

The City of Sydney design for environmental performance template

COUNCIL NAME

City of Sydney

WEB ADDRESS

cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

26.7 square kilometres

POPULATION

246,343

Overview

The City of Sydney Council identified a disconnect between environmental sustainability reports submitted by proponents, as required by Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) processes, and the inclusion of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) design elements being delivered in approvals and construction.

As a result, Council introduced a more rigorous approach whereby applicants describe their ESD design commitments succinctly in an on-line webform. The on-line template replaces sustainability reports and enables demonstration of compliance with relevant planning controls. It has significantly shifted ESD reporting for largescale development with applicants explicitly asked if design elements are plan-marked. Template submissions are easily- tracked improving monitoring and outcomes reporting.

Background

The 'narrative' style ESD reports being submitted to Council as a component of Development Application (DAs) made general reference to design options but did not deliver improved sustainability outcomes as recommendations were not reflected in designs.

Council was unable to perform any strategic assessment to determine if DAs were improving over time in terms of responding to the City's adopted environmental targets. These concerns were discussed with a number of ESD consultancy companies, and it was agreed to rework the approach to these reports.

The key objectives in undertaking this project were to:

- End ineffective narrative style ESD reports submitted with DAs
- Lock in clearer commitments to design for environmental performance and lift compliance standards for new development
- Simplify a part of the DA process and require Principal Certifying Authority's (PCA) at Construction Certificate stage to verify retention of environmental design elements
- Improve Council's ability to assess environmental performance trends over time
- Engage and upskill development assessment planners in the 'ESD space'.

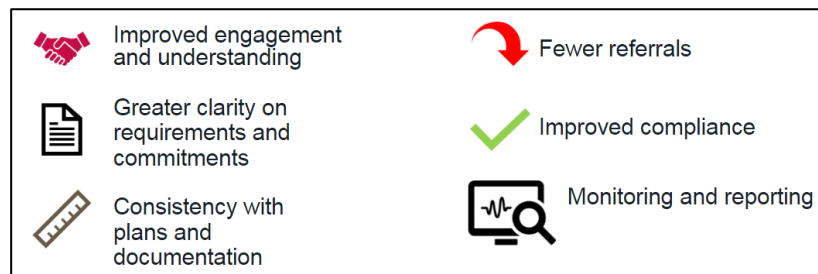
Implementation

Council developed and tested an online delivery option using WebForms and worked collaboratively with the end users, including key consultancy companies to determine a practical solution to this issue. Prior to the system going live, briefings were held with key industry stakeholders. The new approach was designed to ensure DA applicants focus on the City's environmental design expectations.

The Webform used is a low-cost, easily maintained delivery method providing flexibility to Council to manage without being dependant on an external service provider. Council used in-house web developers to build the template, which was both cost effective and ensures Council has the capacity to manage going forward. No specific budget was allocated to the project, with resources drawn from existing staff.

Outcomes

While this project was conceived and delivered by Council, the ESD consultant community were important contributors and supported Council 'fixing' what they also identified as a 'broken' process. Over 18 months the project moved from conception and an early engagement phase with stakeholders which commenced in late 2019, through to completion and 'go live' stage in April 2021.



The template is actively being used by proponents and the information provided has enhanced in accuracy as compared to previous consultancy ESD reports. There has been general support for this approach from the consultancy sector and the information provided now ensures instant capture of information which relates directly to Council's existing DCP policy settings.

Council can now assess larger DAs with a like-for-like comparison, including hotels or apartment developments. This provides the opportunity to identify repeat technology solutions and shape policy settings going forward to achieve better sustainability outcomes.

Summary

The new system has put an end to ineffective narrative 'ESD reports', locks in clearer commitment to design for environmental performance and simplified a part of the DA documentation process. It provides a cost effective solution supported by industry to create better sustainability outcomes. The approach is readily transferable to other councils and could assist in implementing aspects of the NSW Government's Design and Place SEPP to shape DA submission requirements, as one example of its wider relevance.

Contact

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This project was the 2021 winner of the Innovation in Planning, Policies and Decision Making Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards