

# Planning Permit Activity Reporting System (PPARS)

## Frequently Asked Questions



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# The PPAR System

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The following document is designed to answer the most common queries made regarding the Planning Permit Activity Reporting System (PPARS). If you have a question that does not have an answer below, please contact the PPARS administrator on (03) 9947 1236 or email [ppars.admin@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:ppars.admin@delwp.vic.gov.au) for assistance.

All documentation referred to is available from the PPARS page on the Department's website:  
<http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au>

## Why is PPARS important?

The availability of statistical data on planning permit activity enables the identification of trends in planning permit applications.

It assists in identifying problems in the planning system and provide useful information to councils to assist with organisational resource management.

## When did PPARS go live?

The system began live operation in May 2007.

The first live data submissions were received at the beginning of August 2007 for the month of July.

## What is the main web address for the production version of PPARS?

The main page for PPARS is at <http://www.ppars.dpcd.vic.gov.au>.

## What is PPARS 'Version 3'?

Version 3 of PPARS, launched in November 2013, introduced new functionalities and enhancements to the online system. It also increased the number of data fields being reported to PPARS, and modified the listings for others.

Each planning system vendor has developed enhancements to their systems in order to comply with these new specifications.

## What new fields are being captured by PPARS Version 3?

There are a number of new fields being captured. See the **Planning Permit Activity Reporting System - Data Dictionary (v7.9)** for a definitive listing.

## I cannot see or use any PPARS Version 3 enhancements. Why?

While each planning system vendor has developed enhancements to their systems, these may not have been rolled out to your Council as yet.

Check with you IT systems administrator or Vendor representative for further information.

# User Accounts and Passwords

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## How do I get a User Account on PPARS?

You will need to complete a **PPARS New User Application eForm** and return it to the PPARS Administrator. This form can be filled out electronically and submitted by email.

Once the account is generated, you will receive **two** separate emails to the address you provided; one will contain your Username, the other your Password.

## What types of User Accounts are there?

There are two types of User Accounts available to Council users; Standard Accounts and Contact Users.

**Standard Users** have access to the system, and can view all reports and submitted returns. They can perform queries on the database and export data to excel, XML etc.

**Contact Users** are generally the administrators at Council, and will be the person(s) responsible for submitting and signing off the monthly returns to PPARS and requests for new user access to the system. They have all the same access as Standard Users, as well as receiving all system generated administrative notifications (emails). **PPARS requires at least one of these accounts per Council.**

## Why am I getting an invalid log-in error when I enter my password?

Make sure you are attempting to log in to the correct website (see The PPAR System section).

Make sure you are using the correct username and password; your username should be in the format of **Firstname.Surname**, while your password (when generated) is nine (9) characters long and is made up of four alpha characters, one special character and four numeric characters.

Usernames and passwords are case sensitive. Make sure your CAPS LOCK is **off**.

If you are still having issues, please contact PPARS Administrator.

## What do I do when I have forgotten my username/password?

PPARS has a 'Forgotten Password' function. Select this from the Main PPARS page, and follow the prompts.

If you have forgotten your security answer, you will need to contact PPARS Administrator.

## Can I change my password?

Yes, as long as it conforms to the Password Generation rules. Please refer to **Section 6.3 of the PPARS User Guide** for more information.

## Can multiple Council officers have access to PPARS?

Yes. The PPARS Administrator can issue usernames and passwords to any approved Council officer, so long as they complete and sign the appropriate form.

## Does my Council have a generic User Account?

No. Your Council has a System User Account that your vendor system uses to connect to PPARS and submit data, however this account **should not** be used to log in to the system by casual users.

# Monthly Submissions (Returns)

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## What is a PPARS Data Return?

A Data Return, or simply a 'Return', is an XML file containing all of the planning permit application data for a Responsible Authority for a whole period (one calendar month). For more detailed information on Returns, refer to **Section 3.1 of the PPARS User Guide**.

## Can an annual Return be submitted?

No. Each Responsible Authority must submit a Return every month, covering the complete previous calendar month.

