars should be organised for local councillors on how to understand the planning process and how to responsibly assess applications.
12. Specialist reports such as heritage compliance, landscape overlays, energy audits, should not be required at lodgment but should be provided if necessary prior to issue of approval or as a condition of approval.
13. External independent consultant planners or architects should be able to certify that application documents meet guidelines.
14. The advertising process should be reviewed so that it is less adversarial in nature. For example, terms such as ‘object’ and ‘materially effect’ should be replaced with ‘comment on’.
15. Following planning approval by local council or appeals body, endorsed plans should be certified by private independent planning consultants.

4. RESULTS

4.1 PLANNING ASSESSMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Architects were asked to rate the planning process in their state according to the criteria of very good, good, fair, poor, very poor. The responses were consolidated into good (comprising 'very good' and 'good response' categories), 'fair' was retained, and the responses for 'poor' and very poor' were combined. As illustrated in the following chart, with the exception of Tasmania, the majority of respondents rated the planning process in their respective states as poor. The result clearly reflects architects high level of concern with how the general planning assessment system is currently structured.



4.2 TIME DELAYS

Architects were asked to review the time it took to go through the town planning process for a range of typical project types from home renovations to large commercial projects. They were then asked to compare this with the time it took for similar projects three years ago.

The number of new homes and renovations now requiring planning approval due to heritage and landscape issues has risen substantially in some states. Many architects reported that for some smaller projects it took two or three years to obtain approval for a building that took 3-6 months to construct.

4.2.1 Endorsement

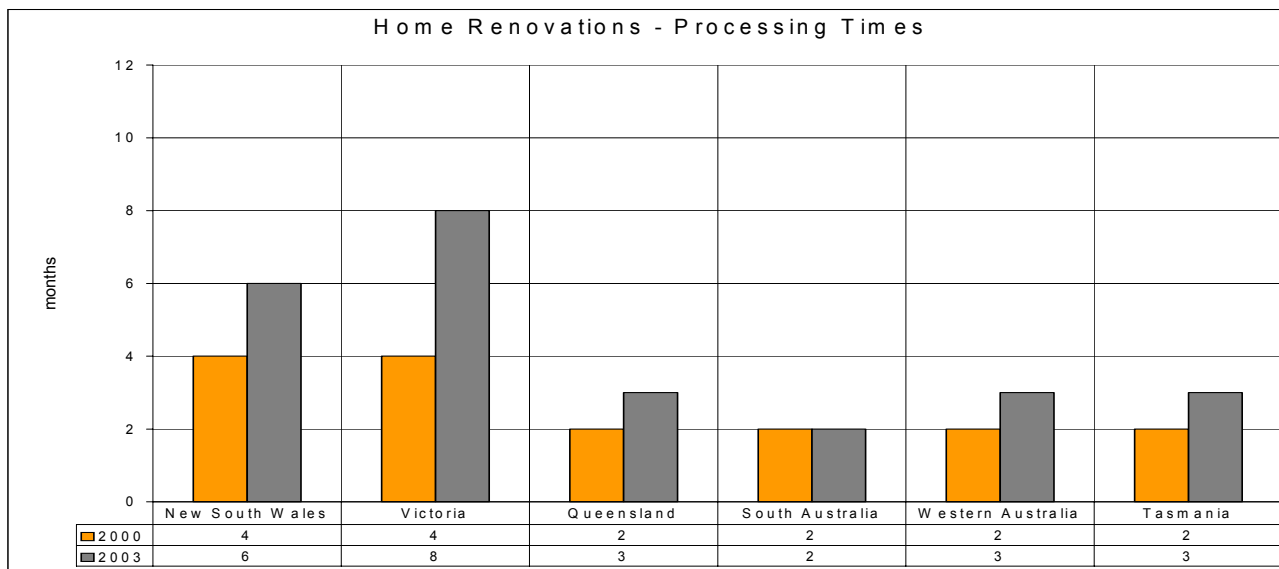
Once an application has been won at appeal, it will have conditions placed on it so drawings need to be modified and re-lodged at council to be endorsed. This part of the endorsement process, which should be straightforward, can also take months. Architects report that in many cases it takes 2 or 3 months to gain endorsement further to the process of initial planning application, advertising, council decision to decline approval, appeal lodgement processing and decision in favor of the applicant.

4.2 Recommendation

Following the issue of planning approval by local council or appeal body, endorsed plans should be certified by private independent planning consultants.

4.3 HOME RENOVATIONS

The survey asked respondents to nominate the average time taken for planning approvals to be processed for home renovations. As illustrated in the following chart, the average time has risen across all states, with the exception of South Australia. In New South Wales and Victoria, the average time taken has risen substantially, from an average of 2.6 months in 2000, to over 4 months in 2003.



The rigid application of planning submission requirements for very small projects is a significant concern. The survey generated numerous examples where:

- ramps and even handrails needed to assist disabled or elderly people living in their homes required local planning approval. In such cases, applicants were often told that they needed to provide site analysis and context plans, heritage reports and even energy statements to comply with submission guidelines for projects as simple as fences, verandahs and ramps.
- fences required to contain small children, and swimming pool fence applications were rejected because of local regulations.
- home owners in older, established suburbs having to spend \$20,000 to \$30,000 on a number of consultant reports to renovate or extend their properties and having to wait for as long as three years for an application decision.

