PlanSA

PlanSA ePlanning System Improvements Action Plan Outcomes

A response to feedback received via the 2022 Customer Survey

Government of South Australia

Department for Housing and Urban Development

Overview

PlanSA is widely recognized as one of the best planning systems in Australia. Both the Business Council of Australia and Housing Industry Association have ranked it No. 1 for the comprehensive and complex service it provides South Australians and its important work in delivering outcomes aligned with the Government of South Australia's Housing Roadmap.

It is a priority for PlanSA to continue to improve, evolve and innovate its service offering. This has been a key pillar of PlanSA's impact since its inception in 2021. There is continuous work being done to ensure that the clients of PlanSA – whether they be community, developers, state agencies or councils – have an opportunity to influence the services offered via the PlanSA portal.

One of the key initiatives to harness this user feedback is through customer survey. A survey gives the broad spectrum of PlanSA users a platform to provide feedback, make suggestions and be a part of the solution. The first comprehensive survey was conducted in 2022 and from this a significant body of work to enhance PlanSA was undertaken. We listened to our customers and it was their feedback that has contributed significantly to the evolution of the portal.

In 2025, PlanSA will be undertaking its next thorough investigation of what our customers require of PlanSA. A comprehensive survey will be provided to all PlanSA stakeholders in the coming months. It will be the feedback from this survey that sets the path for PlanSA in the coming years.

In preparation for the 2025 Survey, it is an opportune time to provide a detailed update on the Action Plan that was developed following the 2022 survey.

We encourage you to be involved in shaping the future of PlanSA by taking part in the 2025 Survey.

Introduction

PlanSA's inaugural survey was conducted by market research company Action Market Research (AMR) in June-July 2022 to provide feedback on South Australia's ePlanning system. Feedback was obtained from over 1500 users of the system including council staff, planning and building professionals and community members who had interacted with the electronic planning system in the past 12-months.
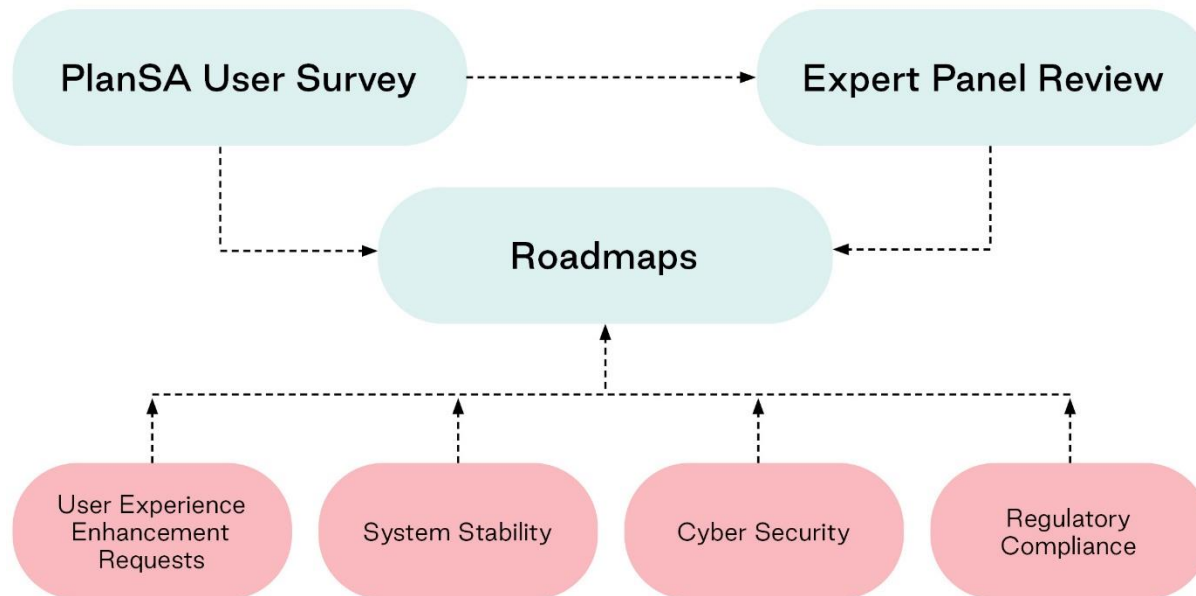
The survey explored the overall level of customer satisfaction in PlanSA, as a business unit within Planning and Land Use Services (PLUS) and the four elements that make up the ePlanning platform:

- the PlanSA website,
- the Development Application Processing (DAP) system,
- the Online Planning and Design Code, and
- the South Australian Property and Planning Atlas (SAPPA).