## Why does a Council need to submit a Return every month?

State-wide Reporting is published on the department website, so the data from every Council must to be kept up to date.

## Can a Council with no vendor system submit a Return?

Yes. PPARS has provided Councils with an Excel spreadsheet, which must be sent manually (emailed) to the PPARS Administrator on a monthly basis for upload to PPARS. This method of submission is not recommended.

## What happens if a Council misses sending in a Return for a period?

PPARS will send a reminder email if a return is not received by the cutoff date (the 14th of the following month).

If no data is available, either the Council or the PPARS Administrator will need to create a Null Return for the Responsible authority. This missing data will be indicated on all reports that would have included the data.

When the Responsible Authority provides the data, all reports making use of that data can be re-generated by the PPARS Administrator at the request of Council.

## What is the difference between a 'Full' Return and a 'Correction' Return?

**A 'Full' Return** are the standard returns submitted by Councils each month; containing all to the relevant application data for the period specified

**A 'Correction' Return** is a specialised Return that contains only those applications specifically designated by the user, and is not restricted to a date period.

There are two types:

- A standard Correction Return is used to make alterations to application data that has been previously reported to PPARS. This is so corrections can be made to erroneous data without having to resubmit whole Returns from previous years.
- A Correction for Deletion (or Deletion Return) is used to completely delete specified applications from the PPARS database. This is used where applications that should not have been reported to PPARS can be removed with little hassle.

## Which applications are included in a Return?

A Return for a period contains the details for all:

- Applications lodged prior to the first day of the period that are still active (no decision has been made by either the council or VCAT). Applications that are 'in progress' with VCAT should be also be included in the report.
- Applications lodged between the first and last days of the period.
- Applications decided between the first and last days of the period (either by the council or VCAT).

## What data should not be included in a Return?

A Return should not contain applications that have been decided by the Council (or by VCAT) prior to the first day of the period, unless the application is still in progress at VCAT.

Applications that also should not be reported are:

- 'Secondary consents'
- 'Extensions of time'
- 'Condition 1 plans'
- Corrections to clerical errors as Amended Permits

You will need to contact your system vendor to exclude these from your data submissions.

## Who is responsible for signing off a Return?

While the sign-off the data contained in a Return is performed by the designated Council Contact User (see User Accounts and Passwords above for more information), the resulting Monthly Report generated should be approved by your Planning Manager as correct.

## What should I look for before signing off a Return?

There are a number of things to look for before signing off a Return for a period:

- Review the Return Summary table which counts the number of active applications at the beginning of the period, number of new applications received within the period and number of completed applications during the period.
- Ensure that there are applications that have an RA Outcome.
- Ensure that there are different application types, eg new application, amended permit.
- Ensure that the Statutory Time Frame data element is being completed for decided applications.
- Ensure that the Estimated Assessment Effort is being reported completed for each application and reported to PPARS.
- Ensure that ALL relevant VCAT information is being reported to PPARS.
- Ensure Application Categories are being completed and reported to PPARS.
- Ensure that both the Fees and Value of works are being reported to PPARS.

## **Is there a faster way to look at all of the applications in a Return, rather than entering each one individually?**

Yes. Once you are looking at the 'Viewing Return: XXX' screen where all of the applications are listed, scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click 'CSV all'. This will download all of the applications in the Return with all the relevant data into an Excel Spreadsheet which you can easily sort and view.

## **I have submitted a Return, but I can't see it in the list of Returns available to sign off. Where is it?**

Make sure you have clicked [All Returns \(including Corrections\) Last Year](#) to show all Returns submitted. The latest one should be at the top of the list.

If it is not there, try pressing 'F5' to refresh your browser screen.

# Application Data

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## What types of applications is PPARS interested in?

All New Applications, Amended Permit Applications and Combined Applications should be reported to PPARS.

## What is the difference between an Amended Permit and an Amendment to an Application?

An **Amended Permit Application** is where a Permit has already previously been issued, and the applicant wishes to make an alteration. These should be reported to PPARS as an 'Amended Permit Application'.

An **Amendment to an Application** is simply an alteration to the existing application for a Permit; the application is already registered and should not be issued a new Application number.