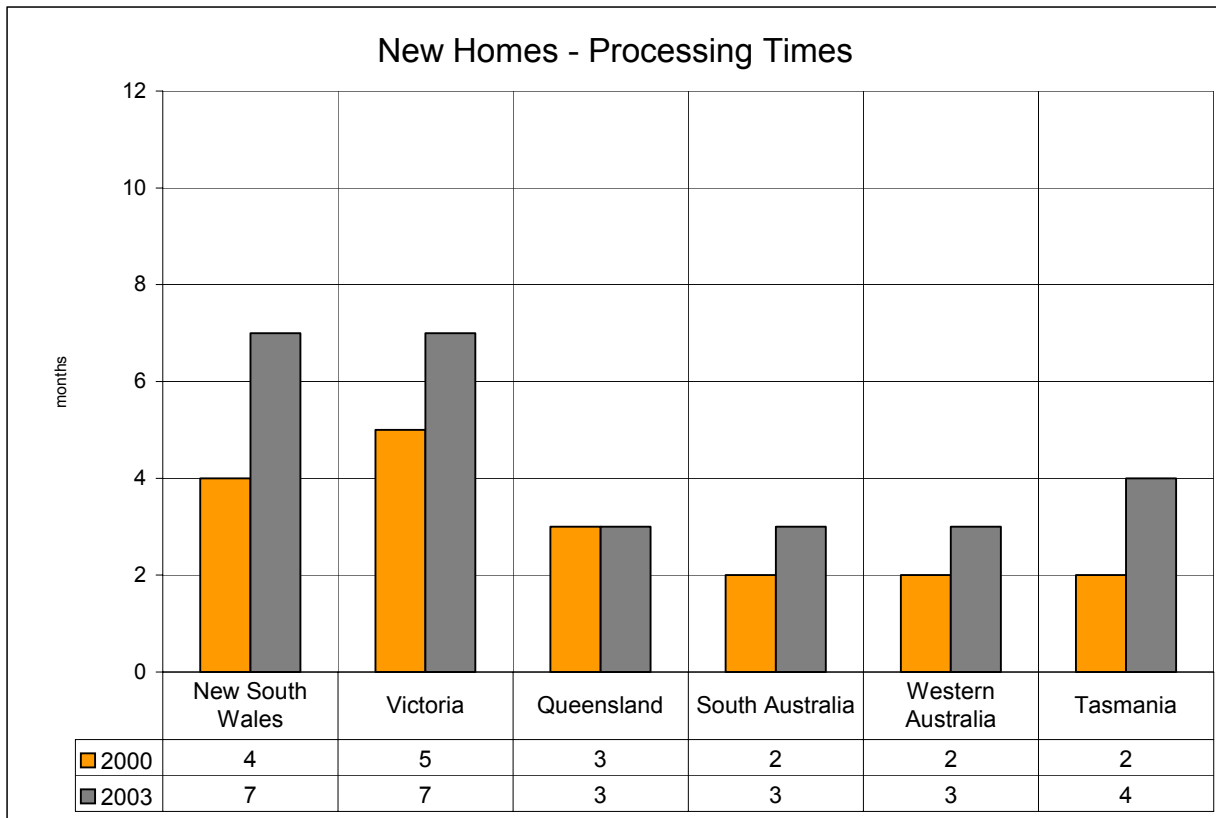
A number of respondents to the survey stated that the inconsistent planning processes have become a significant disincentive for home owners to restore, renovate or improve their properties.

4.3 Recommendation

Home renovations and minor improvements, which currently require planning approval, should be dealt with through the building approval process rather than the planning process.

4.4 NEW HOMES

The survey asked respondents to nominate the average time taken for planning approvals to be processed for new homes, where planning approval is required. As illustrated in the following chart, with the exception of Queensland, the length of time taken has risen in all states since 2000



Survey respondents stated that where planning approval is required for new homes, the New South Wales and Victorian systems particularly are considered to be stifling creativity, curtailing the introduction of new and innovative materials and building systems, and as a result adding substantially to the cost of new homes in older suburbs.

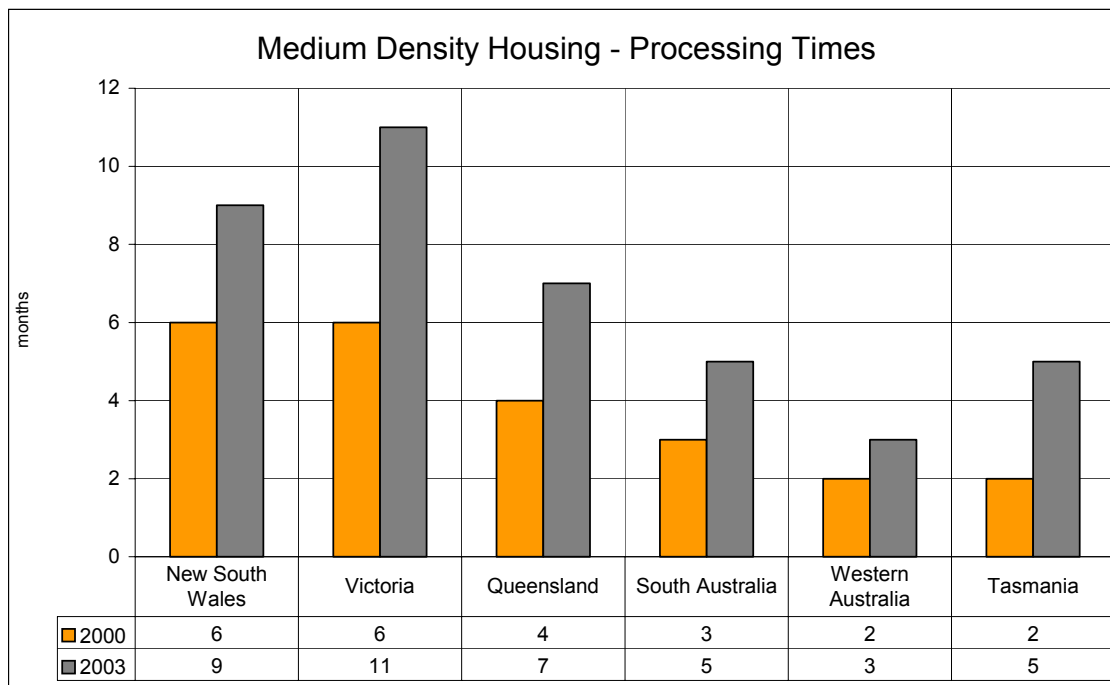
Respondents provided examples where an increasing number of planning inconsistencies are occurring. For example, a new home in an inner suburban area was designed with solar hot water panels to gain energy efficiencies but was rejected by a heritage consultant as being out of character with the area.

