

# Terms of Reference

Design Review

Development Facilitation Program



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## Purpose

These Terms of Reference outline the design review processes that may be undertaken as part of the Development Facilitation Program (DFP) and the role of the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA).

## The Development Facilitation Program (DFP)

The DFP has a commitment to facilitating high-quality design outcomes across Victoria, in line with **Victoria's Housing Statement** and the **Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria**.

The **Development Facilitation Program** seeks expert design review on all projects considered under Clause 53.23 Significant Residential Development and 53.22 Significant Economic Development of the Victoria Planning Provisions. Decision guidelines outlined within these Clause require the decision maker's consideration or the views of the Victorian Government Architect, as appropriate.

The design review processes embedded within the Development Facilitation Program aims to:

- **Support the Victorian Government's commitment to high-quality design outcomes**  
Where the impact of a project on the community and the built environment has potential to be substantial, the design review process aims to ensure a higher standard of design, encouraging architectural innovation, sustainability, and the integration of elements that benefit the community.
- **Provide independent expert design review processes**  
Design review processes aim to establish a transparent and impartial system where design proposals are assessed objectively, free from external influences. Expert design facilitation processes foster trust among stakeholders and uphold the integrity of decision-making.
- **Facilitate faster planning outcomes**  
Design review processes as part of the Development Facilitation Program are undertaken within fast-tracked timeframes. Embedded design review processes ensure that speed of development does not compromise high quality built-form outcomes for the State.

## The Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA)

The Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) are Victoria's independent design advisers for Victoria's public places and buildings. OVGA utilise in-house expertise and independent panel of experts to assist projects to achieve the best possible design and built form outcomes for the betterment of the State.



## The design review process

Project enquiries submitted through the Development Facilitation Portal are triaged internally by officers within the Development Facilitation Program to determine a projects eligibility. All projects undergo an initial design review by Department officers, with the extent of design review determined by a project's complexity and significance (see '[Determining design significance](#)' below).

While most proposals are reviewed internally by DFP urban design officers, there are instances where a project may undergo a complementary review by the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) or a design review panel (as appointed by the OVGA) if they meet '[design significance](#)' criteria.

## Determining 'design significance' for the purpose of design review

The DFP triage projects internally to determine whether a project meets 'design significance' criteria. Factors that *may* deem a project to be of 'design significance', warranting an additional complementary review by Office of the Victorian Government Architect are as follows:

- Civic or public-facing role (eg. Convention centre, hospital)
- Government investment and priorities (eg. Melbourne Metro, Victoria's Big Build Projects)
- Potential to innovate and improve standard practice (eg. sustainability, architectural excellence)
- Including a place listed on the Victorian Heritage Register
- Establishing a new benchmark or precedent project (eg. Renewal area, emerging typology of building).
- Some instances where development seeks to vary mandatory controls or deviate from local planning policy objectives.



## Design review streams

All projects considered by the Development Facilitation Program are subject to a design review process to ensure proposals appropriate for fast-tracking are delivering high-quality built form outcomes for Victoria (see **Figure 1. Design review streams**). The design review process aims to work with proponent teams providing merit-based, policy informed design recommendations to enhance built-form outcomes across the State.

While most projects are reviewed by the Development Facilitation Program's internal urban design officers, others are considered by the OVGA. Design review streams are as follows:

### 1. No design review required

The DFP may determine no design review is required or that more information is needed from the applicant before determining an appropriate design review stream.

### 2. Design review completed by DFP Urban Design

The DFP may determine an internal urban design review is necessary. An internal urban design review may include a written desktop evaluation of the proposal, comprising of architectural, landscape, urban or strategic design recommendations that will be issued to the applicant team. DFP's urban design officers, together with the assigned planner, may meet with the applicant team to discuss recommendations.

- a. A desktop assessment undertaken by DFP's urban design officers utilises the following design review proforma and assessment criteria.

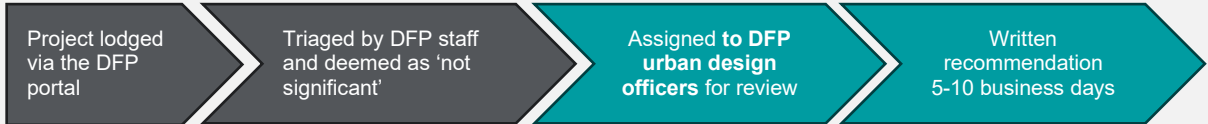
### 3. Design review completed by the OVGA

The DFP may determine a project meets 'design significance' criteria. In this instance, design review may be undertaken by the Office of the Victorian Government Architects design advisors. A written desktop evaluation of the proposal will be issued to the proponent team and on occasion, there may be a meeting between the reviewers and the proponent team.

- a. A desktop assessment undertaken by the OVGA utilises this design review proforma and assessment criteria
- b. In some instances, OVGA may recommend the engagement of a panel of independent technical experts to review the proposal. A workshop may be undertaken between the proponent team and the panel to discuss matters pertaining to the project. Workshops will be followed by written advice. Proponent teams will be notified if their projects will be considered by a panel of external technical experts.

