

Planning response to COVID-19

Changes to planning rules

This fact sheet provides information and advice on the temporary Planning rules and amendments that have been implemented during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic.

Exceptions and amendments relate to; hours of operation for food and retail businesses, medical and health facilities, working from home and projects related to the Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan.

Any specific questions and requests for assistance should be directed to Development Assessment Services who can be contacted by telephone at 8999 6046 or email at Das.NTG@nt.gov.au.

Hours of operation for food and retail businesses

The Planning Minister and Development Consent Authority (DCA) have lifted all restrictions imposed through conditions of Development Permits across the NT that limit the hours of operation or times of delivery for food and retail businesses for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will serve to ensure there are no planning restrictions disrupting the supply chain bringing food and essential supplies to our supermarkets and shops.

Medical and health related facilities

Planning rules have temporarily been changed to allow the rapid deployment of medical and health related facilities responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The effect of this change has been to remove any need for approval under the *Planning Act 1999* for “the temporary use and/or development of land for medical or health related activities associated with the need to rapidly respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, as advised necessary by a department or institutional establishment of the Crown.” This will ensure that as the situation changes, the planning system helps to facilitate the delivery of health and medical related facilities to serve the needs of Territorians.

Working from home

The Planning Minister and DCA have lifted current restrictions that apply to people working from home, where the persons or business is operating reasonably and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If Territorians need to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no planning hurdles to stop them from doing so in a reasonable manner which respects their neighbours' amenity.

Please remember that all other relevant legislation (such as health, building and fire requirements) which are there to protect the safety of Territorians are still applicable.

Projects related to the Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan

Some regulations associated with the planning approval process have been temporarily suspended for works undertaken in association with the NT Government's recent Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan.

The planning rules have temporarily been lifted so that there will be no need for the lodgement of an application under the *Planning Act 1999* before getting a building permit to start construction where:

- Internal works, physical upgrades and improvement are partially funded by any of the three schemes within the 'Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan'; and
- External works are partially or wholly funded by the Home Improvement Scheme within the 'Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan', so long as such works fully comply with the requirements of the NT Planning Scheme.

Please note that a building permit would still be required and this exemption does not enable a change of land use or completely new development to occur without approval.

Examples of projects that would normally require planning approval, but will now be exempt would be as follows:

Business Improvement Grant

For example, (1) a café owner in Alice Springs would like to convert an internal storage area to be used for restaurant seating, or (2) a shop owner would like to construct an internal mezzanine floor. These would both likely require planning approval taking between 2-8 weeks to get a permit depending on the application type.

No planning approval will now be needed and both the café and shop owners can move straight to obtaining a building permit.

Immediate Works Grant

For example (1) a social club in Palmerston would like to change a tea room into an office or seating area or (2) a sports club would like to change an unused internal storage area to extend its bar. Both of these would usually need planning approval taking between 2-8 weeks depending on the application type.

No planning approval will now be needed and both clubs can move straight to obtaining a building permit.

Home Improvement Scheme

For example (1) a unit owner in Larrakeyah would like to convert part of a lounge room and study to a bedroom, or (2) a townhouse owner in the Darwin CBD would like to build a pergola over a patio. Both of these would usually need planning approval taking between 2-8 weeks depending on the application type.

No planning approval will now be needed and the owners can move straight to obtaining a building permit.

Planning system operations

It is intended that the Planning system will continue to operate for the duration of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

All meetings of both the NT Planning Commission and the DCA will continue as currently scheduled, but will be conducted using online video and teleconference facilities.

For more information, visit coronavirus.nt.gov.au

For more information on COVID-19 in the NT

Web: <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>

Phone: 1800 020 080 - *Australian Coronavirus Information Line*

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Who should I contact if I have any questions about whether any planning approval is necessary for my project?**

All planning questions should be directed to Development Assessment Services who can be contacted by telephone at 8999 6046 or email at Das.NTG@nt.gov.au.

- 2) Where can I get additional information on the Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan?**

Information is available at <https://business.nt.gov.au/recovery>.

- 3) Are the new exemptions for works funded by the Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan permanent?**

The exceptions will only be available for the life of the funding schemes available through the Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan.

- 4) Will the new exception in the NT Planning Scheme mean that works funded by the Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan are not subject to other Government regulations?**

No. All other Government legislation will need to be complied with, including any applicable building regulations.

- 5) If I am being disturbed by noise associated with late night deliveries to a nearby shop or supermarket, what should I do?**

Contact Development Assessment Services on telephone at 8999 6046 or email at Das.NTG@nt.gov.au and they will contact the business operator and seek to resolve the issues you may be experiencing.

- 6) Will restrictions imposed on a development permit limiting the hours of operation or times of delivery for food and retail businesses be lifted indefinitely?**

No. Where restrictions imposed on a development permit limit the hours of operation or times of delivery for food and retail businesses these will only be lifted for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 7) What is the benefit of the new exception that allows medical or health activities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to be established without planning permission?**

This exception will allow the relevant government health authorities to establish medical and health clinics without delay, and in response to the immediate needs of the community.

8) Will this new exception for medical and health clinics be permanent?

No. A use or development established under the exception will be required to cease when the pandemic is declared complete. The site used for any temporary medical or health activity will need to be reinstated to its previous condition upon cessation (unless planning permission has otherwise been given to establish the use on a permanent basis).

9) How do I participate in a public hearing of the DCA or the NT Planning Commission either via online video or teleconference facilities?

You will be able to participate from home. If you have lodged a public submission in relation to an application (which can be lodged either via post or online through the NT Planning Notices website at <https://nt.gov.au/property/building-and-development/hearings-and-notices/planning-notices-online>) you will receive an invitation to attend the meeting remotely and details will be provided approximately 10 days prior to the meeting in relation to the date and time of the meeting, as well as in regard to how to participate in the meeting.