4.4 Recommendation

Heritage landscape overlays and similar planning constraints should not trigger the need for planning approval for home renovations and new homes. They should form part of the building approval process.

4.5 MEDIUM DENSITY HOUSING

The survey asked respondents to nominate the average time taken for planning approvals to be processed for unit and apartment developments. The following chart illustrates that across Australia, the average time has increased since 2000, from an average of just less than 4 months, to over 6 months in 2003.



The result for this question highlighted the difficulties that architects, planners, developers, builders, governments and the general public have in providing good, affordable housing for our growing cities. With Sydney and Melbourne expecting population increases of a million or more people in the next thirty years, and proportional growth expectations for most other capital cities, the options are basically higher densities or continued loss of rural land.

Respondents to the survey highlighted that the current planning processes are adding substantially to the cost of medium density housing, imposing additional costs on ratepayers through cumbersome planning processes and on taxpayers through the funding of state appeals processes.

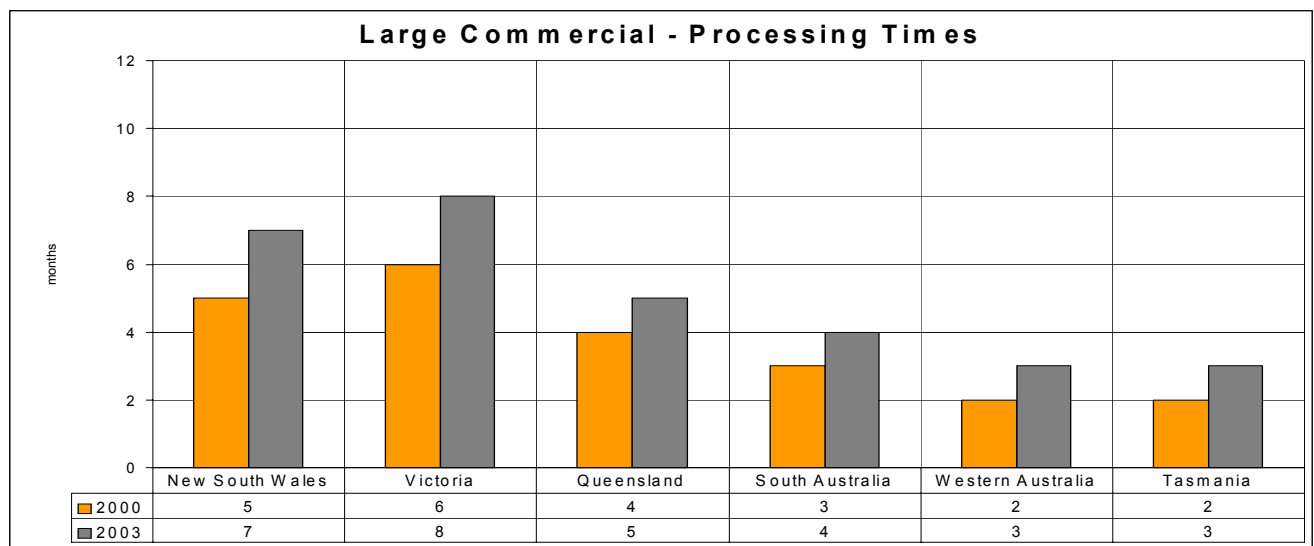
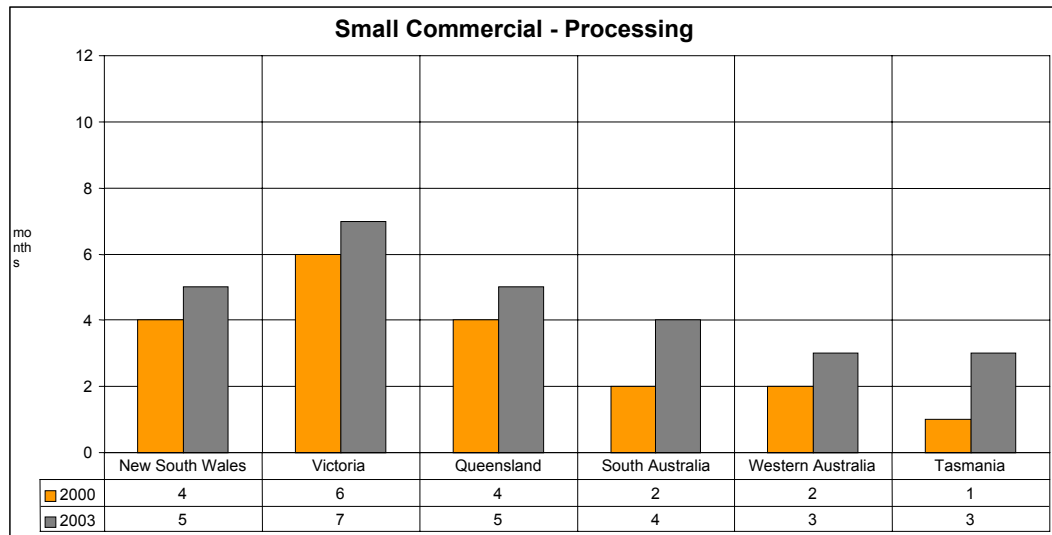
4.5 Recommendation

Local government councillors should be involved in establishing local policies, but once established compliance or otherwise should be determined by an assessment panel comprised of council staff, professionals and external assessors, not by the councillors themselves.

The RAlA would be prepared to nominate independent architect assessors to participate on the assessment panel.