## Design review streams

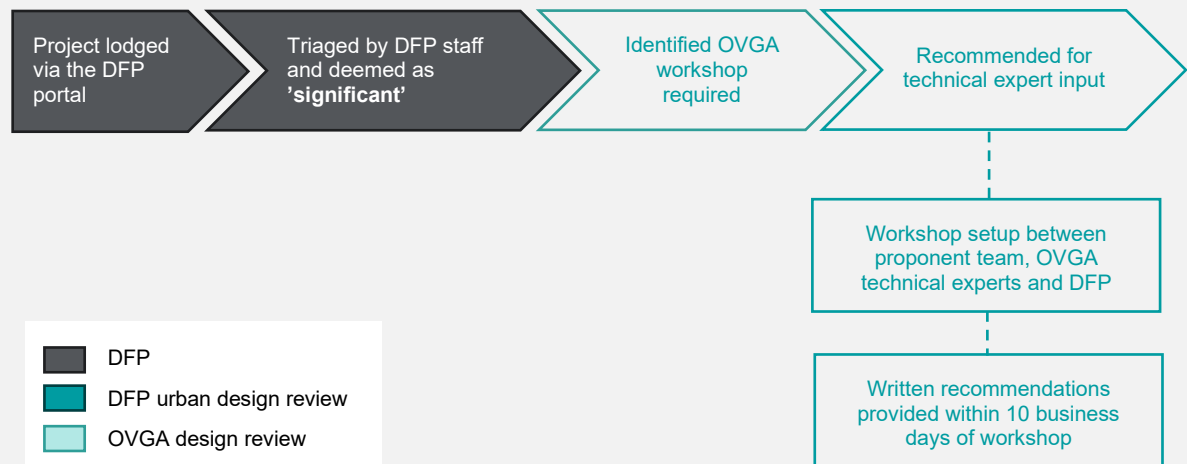
### 2a) DFP Urban Design Officer Review (2 weeks)



### 3A) OVGA Design Advisor Review (2 weeks)



### 3B) Panel of Independent Technical Experts (4 – 8 weeks)



- DFP
- DFP urban design review
- OVGA design review
- OVGA technical expert design review

Figure 1. Design review streams

## Timing of design review

Design advice provided by the DFP and the OVGA occurs within fast-tracked timeframes as part of the DFP process.

Authoring agency	Advice type	Timeframe
<b>DFP urban design</b>	Written advice	Within 2 weeks (or 10 business days) from advice being sought by the DFP planner
<b>OVGA design advisors</b>	Written advice	Within 2 weeks (or 10 business days) from the advice being sought by the DFP planner
<b>Expert technical panellists</b> (if recommended by OVGA)	Workshop followed by written advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Workshop set up between the proponent and the OVGA within 2 weeks of OVGA receiving the proposal</li><li>- Workshop held on agreed date between OVGA, DFP and proponent team</li><li>- Written advice and a summary of recommendations provided within 10 business days of the workshop date.</li></ul> Approximately 4-8 weeks for expert technical panellist engagement.

## Agency roles and responsibilities

This section defines the responsibilities of areas of Government and any other relevant parties.

Officer	Organisation	Overview
<b>DFP Manager or Director</b>	DTP/DFP	<p>The Manager/Director of DFP oversees the consideration of all pre-application enquiries and projects submitted to the Development Facilitation Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess and recommend projects for design review</li> <li>- Act as a conduit between design review agencies and proponent teams</li> <li>- Host design review workshops and discussions between agencies and proponent teams</li> <li>- Perform site visits on a case-by-case basis</li> <li>- Determine whether projects meet 'design significance criteria'</li> </ul>
<b>Urban Designer</b>	DTP/DFP	<p>The urban designer within the Development Facilitation team provides expert design advice on applications lodged through the Development Facilitation Portal. Advice provided by Urban Design is provided within 10 business days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide design advice on development applications</li> <li>- Hold design meetings/workshops with proponent teams</li> <li>- Perform site visits</li> <li>- Determine whether projects meet 'design significance criteria'</li> <li>- Liaise and triage projects with the OVGA for review</li> <li>- Provide written design advice to proponent teams</li> </ul>
<b>Planner</b>	DTP/DFP	<p>Statutory Planners within DFP oversee the assessment and case management of pre-application enquiries submitted to the Development Facilitation Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Undertake preliminary assessment of projects and triage eligibility for DFP consideration</li> <li>- Seek approval from DFP delegate or manager before triggering any design review process or determining that no design review is required.</li> </ul>





		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Circulate plans, background information and architectural drawing</li><li>- Act as the primary conduit between proponents and design reviewer</li><li>- Determine whether projects meet 'design significance criteria'</li><li>- Communicate outcomes of design review processes to the proponent.</li><li>- Perform site visits</li></ul>
<b>Government Architect and Design Advisors</b>	OVGA	<p>The OVGA analyse and provide design recommendations on proposals which are triggered by 'design significance' criteria. OVGA may host design review workshops with proponent teams and on occasion, with a panel of technical experts (if required).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Provide design advice on 'design significant' development applications referred by the DFP</li><li>- Triage development applications and enquiries with the DFP urban designers, planners and managers</li><li>- Advise on appropriateness of workshop sessions with expert technical panellists</li><li>- Return written advice and advice within 10 business days</li><li>- Perform site visits on a case-by-case basis</li></ul>