## What is meant by 'Application Lifecycle'?

One of the primary functions of PPARS is to track the lifecycle of applications; from their inception, through the planning process, to the final decision.

These lifecycle rules ensure PPARS is advised of all decisions.

## What happens if we change data once we have submitted it to PPARS?

If the application is still 'Active', a new 'version' of the application will be created upon submission of the next Return, and the data changed accordingly.

If a decision has been made, and the application is effectively closed (yet still open in PPARS), an error will be reported by PPARS upon the attempted sign-off the next month's Return (see the **Errors** section below).

If this is the case, a correction return will be required to alter the changed fields accordingly before a subsequent Return can be signed-off. For more information on Correction Returns, refer to **Section 3.1 of the PPARS User Guide**.

## Is there a definitive list of data fields that PPARS collects?

Yes. The **PPARS - Return Data Sheet v7.9** and the **PPARS Data Dictionary 7.9** contain a detailed listing and a comprehensive breakdown per field respectively.

## Are all fields mandatory?

Some fields are mandatory from the start of the process, while others become mandatory when a decision is made or an appeal with VCAT is lodged.

Please refer to the **PPARS - Return Data Sheet v7.9** and the **PPARS Data Dictionary 7.9** in your documentation.

## Can I perform searches on various data elements in the PPARS database?

All data elements within PPARS can be searched on, to do this login to PPARS and select the 'Applications' tab.

There are two types of searches they are;

- **Simple Search** – Only the main data elements can be searched on.
- **Advanced Search** – All data elements can be searched on.

## Can I download data from PPARS to a spreadsheet?

Yes, all data can be downloaded as either 'CSV' or 'XML' formats. This can then be used in Microsoft Excel for further analysis. You can download data from either the return level (which downloads all applications for a single return) or at the Application search level.

Figures from the PPARS Monthly report can also be downloaded for further analysis.

## Can I get access to another responsible authority's data?

Not without their consent, and only via an extract run by the PPARS Administrators.

All data remains the property of the supplying responsible authority.

## Can the public see all data submitted by a Responsible Authority?

No. The public can only see published data in reports that are marked explicitly as a Public Report, such as the PPARS Annual Report, monthly and quarterly reports.

For more information on Reports, refer to **Section 5 of the PPARS User Guide**.

# Data Field Entries

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## Does PPARS want the Lodgement Date or the Received Date for the Application start date?

The application received date is the correct field to be reported to PPARS for this process.

## Can there be multiple categories for an application?

Yes, PPARS accepts multiple categories for any single application, and expects them where appropriate.

## How do I determine the Estimated Assessment Effort?

**Simple** - Estimated less than 1 person day effort required to process the application

**Average** - Estimated 2 - 5 person days effort required to process the application

**Complex** - Estimated more than 5 person days effort required to process the application.

## How do I determine the Estimated Cost of Works for Amended Permits?

This should be the **difference** between the originally quoted value and the new value. If the value is unchanged, the estimated cost of works should be **zero (0)**, as there is no change.

## What is the definition of a 'Dwelling' for the purpose of the Number of New Dwellings (Yield) field?

As per Sections 74 and 75 of the Victorian Planning Provisions:

A dwelling is a building used as a self-contained residence which must include:

- a) a kitchen sink;
- b) food preparation facilities;
- c) a bath or shower; and
- d) a closet pan and wash basin.

## How do I determine the Number of New Dwellings (Yield)?

This should be the overall **yield of dwellings** that will be on the site if the permit is issued.

It is easiest to remember it as:

- How many on the site now?
- How many will be on the site if the permit is issued?
- The difference between the two is the yield.

This would mean if an application is for three new dwellings, but an existing dwelling is demolished to do so, the yield is '2'

This also means that if 2 small dwellings are removed to build one large one, the yield is '-1'.

## **How do I determine the Number of New Dwellings (Yield) for Amended Permits?**

This should be the difference in the overall **yield of dwellings** between what was originally proposed, and what the new amendment is proposing.

