

Council completes Service Review of Development Assessment and Building Certification Division

Wagga Wagga City Council has completed a six-month Service Review of its Development Assessment and Building Certification Division to ensure its long-term efficiency.

The Division is responsible for the provision of quality planning and development initiatives within the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area, including managing Council's development application (DA) assessment and building and plumbing certification services.

The Service Review, which was prompted by criticism from applicants regarding Council's turnaround times, involved extensive consultation, benchmarking and analysis of six 'in-scope' areas, with the final report presented to Council at its Ordinary Meeting on Monday 11 November 2024.

The Development Assessment and Building Certification Division deals with a significant number of applications for a range of services. In the 2023/2024 Financial Year the Division received a total of 7,369 applications, the equivalent of 28 applications per business day.

The Service Review found that the Division's overall performance was well above average with good legislative compliance and timeframes better than many Councils in NSW. Council's average assessment timeframe for development applications in the last financial year was 78 days, compared to a state average of 115 days for all Councils in NSW.

However, the Review and the Division's staff acknowledge that there is room for improvement, and that averages do not always mean individual applicants are satisfied with the Division's performance.

Project Director Regulatory Planning and Reform Rebecca Fox – who oversaw the Review – says many improvements are being made to increase customer satisfaction.

"The Development Assessment and Building Certification Division is adopting strategies to streamline its services and make sure it uses its resources effectively and efficiently to provide streamlined processes and quick timeframes.

"The Division is under pressure, with a lot of development applications and other applications in the system, and staff are pushed to the limit to make good decisions and meet satisfactory timelines.

"At the moment, a nationwide shortage of planners and building surveyors, not just in Wagga Wagga, but across the whole of Australia, is adding to the challenge for all Councils in processing applications in a timely manner."

Examples of the strategies to improve the Division's services include improved communication with stakeholders, updating of the website's content to improve the quality of applications which facilitates quicker assessment, trialling an Artificial Intelligence pilot

program to assist in improving the pre-lodgement stage of the DA process, and the use of contractors and consultants to address areas of risk and improve outcomes for all stakeholders.

An evaluation of the outcomes of the Service Review will be undertaken within 12 months and a report presented to Council by December 2025.

END

Contact 6926 9190 or media@wagga.nsw.gov.au

About Wagga Wagga City Council

Wagga Wagga City Council serves more than 68,000 residents across an area of 4825 square kilometres with an overall budget of more than \$236M.

The organisation manages more than \$2.48 billion in assets, including a 2300km road network, Wagga Wagga Airport, Livestock Marketing Centre and the Oasis Aquatic Centre.

Council also provides important community facilities such as Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Wagga Wagga City Library, Museum of the Riverina and Civic Theatre, as well as maintaining countless parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities to ensure Wagga maintains its reputation as 'the City of Good Sports'.

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