In addition, the survey provided insights into customer satisfaction levels with PlanSA's support services and comparison with the previous planning system, managed individually by South Australian councils.

PlanSA has undertaken a detailed review of the feedback from the survey and the Expert Panel as part of the Planning System Implementation Review and recommendations to the publish an Action Plan to implement a series of system improvements to address the key issues raised, and to further improve the PlanSA customer experience and useability of its systems.

This report provides an update on the outcomes of the Action Plan and provides further details on the implementation of key action points.

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PlanSA User Survey ----> Expert Panel Review
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User        System  Cyber    Regulatory
Experience  Stability Security Compliance
Enhancement
Requests
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The feedback provided in the PlanSA User Survey has been categorised into groups: community, decision makers, applicants (including volume applications) and referral agencies. In addition, the action plan takes into consideration the preliminary feedback from the Expert Panel. Further information regarding the Action Plan can be found here.

Summary

Feedback obtained from the survey has been used to inform the quarterly PlanSA roadmap that report on completed, in-progress, and planned enhancement projects. These projects are categorised by system stability, cyber security, regulatory compliance, and user experience improvements and are updated quarterly on the PlanSA portal.

To date, a total of 583 enhancements have been delivered since the survey. With the majority relating to feedback received from the survey. Further information on enhancements delivered can be found on the PlanSA website via the [Release Notes page](#).

Of the fourteen action categories for short to medium term priorities, six have been fully delivered, with the rest being captured in the PlanSA roadmaps and scheduled to be delivered in the near future. A section to detail outcomes for each action plan point is outlined below.

Action Plan & Outcomes

Short Term Priorities

Improvements to the Section 7 data extract		
Action 1.1	Amend the existing data extract through formatting improvements along with additional information relating to building indemnity insurance and development approval authorisation dates.	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Council	• The data extract is difficult to read and check
PlanSA Response	A review of the data extract will be undertaken against the feedback that has been received by councils and other stakeholders using this extract, including conveyancers. There are opportunities for improvements to the formatting, ordering of conditions and information, and its content based on the framework outlined within the *Land and Business (Sales and Conveyancing) Act*.	
Outcome - COMPLETE	• Amended the existing data extract with additional information relating to building indemnity insurance and refinements to the formatting in relation to building indemnity insurance • Implemented functionality to generate a data extract for Section 7 based on a child title or plan parcel number search • Provisioned additional explanatory text to the section of the data extract related to significant tree, clarifying that there are different types of regulated/protected trees that may be present on the land. • Additional information now available on the extract; date extract was created, application status, • Applications lodged through the transitional process, where the Building Consent has no ongoing conditions, will now appear on the data extract along with any associated Building Indemnity Insurance details.	

	• Removed the Code Amendment section from the extract as this information can be found via the Property Interest Report through Land Services SA

Group conditions by element type

Action 1.2	Provide the ability to store conditions and notes grouped by a key so that typically applied conditions and notes can be applied without re-typing or re-selecting from a master condition and notes list.
	Survey Respondent · **Feedback**
	Council · • Conditions should be able to be grouped by category i.e., Traffic, stormwater, illumination.
PlanSA Response	This suggested enhancement supports assessment efficiency for decision-makers within the system. The functionality can be extended to general advisory notes and reserved matters. Other enhancements requested by stakeholders through the PlanSA Service Desk such as the ability to order, rename, and preview conditions and notes, will also be included in this project.
Outcome - COMPLETE	Within the Your Organisation tab in DAP, the functionality has been added for Organisation Administrators to create a group of 'standard' conditions, advisory notes and reserved matters that can then be selected and applied at the Consent level.The ability to order, rename, and preview conditions and notes, was also be included in this project.