4.6 SMALL AND LARGE COMMERCIAL

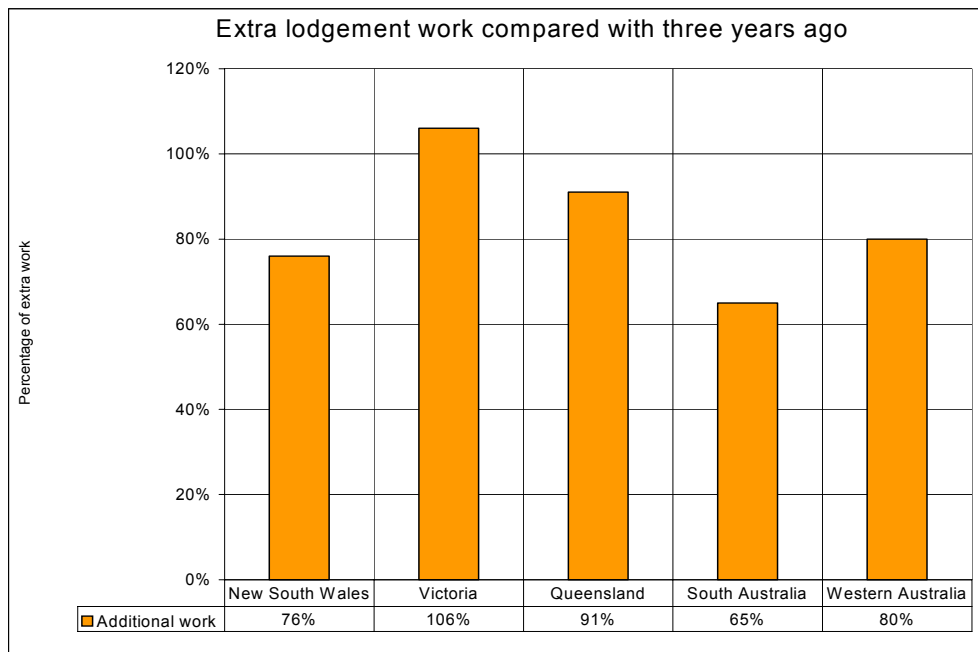
The survey asked respondents to nominate the average time taken for planning approvals to be processed for both small and large commercial developments. Across the country, average times have increased since 2000 from just over 3 months to approximately 4.5 months in 2003 for small commercial, and from 3.6 months in 2000 to approximately 5 months in 2003 for large commercial, as illustrated by the following two charts.



Respondents indicated that although cumbersome, the planning process for large and small commercial projects was manageable and had not deteriorated significantly in the last three years.

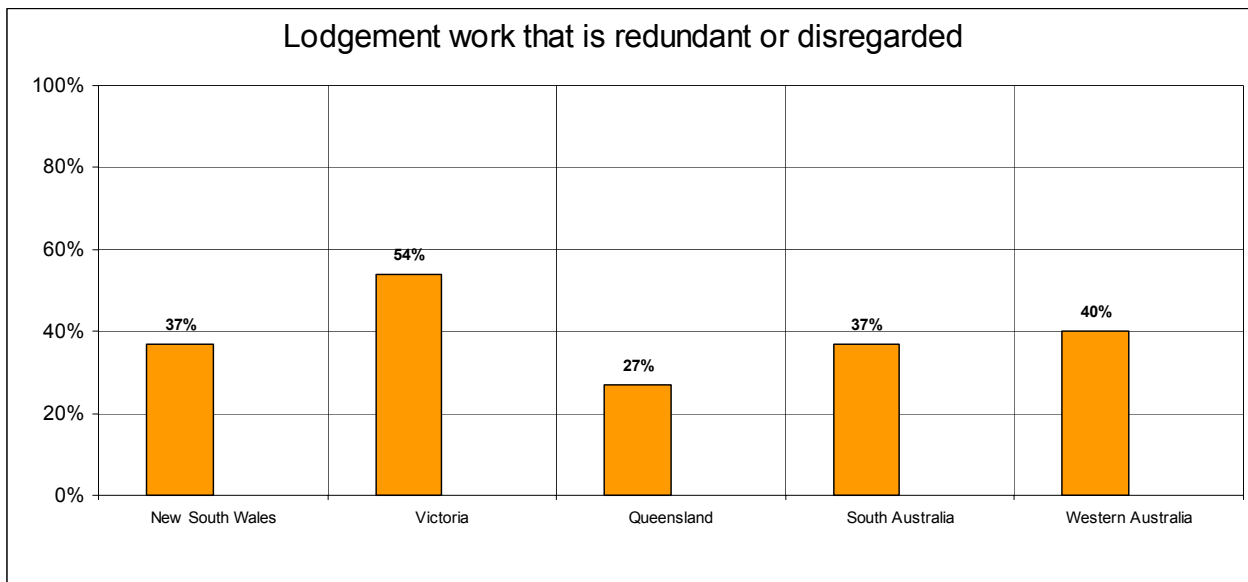
4.7. VOLUME OF WORK REQUIRED TO LODGE A PLANNING APPLICATION

The survey asked whether there was more work required of architects for the preparation of a planning submission than was necessary three years ago. Overwhelmingly, 98% of respondents said ‘yes’. Respondents were also asked to state the percentage of extra work required to lodge a planning application. As illustrated in the following chart, Victorian respondents claimed that they must undertake double the work than was required three years ago. Across all states the amount of work necessary had risen considerably since 2000.



4.8 LODGEMENT WORK THAT IS REQUESTED OR DISREGARDED

Respondents were asked to provide information on the content of planning submissions, provide examples of how the content, supporting files and information is managed by the relevant planning unit, and to detail their experience with lodged submissions that are considered redundant or are disregarded by the planning unit. The following chart illustrates that across Australia, approximately 39% of information provided in support of a planning submission is considered by the planning unit of the local government to be redundant or is disregarded in the submission approval process.



