



Express DA application guideline

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Vision

‘An accelerated assessment initiative, that is simple and faster, driving forward the vision for Cairns through consistent decision making, championing good development outcomes’

Introduction

The Express Development Application (Express DA) assessment service is the Cairns Regional Council’s (Council) fast track assessment process for low complexity development applications.

The Express DA program allows suitably qualified professionals lodge certain types of planning applications in a way that enables the Council to promptly issue approvals for those applications. The program is based on decision ready applications for specific development types as nominated in the Express DA Accreditation Kit and in this Guideline.

Express DA relies on two specific processes to be in place to ensure its efficiency:

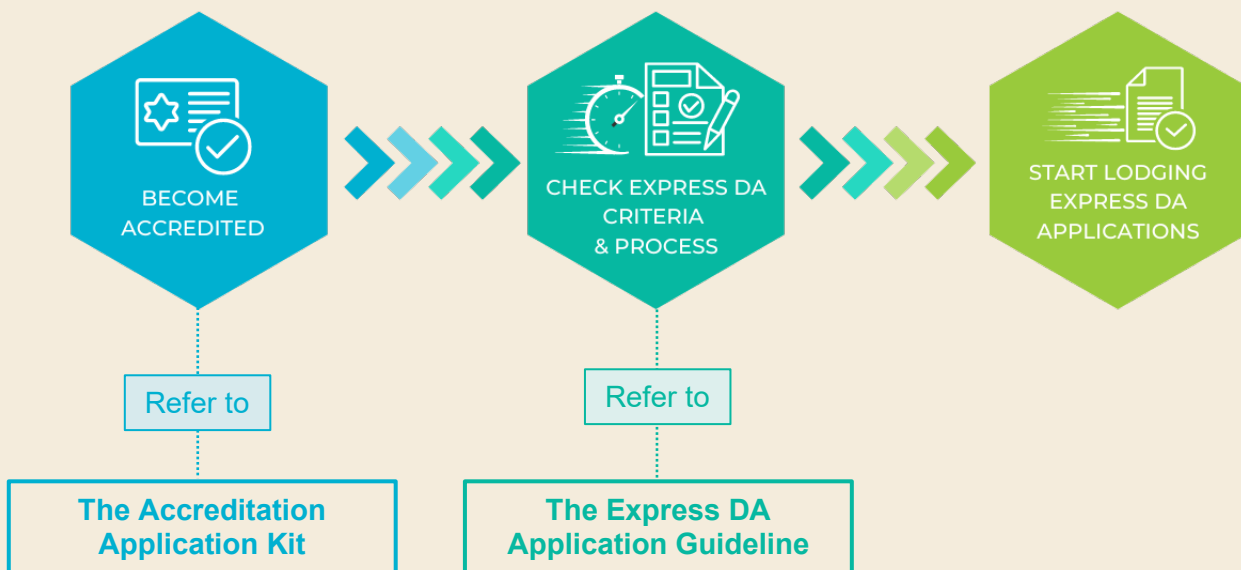
- Clear standards for nominated development applications based on the planning scheme and its associated benchmarks, and adopted Council Policies; and
- An accreditation system and process where in Council could reasonably rely on a suitably qualified consultant’s report to make a decision.

The aim of Express DA is to reduce timeframes and impacts on industry and Council, and to increase accountability and utilisation of professional consultants. Express DA protects the integrity of the planning assessment and approval process by empowering only accredited consultancies which have demonstrated that they possess appropriate expertise, experience, and integrity.

This two-part system is explained over two separate guideline documents:

- The Accreditation Application Kit; and
- The Express DA Application Guideline

For a full understanding of the program, both documents should be read in conjunction.



The Express DA application guideline

These guidelines are intended to provide accredited consultants with all the information they require to understand the Express DA assessment service, its processes and requirements.