## **Can we set the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) to 'Yes' if we do not have a received date yet?**

Yes; the CHMP Received Date field is only required when a Permit or Notice of Decision is issued.

# Reports

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## **I cannot find reports for the data I just signed off. Where are they?**

The Monthly and Quarterly Reports are not automatically produced when a Return is signed off; they need to be generated by the PPARS Administrator when they receive notification.

If you would like a Report generated, or re-generated to reflect any changes to the data, please contact the PPARS Administrator.

## **The figures on the report don't match the drill down value. Is the report wrong?**

The reports generated are static documents; however as applications progress through the lifecycle, their details change. The report is only a snapshot of what the data looked like at that point in time the report was generated.

If you would like a Report re-generated to reflect any changes to the data, please contact PPARS Administration.

## **How often are Public Reports be published on PPARS?**

The Department produces Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Reports of planning application data, which will be available to the public through the PPARS homepage.

## **Can we get our own, specially designed monthly Reports?**

Yes. PPARS can produce Custom Reports using any data sets and fields a Council chooses. Contact the PPARS Administrator to discuss your requirements.

# Application Scenarios

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## **What happens if an application is lodged which turns out to be a secondary consent?**

A Deletion Return needs to be created and uploaded to remove the application. For more information on Correction (Deletion) Returns, refer to **Section 3.1 of the PPARS User Guide**.

If your vendor system does not yet have 'Deletion Return' functionality, please contact PPARS Administrator.

## **The Minister has called in one of our applications. What do we do with the original record?**

While not an entirely accurate reflection of the result, this application's outcome should be set to 'Withdrawn'.

## **We have issued a permit, yet we do not have a relevant Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) Received Date that the system is asking for. What do we do?**

Check that the application indeed has had a permit issued; if a CHMP was required, and a permit was issued without receiving the Plan, the permit may be deemed null and void.

If it turns out that a CHMP was not required, the CHMP field on your system should be set to 'No', and you will not be prompted for a date.

# Errors

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## Why am I getting an invalid log-in error when I enter my password?

Make sure you are attempting to log in to the correct website (see The PPAR System section).

Make sure you are using the correct username and password; your username should be in the format of Firstname.Surname, while your password (when generated) is nine (9) characters long and is made up of four alpha characters, one special character and four numeric characters.

Usernames and passwords are case sensitive. Make sure your **CAPS LOCK is off**.

If you are still having issues, please contact PPARS Administration.

## When submitting a Return to PPARS, my Vendor System returns an error: [PPARS-R00 Error] XML Syntax Error - Broken (not well formed) XML: (line... What does this mean?

The data you are trying to submit contains either a special character that has not been encoded correctly, or an empty field that should be filled in.

Tracking this down can be difficult, and you will need to send an email to the PPARS Administrator explaining the issue, along with the error message, and a copy of the XML file produced for the extract process.

## PPARS reports an error when I try to sign off a Return, as follows

Error: this responsible authority still has active applications. The following applications were active in the previous months return yet are missing from this return:

App.No.01

App.No.02

### What does this mean?

The Return you are trying to sign off is missing the applications listed. These applications were marked as 'Active' in the previous month's Return, and PPARS, following the lifecycle rules, is trying to account for them.

You will need to go into your system and attempt to ascertain why each of the applications listed has been left out of the submitted Return. Once this has been established you will need to do either of the following, depending upon the problem:

If the applications should be in the submitted return and were missed...

You will need to delete or reject the submitted Return. Then when the reason for the applications to be dropped has been corrected, you will need to regenerate and resubmit the Return so the missed applications are picked up. With these applications being properly reported, this Return will now sign off.

If the applications were reported incorrectly originally, and the submitted Return is correct...

You will need to run a Correction Return to alter the data reported to PPARS to reflect the data you are now submitting (see Correction Returns, Section 8 of the PPARS User Guide for more information).

If your vendor system does not have 'Correction Return' functionality, please contact PPARS Administration.

## **If I still don't understand the error message PPARS has reported, who do I contact?**

Please contact the PPARS support team on 1800 789 386 or email [planning.support@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:planning.support@delwp.vic.gov.au) for assistance.

[www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au)