Respondents provided examples where some councils required traffic reports, energy audits, arborist and engineering reports before any discussion could take place on basic issues such as density, height limits and setbacks. Often the reports become immediately redundant once changes to the basic design concept were agreed. Architects who had been requested to prepare such reports after community consultation had taken place were often advised that no consultation could occur until the application has been advertised and advertising could not occur until all reports had been received.

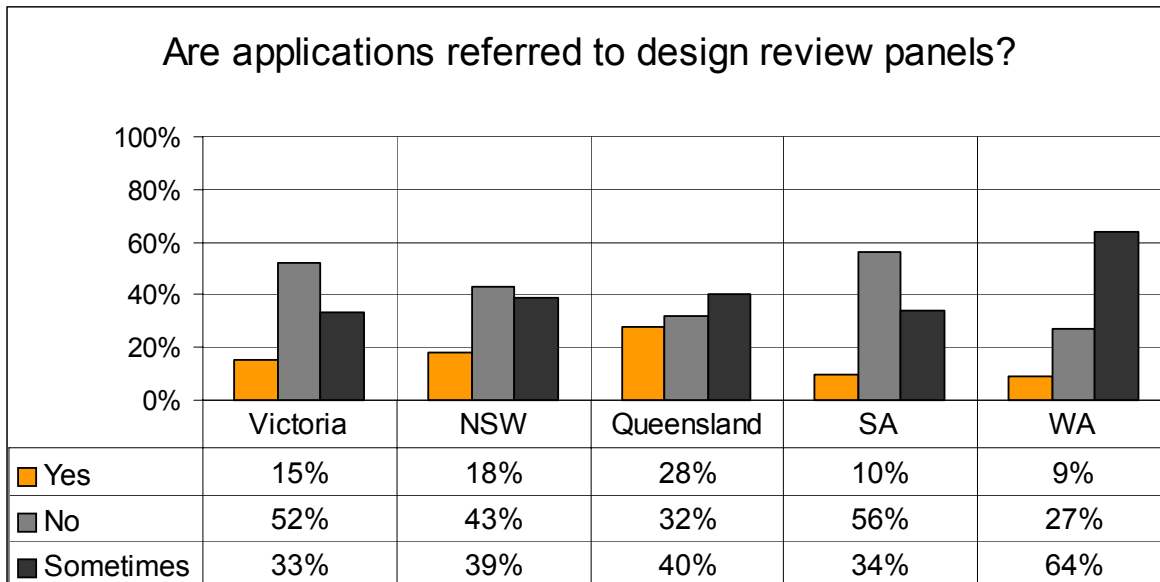
In addition, respondents provided numerous examples of the same information being requested ‘two or three times’ by some councils and often just before the statutory processing period had expired. Respondents also provided examples of some councils losing whole application files or sections of files.

4.8 Recommendations

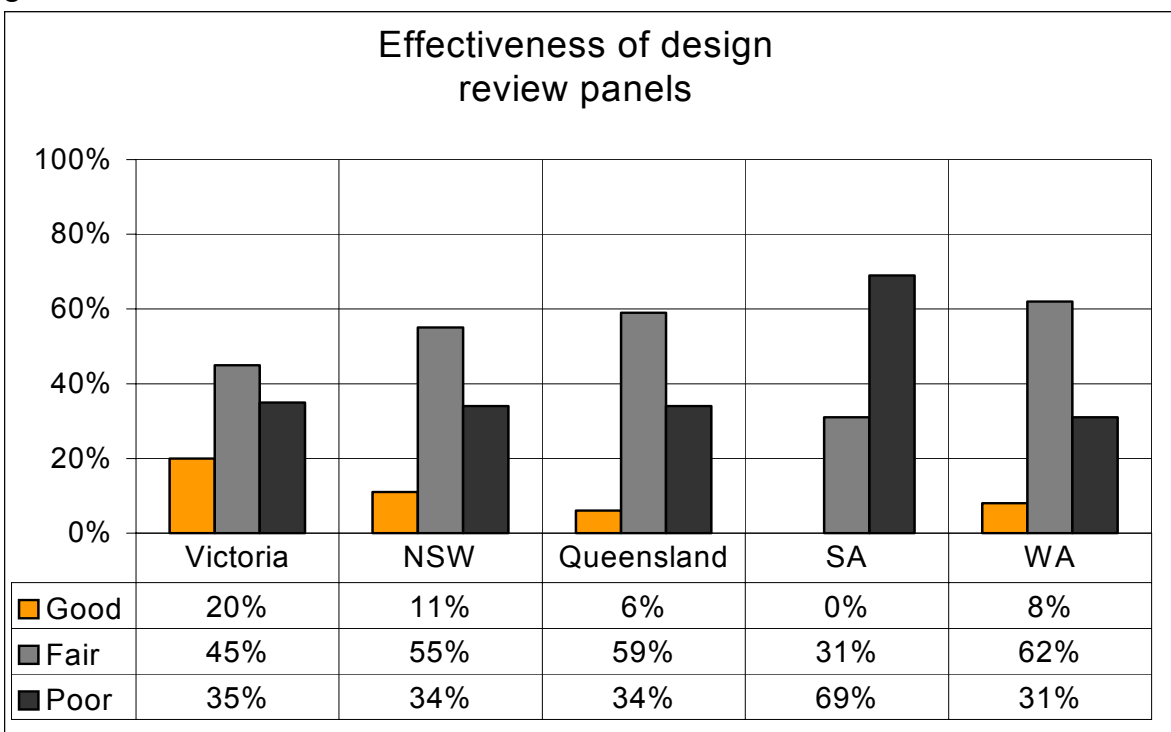
- *State government planning departments should establish common procedural guidelines for all local governments to follow.*
- *All local government development control plans, guidelines, overlays etc. should be available on the internet.*
- *All local governments should move towards an electronic lodgement system whereby applications can be lodged and advertised on the internet and objections received electronically. This will considerably free up council officers’ time.*
- *The local government planning assessment report on an application should be completed **before** public advertising and should form part of the advertising package.*
- *Councils should “stream” applications so that for example all commercial applications go to one planning consent officer, all medium density housing to another etc.*

4.9 PERFORMANCE OF DESIGN REVIEW PANELS

The survey asked about whether planning applications were referred to design review panels. Across Australia, the responses varied. In no state was the majority of planning applications referred to design review panels as a matter of course, as illustrated by the following chart.