Overall, these guidelines outline the following:

- the Express DA process
- what is and isn't an Express DA
- the type and standard of information required to accompany an Express DA

To use the Express DA assessment service, you will also need to become an accredited consultant. To find out more about how to become accredited, read our Accreditation Application Kit on Council's website www.cairns.qld.gov.au/express-da

Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are designed to be used by accredited consultants wishing to lodge an Express DA. This includes industry professionals such as planning consultants or building certifiers acting on behalf of the owner. Throughout these guidelines these parties are collectively referred to as 'the applicant'.

It is a requirement of this program that an accredited consultant be engaged to prepare an Express DA application and provide ongoing advice and support throughout the Express DA process. Applications not progressed through the Express DA process will be assessed and decided in line with legislative requirements and timeframes.

Who is an Accredited consultant?

An accredited consultant is a consultant that has demonstrated adequate competency to be considered 'accredited' for the purposes of the accreditation process. The accreditation is valid for an individual consultant whilst under the employment of their current consultancy or business.

The accreditation of professional consultants is a voluntary process of being certified as meeting minimum requirements designated by an accrediting system. It provides a mechanism for Council to be able to reasonably rely on a consultant's professional qualifications and experience. Its aim is to ensure the integrity of the process and qualify only consultants who, by reason of their expertise, experience, integrity and honesty can be relied upon to use the Express DA process and to provide relevant documentation including all permits and associated reports and drawings to Council.

Applicants lodging in this way are agreeing to follow and abide by Council's established procedure. Random auditing will be undertaken to assess and monitor the competence of accredited professionals.

Utilisation of such a process requires experience with lodging competent applications, knowledge of the relevant planning legislation, familiarity with the Council's planning schemes and policies and a high level of reliability in the consultant by the Council.

Roles and responsibilities

The Council (assessment manager) and applicants both play a role in the Express DA process, and it is important to understand the roles and responsibilities of the main parties who are involved. These are outlined below.

Applicant

The applicant for an Express DA is the person who made the application. As mentioned above the applicant must be an accredited consultant acting on behalf of the owner.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to prepare an Express DA in accordance with the requirements outlined in this guideline.

Assessment manager

The Council is responsible for assessing and deciding an Express DA and is known as the assessment

manager under the Legislation. Assessment of and decisions made on an Express DA will be against the requirements of the CairnsPlan.

The Express DA process

Overview

This part of the guideline outlines the overall process for an Express DA.

A key feature of the Express DA process is its approach to facilitating an upfront review of an application prior to formal lodgement and is an opportunity for our dedicated team of officers to work with applicants, support them with achieving the outcomes of the CairnsPlan and ensure smooth and faster assessment of the application once lodged.

The overall process

The Express DA assessment process is a straightforward process and is outlined in **Figure 1** below.

