

Service Standards for Planning and Development

Version 1 March 2025

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# Introduction

The planning and development services that Melbourne Water provides ensure that new development is safe from flooding and does not adversely impact neighbouring properties or waterways. They support the timely delivery of housing that meets the needs of our growing city, while managing flood risk. They also enable Melbourne Water to protect its assets and maintain the health of local waterways.

The services involve processing and responding to a range of planning and development application types. We receive the applications as a referral authority from consent authorities and direct from planning and development proponents. Melbourne Water’s standards for these services (service standards) encapsulate our commitment to providing timely responses consistent with State and local government and development industry expectations.

# The Service Standards

## Purpose

The service standards set out the principles we apply to processing planning and development applications. They also list the maximum timeframes, in calendar days, for Melbourne Water to process these applications.

We work to statutory timeframes for applications we receive as a referral authority under provisions of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) and *Subdivision Act 1988* (Vic). For other applications and requests, we work to non-statutory timeframes established in consultation with the development industry.

Non-statutory applications may be considered as ‘Standard’ or ‘Complex’. The criteria we apply to determine whether we will manage an application in the timeframe for a Complex application are outlined in the Service Standards table, below.

## Scope

These service standards relate only to Melbourne Water’s management of planning and development applications. They do not relate to applications for other Melbourne Water services such as Development Services Scheme construction or works on or near Melbourne Water assets.

These service standards apply to the way applicants can expect Melbourne Water to manage these services. They are not to be confused with standards, guidelines and requirements Melbourne Water issues which are to be followed by the development industry.

The service standards have been prepared in consultation with peak development industry associations and members of Melbourne Water’s Urban Planning and Development Strategic Collaboration Group. They replace previously published standards for these services.

We will continue to engage with the industry and seek feedback as we monitor our performance against these standards.

## Principles

Melbourne Water will apply the following principles to our work to process planning and development applications:

### Mutual obligations and outcomes

Melbourne Water will:

* work to balance Melbourne Water obligations and development industry obligations;
* ensure statutory obligations for flood protection and waterway health are met;
* engage with stakeholders to understand respective obligations;
* work to support positive and shared outcomes for State Government, local government, the development industry and the community;
* provide clarity and guidance to industry and local government on both the minimum and required application material Melbourne Water requires to accompany applications in order to process applications and enable delivery of service consistent with the service standards; and
* provide the services to a level consistent with industry standards.

### Clarity, consistency and certainty

Melbourne Water will:

* provide clear service standards, including how we assess a non-statutory application to determine whether it meets the criteria for a Complex application, with a longer timeframe to process;
* work to the timeframes set out in the service standards, with a target of processing applications within the standards over 90% of the time;
* provide clear information about application processes, including processing steps and timelines, and the circumstances in which the processing time (or ‘clock’) may stop, be reset and restart;
* early in the process identify and communicate any deficiencies in an application, for example if it is invalid or incomplete, and inform applicants of any further information Melbourne Water requires to process the application;
* review and communicate progress through the lifecycle of an application;
* communicate what we require from applicants, when we require it and why;
* provide clear reasons for decisions; and
* provide information about how to provide feedback, make complaints and escalate issues.

### Transparency

Melbourne Water will:

* provide applicants with clear reasons for our decisions;
* report regularly on our performance against the service standards;
* continue to consult with and update the development industry, including through Melbourne Water’s Urban Planning and Development Strategic Consultation Group (UPD SCG); and
* seek feedback on our service performance against the service standards and use feedback to continually improve our approach.

## Service performance

Melbourne Water publishes regular updates on our performance against the service standards on the Melbourne Water website. We also provide updates to and seek feedback from State and local government and the development industry, including through the cross-sector Urban Planning and Development Strategic Collaboration Group convened by Melbourne Water.

We welcome feedback on our performance and use it to inform our continuous service improvement program in Urban Planning and Development. To provide feedback use the contact details applicants may use the contact details in Melbourne Water’s responses to their application or on the [Contact Us page on the Melbourne Water website](https://www.melbournewater.com.au/about/contact-us).

## Review

These service standards are the result of a comprehensive review of our processes, systems and resources and incorporate feedback from our customers. We will review the standards in mid-2025 and mid-2026, in consultation with the development industry.

Updates on these services, service standards and our performance are available via the [Planning and Development Sector Hub on Let's Talk Melbourne Water](https://letstalk.melbournewater.com.au/development-sector-hub).

## Service standard timeframes for planning and development applications

The table sets out the types of planning and development applications Melbourne Water receives and the timeframes we work within to process these applications. They also outline the criteria we apply to determine whether an application is Complex.

Table 1: Service Standard Timeframes for Planning and Development Applications

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Application type | | Application complexity | Timeframes  (Maximum number of calendar days to complete application) | Criteria to determine timeframe/complexity |
| Planning permit for subdivision  Joint planning permit and certification  Certification of plan | | | 28 | - |
| Planning permit for development | | | 28 | - |
| Stormwater Management Strategy (SWMS) | | Standard | 45/28 | * 45 days applies to pre-permit applications where SWMS is in accordance with drainage strategy/Precinct Structure Plan and downstream infrastructure is in place. * 28 days applies to post-permit applications. |
| Complex | 90 | * Downstream infrastructure is not in place. * Variation to drainage strategy and Precinct Structure Plan proposed. * Precinct Structure Plan is required. |
| Engineering requirements | Non-works offers | Standard | 28 | - |
| Works offers | Standard | 60 | - |
| Engineering requirements (continued) | Complex | 120 | High-risk or complex assets and/or complex sites including:   * Assets valued over $10 million. * Other agency approvals required. * Flood walls present. * Major projects with significant complexity. * Sensitive sites (e.g. environmental or cultural heritage values). * High-risk ANCOLD Assessment required\* |
| Design consent (approvals): Concept and Functional reviews, not Detailed reviews | | Standard | 28 | - |
| Complex | 90 | High-risk or complex assets and/or complex sites including:   * Assets valued over $10 million. * Other agency approvals required. * Flood walls present. * Major projects with significant complexity. * Sensitive sites (e.g. environmental or cultural heritage values). * High-risk ANCOLD Assessment required\* |
| Statement of Compliance (SoC) | | | 7 | - |

*\* Assessment based on guidelines issued by ANCOLD, the Australian National Committee on Large Dams Incorporated (ANCOLD Inc.).*

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