As demonstrated in the following chart, with the exception of South Australia, the majority of respondents overall considered the effectiveness of the design review panel process to be 'fair' to 'good'.



In some states various councils have experimented with design review panels in a variety of forms. The basic concept is that applicants meet with a small panel made up of external professionals such as architects, planners, landscape architects, heritage consultants and discuss the way in which the

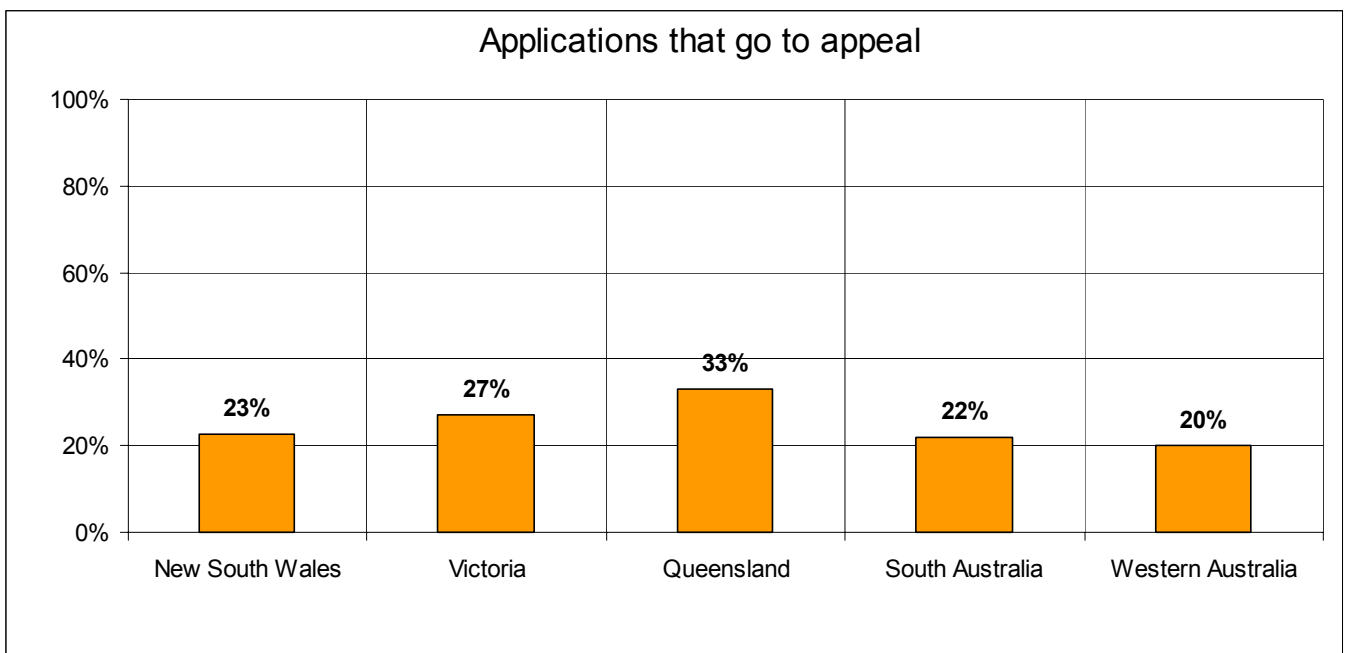
project should be approached. Members of the design review panel are expected to know the planning objectives of the council.

4.9 Recommendation

All local governments should move towards establishing external assessment panels comprising of independent planners, architects and other relevant consultants depending upon the projects. A typical team could be comprised of three external people plus the council planning consent officer. They would be involved in pre-application meetings and assist with the processing of the application after lodgement.

4.10 APPLICATIONS THAT GO TO APPEAL

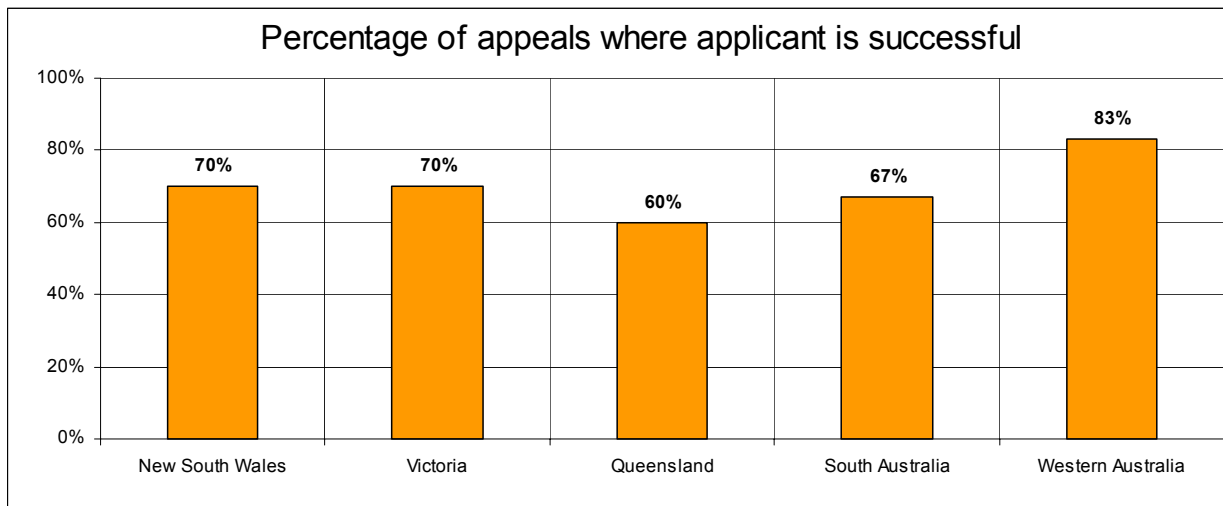
The survey asked respondents to state the number of application decisions that are appealed. As illustrated in the following chart, across Australia approximately 25% of all planning decisions are appealed.