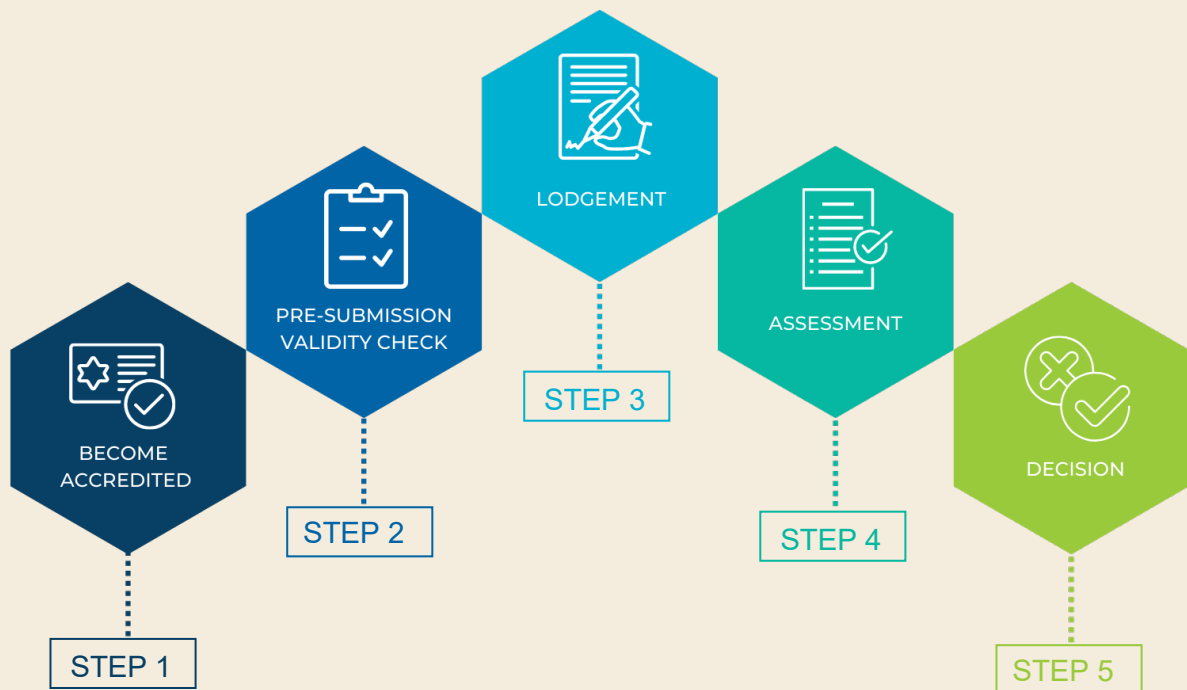


Figure 1 – The overall Express DA process.

Pre-submission validity check

What is pre-submission validity check?

Pre-submission validity check is when an Express DA is reviewed by our Development Assessment team prior to lodging an application to determine if it is lodgement ready. It is intended to ensure:

- applicants are on the right track.
- any potential issues are addressed up front.
- a smooth and faster assessment of the application once lodged.
- the likelihood of an information request is eliminated.
- applications are well made.

The pre-submission process is outlined in **Figure 2** below.

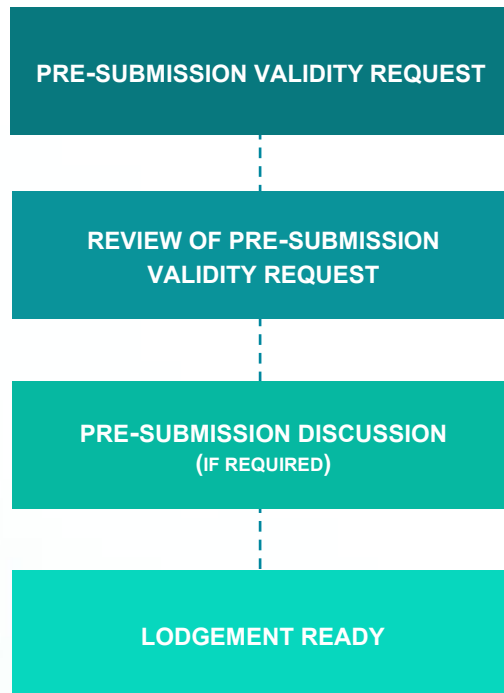


Figure 2 – The pre-submission process

Pre-submission is mandatory, free of charge and expected to take up to 10 business days from receipt of a pre-submission request.

Pre-submission request

A pre-submission request is made by the applicant to commence the Express DA process and must include the following:

- completed pre-submission request form.
- completed planning report template.
- completed DA Form 1.
- Supporting information (plans).

The pre-submission request form and planning report template are available on the Council’s website www.cairns.qld.gov.au/express-da

A pre-submission request is to be lodged electronically using DA Online via Cairns Regional Council’s website and in the following format:

Pre-submission request format	
Document/s	Format
Pre-submission request form	PDF or MS Word.
Express DA standard report template	MS Word only .
Development Application Form 1	PDF or MS Word.
Owner’s consent	PDF or MS Word.
Supporting information	PDF or MS Word.

Upon receipt of the pre-submission request, the applicant will receive written confirmation the request has been received.