Development Application Processing (DAP) dashboard improvements

Action 1.3	Enhanced dashboard to improve accessibility of relevant information linked to assigned development applications including tasking, assessment clocks, fee, and referral management.
	Survey Respondent · **Feedback**
	Council · • Interface is not user-friendly and difficult to navigate • Dashboards to be consistent across all screens and provide more information
	Accredited Professionals · • Finding allocated applications and statuses is difficult • Should only see applications that are allocated to the user

	Referral Agencies	• Applications can currently be filed under numerous tabs - for example 'For your Action' and 'Waiting' at the same time
PlanSA Response	Enhancement requests relating to dashboards account for more than 10 percent of the total number of open enhancement requests received by the Service Desk. As the number of applications within the system increase, the dashboards are becoming increasingly complex to manage within the existing layout and ordering of information. PlanSA will develop a new dashboard design and provide greater flexibility for users to create their own filters to better manage their workloads.	
Outcome – **IN PROGRESS**	A new dashboard has been built to provide easier visibility and greater flexibility for Relevant Authorities and Referral Agencies to manage their own workloads. It was made available towards the end of 2024 and will replace the homepage of the DAP in early 2025. In addition, in order to replace the DAP homepage, the project scope needed to be expanded to include a new dashboard for applicants to manage their applications. The main features of the new dashboard include; • Simplified access to tasks that require action (my tasks) • Simplified views of all applications allocated to an organisation • Improved searching, filtering and sorting across the Homepage and Dashboards • Ability for users to create their own filters to better manage their workloads	

Subscription service improvements		
Action 1.4	Create additional subscription options so that community members and system users can subscribe to be notified when certain types of applications are lodged, or where there is a public notification in progress.	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Community Member	• Be notified about significant developments in my area
PlanSA Response	The PlanSA website already includes some subscription options, including the ability to subscribe to applications within a council area, and to status changes of Code Amendments. This functionality can be updated to increase the subscription options available to PlanSA users. In future, it will include the ability to be notified of certain forms of development and applications currently on public notice, to allow the community to have their say more easily.	

Outcome - COMPLETE	Along with the subscription services that were available for the Public Register, a new subscription service has been made available for **Applications on Public Notice,** which provides the ability to subscribe to receive alerts for development applications that have commenced public notification within a specified council area(s) and suburb(s).
	When subscribing to be notified of lodged development applications, users can also now select to be notified of applications containing the following development types (Elements):
	• tree-damaging activity
	• demolition
	• telecommunications facility
	• tourist accommodation
	• land division

Map on website showing development applications	
Action 1.5	Create a web page on the PlanSA website showing development applications on an interactive map, along with links to the public register development application record.

Survey Respondent	Feedback
Community Member	• Be able to locate development applications on a map

PlanSA Response	A Code Amendment Map has previously been introduced to allow users to view Code Amendments by geographical and council area. This existing functionality will be expanded to also display applications on public consultation across the State, including performance assessed, restricted, crown and major developments.
Outcome - COMPLETE	The interactive **development application register map viewer** has been introduced that shows development applications (including Crown developments proposed by the state, and Impact Assessed development). The map includes links to the PlanSA website where you can view further details about each application including the application/consent status, and publicly available documents.

Also available is the interactive **current notified development map viewer.** This map viewer shows all development applications currently being notified (including Crown Developments and major projects) and includes links to the relevant PlanSA webpages where you can view the related plans and details.

Creation of a builders database

Action 1.6	Create a centralised database for builder information (or access to Consumer Business Services data) that is integrated into the PlanSA system to remove the requirement for builder data to be re-entered for each application and building notification.	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Council	• Reduce the need for multiple data entry points by creating a builders database
PlanSA Response	A project is being considered to centralise builder contact information, so it is entered once, and made available within the DAP, allowing users to search and select a builder rather than enter the contact details each time. As further analysis is required to determine if there can be integration between volume builder IT systems and the DAP, this is out of scope for action 1.6 but will be considered separately.	
Outcome - IN PROGRESS	In August 2024, Planning and Land Use Services and the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs signed a Data Sharing Memorandum of Administrative Agreement. Teams from both parties are now working through the business rules, associated API updates and the business requirements for the changes to the DAP system.	

Planning and Design Code as a checklist document

Action 1.7	Improve on the existing code policy snapshot by creating a checklist document for planning consents that lists the code rules which can then be used to improve consistency and efficiency.	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**

	Councils	• There should be a checklist in the DAP to be used for assessment
PlanSA Response	Solution options are being considered to convert the code policy snapshot into a checklist document and be made available to decision-makers during the verification and assessment process. This will provide consistency for assessors and relevant authorities.	
Outcome - COMPLETE	The Code Rules Checklist tool is available in DAP for Planning Consent applications that have a status of "in verification" or "awaiting verification". The Generate checklist tool will identify elements where a DTS pathway exists, with the ability to generate a checklist in Microsoft Word format, includes checkboxes for each DTS provision and an area to provide comments. The checklist can be downloaded, completed, and saved back to the document store as evidence that elements within an application are able/unable to be assessed as a DTS form of development.	