Respondents to the survey provided examples where some clients requested that a planning application be lodged for approval, with the expectation that after waiting until the statutory processing period had expired, the planning application could be determined via appeal rather than having to face the arduous process of dealing with local council, and the compliance with processing requirements and the complicated decision making process.

4.11 PLANNING APPEALS THAT ARE WON

The survey asked respondents to state the percentage of planning appeals that they typically win. As illustrated in the following chart, across Australia 70% of appeals are found to be in favour of the applicant's appeal submission.



A number of respondents stated that a significant percentage of projects are not decided by the local government authority, but end up going through the appeals process. The irony of this situation is that local councils in wanting to set their own policies, in reality have many of their planning decisions made for them by other authorities. This is often the result of an overworked system, where planning consent officers and councillors have no hope of getting through the workload.

4.11 Recommendation

Heritage and landscape overlays and other similar planning constraints should not trigger the need for planning approval for home renovations and new homes, they should form part of the building approval process.

4. 12 RATINGS OF COUNCIL PLANNING PROCESSES & PERFORMANCE

4.12 (i) Most distressed councils in each state

Respondents were asked to rank the five most difficult councils in their state. Answers were rated with five points allocated for the most difficult to one point for the fifth most difficult, and the results were averaged. The objective of this question was to identify which local councils were most overstretched. The results are illustrated in the following table.

The Most Distressed Councils in Each State

NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA
1. Ku-ring-gai	1. Yarra	1. Brisbane	1. Subiaco	1. Mitcham
2. North Sydney	2. Boroondara	2. Gold Coast	2. Nedlands	2. Burnside
3. Leichhardt	3. Glen Eira	3. Maroochy	3. Fremantle	3. Norwood
4. Woollahra	4. Darebin			
5. Mosman	5. Port Phillip			

4.12 (ii) Most cooperative councils

Architects were also asked to nominate the best performing councils and provide reasons as to their selection. But owing to the low response rate, it was not possible to provide a helpful rating. Where there were good reports, such as from some outer suburban councils, they were dependent on an individual planning consent officer who was helpful. Architects commented that the process was reasonable where there was a pre lodgment scheme in place.

The Councils with Best Practice Planning Procedures

NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
1. Sydney	1. Melbourne	1. Brisbane*	1. Adelaide	1. Stirling
2. Randwick	2. Port Phillip*	2. Red Cliff	2. Charles Sturt	2. Cottesloe

** The inclusion of Brisbane (Queensland) and Port Phillip (Victoria) in the above tables reflects the different ways that architects viewed the processing of commercial building applications and residential applications.*

4.13 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

There has been a trend by local government across Australia to implement a greater degree of consultation in the planning process. While this is welcomed, it relies on all parties being able to communicate with each other and provide consistent information. Australia wide, respondents to the survey found the communication process extremely difficult.

Respondents often identified that it was common to have three or four planning consent officers involved in assessing a single project due to staff turnovers, part time staff and holiday leave. Some respondents reported up to ten planning consent officers being involved on large projects. Of greater concern though was the inconsistency of advice from one staff member to another. Victoria rated as the worst state in this regard.

Other pointers to the difficulties of consultation were numbers of telephone messages left before a call was returned (ten to fifteen was not uncommon) the ease of making an appointment with an allocated planning consent officer (two weeks to two months was not uncommon), whether or not more than one planning consent officer was allocated to a project and if there was, was the advice consistent or not.

The following tables illustrate the average number of contacts (phone calls) made and messages left before the call is returned, the ease of making meeting appointments with council planning consent staff, the frequency of working through an application with more than one planning consent officer, and the consistency of advice. The tables provide responses on a state level, and per local councils which received the highest response rate per the survey.

Across the country

State	Average Phone Messages before a call is returned	Making appointments			More than one assessment officer		Consistency of advice	
		Easy	Ave.	Diff.	Yes	No	Consistent	Inconsistent
NSW	3.5	12%	68%	20%	66%	34%	29%	71%
VIC	3.5	10%	59%	31%	69%	31%	15%	85%
QLD	3.0	15%	47%	38%	76%	24%	25%	75%
SA	3.8	13%	66%	21%	70%	30%	33%	67%
WA	2.5	14%	66%	20%	63%	37%	32%	68%
AUS-wide	3.2	12%	56%	32%	68%	32%	25%	75%

Victoria

Council	Phone Calls	Making appointments			More than one assessment officer		Consistency of advice	
		Easy	Ave.	Diff.	Yes	No	Consistent	Inconsistent
Yarra	3.6	4%	41%	55%	75%	25%	16%	84%
Boroondara	4.1	13%	50%	37%	74%	26%	16%	84%
Glen Eira	3.4	0%	53%	47%	67%	33%	7%	93%
Darebin	4.4	0%	73%	27%	73%	25%	17%	83%
Port Phillip	2.5	4%	71%	25%	67%	33%	28%	72%

New South Wales

Council	Phone Calls	Making appointments			More than one assessment officer		Consistency of advice	
		Easy	Ave.	Diff.	Yes	No	Consistent	Inconsistent
Ku-ring-gai	2.9	6%	52%	42%	71%	29%	41%	59%
N. Sydney	2.9	5%	57%	38%	82%	18%	40%	60%
Leichhardt	3.3	4%	44%	52%	79%	21%	28%	72%
Woollahra	2.6	20%	62%	18%	71%	29%	35%	65%
Mosman	3.0	9%	63%	28%	61%	39%	37%	63%