Review of pre-submission request

Once the pre-submission request is received, Council's Development Assessment team will review the request to determine if the application can proceed to a pre-submission discussion (if required) or lodgement.

It is important to note, where it is determined the request has not met the Council's requirements or requires more information, the applicant will be notified as soon as possible.

The applicant will have one opportunity to rectify the request. Should it be determined the request has not been satisfactorily rectified as advised, the applicant will be notified to lodge their application through the standard development assessment process in accordance with the *Planning Act 2016*.

Pre-submission discussion

Where required, a pre-submission discussion is held between the applicant and the assessing officer to discuss our review of the request and advise if the application is lodgement ready.

Pre-submission discussions occur between 8.30am to 12 noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays. They can be conducted by, telephone, teleconference, video or face-to-face meeting. The applicant will be advised of the appropriate discussion approach the day before the scheduled discussion times.

A pre-submission discussion may not be required if the request is determined to be a high quality application. Where this occurs, a lodgement ready letter will be provided to the applicant who will be able to formally lodge their Express DA.

Lodgement ready

Following the pre-submission discussion, the applicant will be sent a written notice advising the application is ready to lodge (lodgement ready letter).

A lodgement ready letter will confirm the following:

- the Express DA is ready to lodge with no amendments or with amendments.
- proposed application details.
- application fee.
- lodgement format.

Pre-submission correspondence

As referenced above, the pre-submission process includes a number of written correspondence formalising the advice or decision provided by Council. The types of all pre-submission letters, timing of when these letters are issued and 'the next steps' are outlined in the table below.

	Purpose of the letter	When is this letter issued?	Next steps
Rectification Letter	This letter advises applicants of what needs to be amended to ensure that the development can be accepted as an Express DA. This letter provides the applicant with a second pre-submission review and another chance of being accepted as an Express DA.	This letter can only be issued to applicants on their first pre-submission review.	Undertake the actions/amendments outlined within the letter and submit a new pre-submission with the updated info to the Express DA inbox.
Ineligibility letter	This letter is issued to applicants if the proposed development has triggered an exclusion within Section 4 of the Express DA Applicant's Guidelines and cannot be accepted as an Express DA.	This letter can be issued after either the applicant's first or second pre-submission review.	The applicant will need to lodge a standard development application.
Lodgement Ready Letter (with amendments)	<p>This letter advises the applicant that the application can be accepted as an Express DA, however, the applicant will need to make minor amendments to the development before lodging the application.</p> <p>The types of amendments that will be requested are minor/limited and intended to be very specific.</p> <p>The discounted fee for the Express DA application will be outlined in this letter.</p>	This letter will be issued to applicants who have proposed development which can be accepted as an Express DA. This letter can be issued after either the first or second pre-submission review.	<p>Undertake the actions/amendments outlined within the letter and lodge an Express DA via the Council's website</p> <p>The amendments outlined in this letter will need to be undertaken prior to lodgement. If the application is not amended as per this letter, the application is not considered an Express DA as it does not meet the criteria and will proceed through the standard development assessment process.</p>
Lodgement Ready Letter	<p>This letter advises the applicant that the application can be accepted as an Express DA.</p> <p>The discounted fee for the Express DA application will be outlined in this letter.</p>	This letter will be issued to applicants who have proposed development which can be accepted as an Express DA. This letter can be issued after either the first or second pre-submission review.	Lodge the application via the Council's website .

Lodgement

An Express DA can be lodged via the **Council's website** once the applicant has received their lodgement ready letter and must include the following:

- DA Forms – as outlined on Council's website.
- Accredited consultant's report template.

The forms and planning report template must be completed in their entirety.

Application documentation is to be submitted as follows:

Lodgement – Application format

Document/s	Titled	Format
Forms Lodgement ready letter	Forms	Combined as one single PDF.
Accredited consultant report	Consultant report	Single MS word document
Drawings/Plans	Plans	Combined as one single PDF.

Accredited Consultants Report template

As part of lodging an Express DA, the accredited consultant is required to use the *accredited consultant's* report template. This report template has been developed to provide a standard template for accredited consultants to use when lodging an Express DA application.

The accredited consultant is required to identify all the Acceptable Outcomes that the development does not achieve and to provide an accompanying justification against the corresponding Performance Outcome. It is not adequate to simply state that the proposal 'complies' with the Performance Outcome. If the proposal complies with all applicable Performance Outcomes and Acceptable Outcomes the accredited consultant is to note this within the report.

The report template should be populated using a 'report by exception' approach and only discuss the issues where a proposed development does not meet an acceptable outcome and requires further discussion.

The report template includes prompts and guidance to assist applicants to complete and provide the necessary information.

Assessment

Assessment of the Express DA commences upon receipt of the application. Assessment is undertaken by our Development Assessment team who will determine the application's compliance with the CairnsPlan assessment benchmarks.

Because the Express DA process includes pre-submission, which eliminates the need for an information request, it is envisaged the assessment of an Express DA to be relatively quick in comparison to the Council's standard development application assessment process.

Whilst the intent of the Express DA process is to avoid the issuing of an information request, Council reserves the right to issue one when required. This means Council cannot guarantee a decision being made on the application within 10 business days.

Decision

An applicant can expect a decision on an Express DA within 10 business days after the application is properly made. This decision is provided in writing and known as a decision notice and includes but is not limited to:

- applicant details.
- application details.
- location details.
- decision date and details.
- details of the approval.
- development conditions.
- further development permits required.
- currency period.
- statement of reasons.

Where to start

Overview

This part of the guideline broadly outlines where to start in regard to:

- understanding the CairnsPlan and how it relates to the Express DA process.
- pre-checks.
- eligibility.

CairnsPlan property report

As a starting point, it is recommended applicants access Council's [interactive mapping tool](#) and generate a CairnsPlan property report. This report will provide applicants with property specific information such as:

- zoning.
- area of property.
- applicable overlay maps.

This information is critical to using the CairnsPlan and determining if a development proposal is eligible for assessment through the Express DA process.

The CairnsPlan

The CairnsPlan has been prepared in consultation with the community to guide the development of Cairns and sets out Council's intention for the future development throughout the region, over the next 20 years.

For ease of understanding, the CairnsPlan is used as a 'set of rules' to assess development applications against. These 'rules' are included in assessment benchmarks. Assessment benchmarks include:

- the strategic framework.
- zone codes.
- overlay codes.
- development codes.

For an Express DA the primary assessment benchmarks are the applicable zone, overlay and development codes.

Part 1 of the CairnsPlan provides an introduction to the CairnsPlan and other key information.

Where to find assessment benchmarks

Assessment benchmarks are outlined in the tables in Part 5 – Tables of assessment.

For an Express DA the primary tables of assessment are Material Change of Use, Building Works and Overlays within the Low, Low-Medium and Medium Residential Density Zones. **Part 5** of the CairnsPlan provides further detail about reading and using the tables of assessment.

What applications can be assessed through the Express DA process?

Overview

This part of the guideline outlines the types of development applications which are eligible for assessment through the Express DA process.

Development applications which can progress through the Express DA process are those which Council considers to be low complexity. Low complexity relates to a development's impacts including:

- the scale of the impact.
- the Council's ability to regulate the impact and make appropriately informed decisions.
- the alignment with the aspirations expressed in the CairnsPlan

With this in mind, certain accepted land uses are considered to be low complexity Express DAs. This is because the CairnsPlan has taken into consideration the impacts of development when determining the appropriate level of assessment for land use activities throughout the region.

Eligibility

The types of applications eligible for assessment under the Express DA process are certain land use activities in specific zones which is accepted development subject to requirements.



For ease of understanding, the below tables have been developed for each development type.