Queensland

Council	Phone Calls	Making appointments			More than one assessment officer		Consistency of advice	
		Easy	Ave.	Diff.	Yes	No	Consistent	Inconsistent
Brisbane	3.4	0%	34%	66%	87%	13%	12%	88%
Gold Coast	2.6	8%	61%	31%	100%	0%	38%	62%
Maroochy	2.0	8%	61%	31%	75%	25%	23%	77%

South Australia

Council	Phone Calls	Making appointments			More than one assessment officer		Consistency of advice	
		Easy	Ave.	Diff.	Yes	No	Consistent	Inconsistent
Mitcham	4.5	0%	34%	66%	75%	25%	38%	62%
Burnside	3.5	8%	61%	31%	58%	42%	22%	78%
Norwood	3.5	8%	61%	31%	100%	0%	23%	77%

Western Australia

Council	Phone Calls	Making appointments			More than one assessment officer		Consistency of advice	
		Easy	Ave.	Diff.	Yes	No	Consistent	Inconsistent
Fremantle	2.5	20%	40%	40%	56%	44%	61%	39%
Subiaco	2.5	13%	75%	12%	44%	56%	68%	32%
Nedlands	2.0	12%	76%	13%	68%	32%	29%	71%

SUMMARY OF STATE PLANNING POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The planning process is about what you can build where and building approval tells you how you can build these structures. One of the problems being experienced at the moment is that the planning process is encroaching on areas that belong in the building approvals process. A complicating factor is that the terminology for the building and planning processes is different in each state. The following is a state by state summary of the basic terms and statutory processes.

New South Wales.

In New South Wales, all developments first require a *Development Application (DA)*, which councils assess with regard to Local Environment Planning Policy (LEPP) and Development Control Plans.

At this stage, councils also require other reports such as *Energy Ratings, Heritage, Waste Management and Environmental Impact* (this varies from council to council). Once a DA is approved, a *Construction Certificate (CC)* is sought. This details all design and construction including landscaping aspects of the development.

Victoria.

ResCode is the universal planning umbrella in Victoria for all housing ranging from additions & alterations, new houses or multi-unit development. Regardless of what form the development takes, a *“site analysis” is a mandatory starting point.* This sets the building and/or site in context with the neighbouring environment. A design response should be based on this document.

For a single house, the simplest statutory path involves a *Building Permit* process, where 14 ResCode criteria must be met by the design strategy in order to achieve an “as of right” building permit.

A site with a small site area, or one covered by a heritage overlay, will require a *Planning Permit* process to precede a Building Permit process. Some 20 ResCode criteria, including Neighbourhood Character need to be addressed in a Planning Permit process.

Multi-unit housing, including dual occupancy developments, must take on the two pronged system outlined above. Some 32 criteria form part of the consideration in a design strategy and associated statement.

South Australia.

Development Approval is required, and this is made up of Planning Approval and Building Rules Consent. *Planning Approval* is compliance with the *South Australian Development Plan (SADP)*, and deals with such issues as the number and type of houses for a given site, open space, setbacks and in some cases roof pitches and materials.

This can be done at the same time as the Building Rules Consent or after the detailed design stage of an architect’s work, particularly if it does not comply with the SADP. For example, if a building has a flat roof rather than a preferred pitched roof for a particular street, a presentation to Council can be made, and even an appeal in court if desired.

Building Rules Consent is compliance with the Building Code of Australia or South Australian Housing Code. This process ensures the building is built to current codes – i.e. wet area details are correct, termite proofing has taken place and the like. This can be carried out by a private certifier (or building surveyor) or by the local council. This stage is usually arranged while the job is out to tender or as a part of Contract Documentation.

Western Australia.

Western Australia has a two pronged system of statutory approval for housing development involving **Planning Permit** and **Building License Approval** processes. Depending on whether the designed solution conforms with “Deemed to Satisfy” provisions of the “**R Codes**” (**Residential Planning Code of Western Australia**), the planning process may be procedural.

Building License Approval follows on after the Planning process has been satisfied. This deals with compliance with the Building Code of Australia.

Queensland

Queensland has a two tiered regulatory process for housing development. Where Planning Approval is required, this will precede a Building Approval process. For single houses, a **Planning process** is triggered by a number of circumstances including small sites (generally less than 450m²), demolition works, alteration works (generally for buildings constructed prior to 1946), houses in rural or residential environmental protection areas and houses in areas allocated for non-residential uses. In areas where these triggers are not set off – e.g. newer areas, a **Building Approval** process only is required. This deals with compliance with the Building Code of Australia.

ACT

The ACT has a particularly regulated approach to building development. Aside from minor additions to the rear of houses, a two stage development process is required.

The first stage involves making an application for a **Development Application (DA)**. This occurs by making an application through the vehicle of a “**High Quality Sustainable Development**” (**HQSD**) to the **Australian Capital Territory Planning & Land Authority (actpla)**.

Land survey drawings, site analysis, streetscape consideration and neighbour consultation forms should accompany the submission of a Design Response Report that may then require advertising. Once the DA process has been successfully completed, a “**Building Approval**” process is required. Private certification of building and structural elements takes place in an application to “ACTPLA”. A building permit is issued once “Home Warranty Insurance” is in place.

Tasmania

In Tasmania applicants lodge a “**Development Application**” with the local government. This is assessed against the “**local planning scheme**” and the authority has 42 days in which to assess the application after which it may issue or refuse to issue a Town Planning Permit. Objectors may lodge an appeal with the “**Land Appeals Tribunal**”. Having received a “**Town Planning Permit**” the applicant may make an application for a “**building permit**” with the council building surveyor or a private certifier and will be issued with a “**building certificate**”.