Eligibility criteria for Express DA development Applications

The eligible criteria for development applications under the Express DA program is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Eligible Development Types

Land Use		Inclusion
Dwelling House		<p>Residential zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low density residential - Low Medium density residential - Medium density residential <hr/> <p>Category of development and assessment</p> <p>Meets the requirement of accepted development under the Dwelling House Code with the exception of minor performance outcomes (a total of 5 or less).</p>
Assessment Benchmarks		
Applicable Development codes		Acceptable outcome
Dwelling House Code	Acceptable Outcome AO1	✓ May propose non compliances
	Acceptable Outcome AO2	✓ May propose non compliances
	Acceptable Outcome AO3	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO4	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO5	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO6	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO7	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO8	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO9	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO10	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO11	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO12	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO13	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
	Acceptable Outcome AO14	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Vegetation Management Code		✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Referral Agency		
Applicable referral agency benchmarks		Acceptable outcome
MP 1.1 – Design and Siting Standard for Single Detached Housing – on lots under 450m2		✓ May propose non compliances
MP 1.2 – Design and Siting Standard for Single Detached Housing – on lots 450m2 and over		✓ May propose non compliances
CairnsPlan 1.6 - Building work regulated under the planning scheme		✓ May propose non compliances
CairnsPlan1.8 - Local government administrative matters		✓ May propose non compliances

Land Use	Inclusion
Dual Occupancy	<p>Residential zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low density residential - Low Medium density residential - Medium density residential
	<p>Category of development and assessment</p> <p>Meets the requirement of accepted development under the Dual Occupancy Code with the exception of minor performance outcomes (a total of 5 or less).</p>

Assessment Benchmarks	
Applicable Zone codes	Acceptable outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low Density Residential Code - Low Medium Density Residential Code - Medium Density Residential Code 	✓ May propose non compliances
Applicable Development codes	Acceptable outcome
Dual Occupancy Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Excavation and Filling Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Infrastructure Works Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Parking and Access Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Vegetation Management Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Applicable Overlays	Acceptable outcome
Airport Environs Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Bushfire Hazard Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Coastal Processes Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Flood and Inundation Hazards Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Hillslopes Overlay Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Natural Areas Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Potential Landslip Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes

Land Use	Inclusion
Building Work & Minor Building Work	<p>Residential zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low density residential - Low Medium density residential - Medium density residential <hr/> <p>Category of development and assessment</p> <p>Accepted subject to requirements where a total of 5 or less non compliances against the CairnsPlan 2016 are proposed</p>
Assessment Benchmarks	
Applicable Zone codes	Acceptable outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low Density Residential Code - Low Medium Density Residential Code - Medium Density Residential Code 	✓ May propose non compliances
Applicable Development codes	Acceptable outcome
Dwelling House Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Dual Occupancy Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Excavation and Filling Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Infrastructure Works Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Multiple Dwelling and Short-Term Accommodation Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Applicable Overlay Codes	Acceptable outcome
Airport Environs Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Coastal Processes Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Flood and Inundation Hazards Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Hillslopes Overlay Code	✓ May propose non compliances
Natural Areas Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Neighbourhood Character Overlay Code	✗ Must meet acceptable outcomes
Referral Agency	
Applicable referral agency benchmarks	Acceptable outcome
MP 1.1 – Design and Siting Standard for Single Detached Housing – on lots under 450m2	✓ May propose non compliances
MP 1.2 – Design and Siting Standard for Single Detached Housing – on lots 450m2 and over	✓ May propose non compliances
CairnsPlan 1.6 - Building work regulated under the planning scheme	✓ May propose non compliances
CairnsPlan1.8 - Local government administrative matters	✓ May propose non compliances

Exclusions

This section outlines the instances (exclusions) when an application **is not eligible** for Express DA assessment.

To be clear, where the application is subject to any of the exclusions outlined in the tables below, the application **is not eligible** for assessment under the Express DA process even if it is located in an eligible zone and is an eligible land use.

Table 3 - Exclusions

Activity	Exclusion
Any Express DA	State referral agency assessment
	Where the development requires referral to a state agency for assessment and the applicant has not received pre-approval support from the State agency for the proposed development.
	Referral Agency Assessment
	Where the development requires referral to an advice agency for advice and the applicant has not received pre-approval support from the relevant advice agency for the proposed development.
	Application Type
	Where the development is impact assessable.
	Approved Plan
	Where the works trigger the need for a Minor / Other Change, for example to a Reconfiguring a Lot approval with a Building Envelope.
	Preliminary Approval
	Where the land is subject to a Preliminary Approval for a Variation Request.
Specialist Reports	
Where the assessment benchmark requires a specialist report.	
This is to ensure the Council can assess the application within a 10 business day timeframe and minimise the likelihood of an information request or specialist input.	

CairnsPlan exclusions

Overlays

Activity	Exclusion
Any Express DA	Where the development is identified on any of the following overlay maps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood Character Overlay Places of Significance Overlay

What information needs to accompany an Express DA?

Overview

This part of the guideline outlines the type and standard of information required to accompany an Express DA and is referred to as 'application material'.

Council requires applicants to submit application material which is of a high quality. An application of this quality allows for an accurate and timely assessment and minimises the likelihood of an information request.

When an applicant submits application material in accordance with **section 5.2** and those outlined in **section 4.2.4** it is considered a well-made and high quality application.

Application material

The application material required to accompany an Express DA is outlined in:

- **Section 4.2.4** - Assessment benchmarks which require specialist reports, statements and/or drawings; and
- **Tables 5.2 (1) to 5.2 (3)** below.

Table 5 – Templates – Express DA	
Application material	Requirements / standard
Planning report template	<p>A completed Accredited Consultants Report template, identifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the development complies with the relevant specific benchmarks for assessment <p>Note: The Accredited Consultancy Report template is available on Council's website and includes guidance on how to discuss compliance with relevant assessment benchmarks.</p>

Table 5 – Drawings – Express DA	
Application material	Requirements/ standard
All drawings	<p>All drawings must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly illustrate the proposed development. • Be drawn to scale. • Include a north point. • Include references such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Drawing title. ○ Date. ○ Version. ○ Who has prepared the drawing.
Site drawing	<p>Site drawing, identifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed development, including any ancillary structures. • Existing structures to be retained as part of the development. • Dimensions of setbacks to all boundaries. • Any vegetation to be retained. • Communal space and private open space (when they form part of the proposed development). • Existing or proposed infrastructure within and external to the site (e.g. within the road reserve fronting the site). • Site property boundaries. • Dimensions of bin storage point. • Dimensions of bin servicing point. • Dimensions of communal space and private open space (when they form part of the proposed development). <p>Any of the specific site drawing requirements identified in section 4.2.4.</p>

Application material	Requirements / standard
Floor drawing	<p>Floor drawing, identifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each floor level, including roof level. • Any of the specific floor drawing requirements identified in section 4.2.4.
Elevation drawing	<p>Elevation drawing of each side of the development, identifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building height. • Materials, finishes and colour palette for the development (where relevant). • Dimensions and colour of any screen/s. • Any specific elevation drawing requirements identified in section 4.2.4. <p>Note: Elevation drawings are not required if the development is located within an existing building and no changes are proposed.</p>

Where can I get help?

The Council's dedicated Express Development Assessment team is here to help. Contact us on:

Email: expressda@cairns.qld.gov.au

Phone: 1300 69 22 47

More information: www.cairns.qld.gov.au

Where can I find templates and other supporting information?

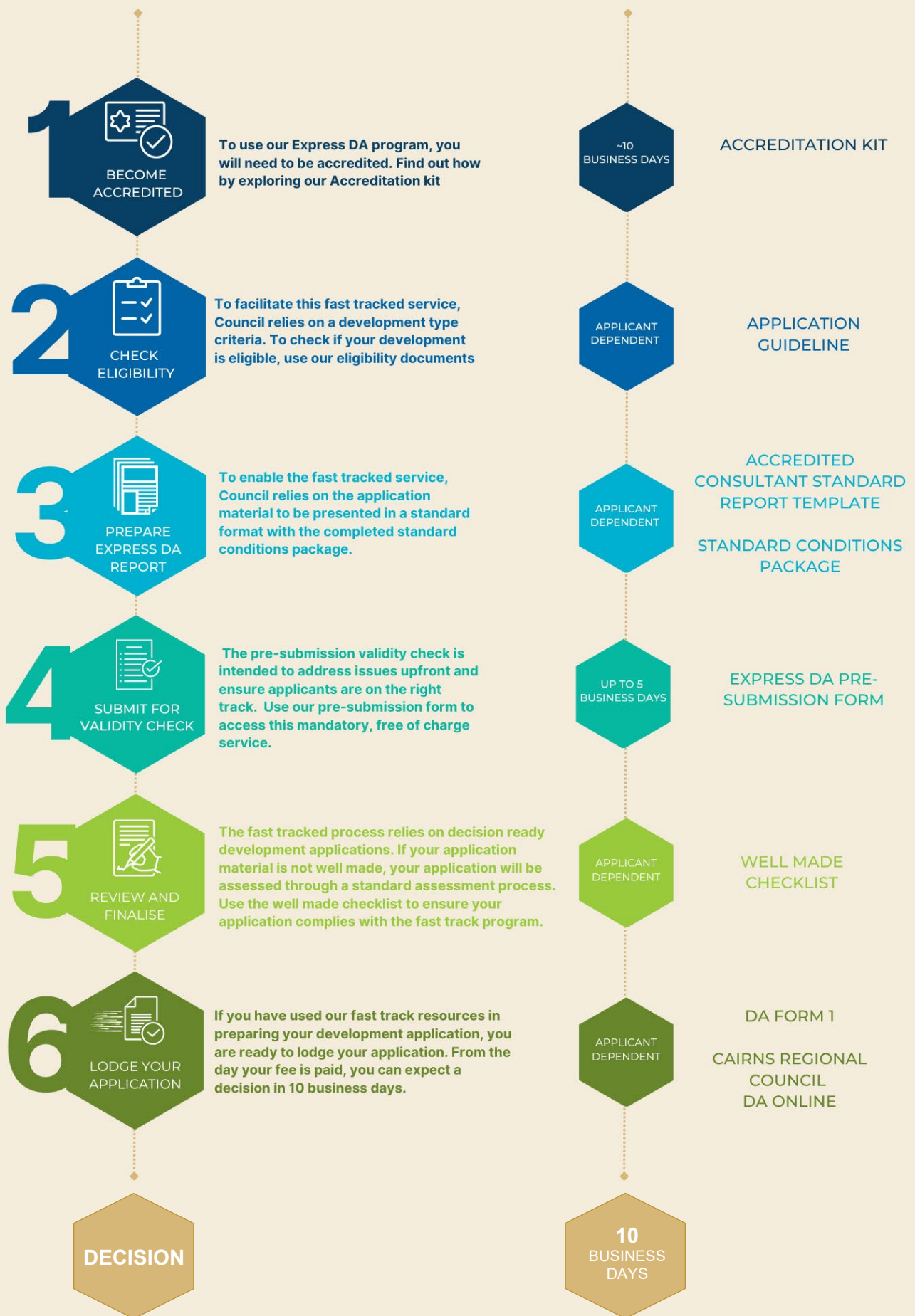
The following templates are available on the Council's website www.cairns.qld.gov.au

- Planning report template.
- Code templates.

Also available on Council's website are:

- Example completed planning reports and code templates.
- Forms:
 - [Pre-submission request form.](#)
 - [Express DA – Accreditation Kit.](#)
 - [Express DA – Accredited Consultants Report.](#)

Attachment 1 – Express DA Process



MORE INFORMATION

P: 1300 69 22 47

Email: info@cairns.qld.gov.au

Web: www.cairns.qld.gov.au



Cairns
REGIONAL COUNCIL