Simplified submission process		
Action 1.9	Improve and simplify the layout of the application submission form.	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Council	• Improve process and encourage better quality of information from applicants
	Applicants	• Outline costs involved at beginning of application • Needs a process map at the top to click forward and back
PlanSA Response	The current development application form in the DAP will be improved to make it easier for applicants to understand and use. The submission process will be assisted by providing a more user-friendly overview of the development application process and the fees that may be applicable through the life of an application.	

Outcome-
IN PROGRESS
	• The Enhancement for organisations to be able to setup frequently used contacts has been delivered. Organisation administrators can now set up standard contacts for the following contacts: applicant, primary, invoice, builder, registered building work supervisor and private certifier. Standard contacts can be set to appear as application defaults or selected throughout the application process.
	• Further improvements to be developed include:
	    o Further application contact improvements (UI)
	    o Declaration improvements to UI and content
	    o Location improvement to UI and functionality
	    o Combined view for development details and elements
	    o Consent improvements to UI and functionality
	    o Additional assessment information
	    o Document uploads

Medium Term Priorities

PlanSA website review and re-design	
Action 2.1	**The layout of the PlanSA website needs to be redesigned to improve search functionality, access to information, and provide resources tailored to the different user groups.**

Survey Respondent	Feedback
Community Members	- Difficult to search and navigate - Not mobile friendly - Public notification submission process is tedious
Applicants	- Terminology is not user-friendly and needs more guides on code and guidelines - Should be easier to navigate - The PlanSA website kept taking me around in circles and it took me 2 hours to find useful information.

PlanSA Response	The website was developed prior to the state-wide ePlanning system and served as the portal for news, information and learning material during the transition to the new planning system. Now that the system has been in operation for more than a year, the current layout of the website will be reviewed to better provide information for the various user groups.
Outcome - IN PROGRESS	The PlanSA Website Redesign project kicked off late November 2024. The project is currently in the analysis phase with the requirements due March 2025. This phase will involve: - Documentation of functional and non-functional requirements - Customer journey mapping which involves stakeholder engagement - Information architecture and high-level solution architecture

Archiving inactive development applications

Action 2.2	Enable the ability to lapse development applications where the applicant has not provided mandatory documentation or paid fees within a certain timeframe.	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Council	• There should be a way to lapse or archive inactive development applications
PlanSA Response	There are several applications that have currently been submitted into the system, yet are unable to be formally lodged as the applicant has not provided sufficient information to allow for the completion of the verification process. It is understood this causes frustration for relevant authorities as the applications appear on dashboards and they have no ability to be refused or cancelled. Creating functionality to allow Relevant Authorities the ability to lapse applications, will reduce the impacts in this scenario.	
Outcome - COMPLETE	Work has been completed to allow relevant authorities to discontinue a submitted development application after 6 months (excludes accepted or transitional) and where a task for actions is outstanding with the applicant, primary contact and/or invoice contact.	

Direct debit payment options

Action 2.3	Enable Direct Debit as a payment option for larger payment amounts, which are currently limited to paying via credit card.	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Accredited Professionals	• No direct debit options

PlanSA Response	PlanSA understand that the building and development industry require an alternative option for the payment of fees aside from credit card. A project is being progressed to provide direct debit options for certain users including volume applicants, surveyors and private certifiers.
Outcome - IN PROGRESS	• Payments (EFT and Cheque) made to Shared Services can now be reconciled against development applications by SPC Planning Services. In progress: • Direct Debit payments into the DAP and EDALA

Recording emails straight into the DAP system

Action 2.4	**Enable relevant authorities to record emails directly into the DAP system and ensure that any suspicious file types are identified and quarantined.**
Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
Council	• Emails should be able to be recorded straight into the DAP

PlanSA Response	Currently applicants and relevant authorities, including councils and accredited professionals can only upload emails as a pdf document. From a system stability and cyber security perspective this measure was implemented to ensure that emails containing viruses were not uploaded into the state-wide system. Further investigations are required to determine how emails can be quarantined if viruses are detected prior to implementing this enhancement to allow email file types.
Outcome - IN PROGRESS	PlanSA are working on several pilot projects to facilitate this functionality within the DAP. Including sending emails to the DAP, as well as uploading them, and automatically adding the document types and other metadata for both the email and attachments.

New online submission Form

Action 2.5	**Provide a submission process that is better tailored to the types of users accessing the system and reduce the number of log-in accounts required.**	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Applicant	- Log-in system should be easier - Very time-consuming way of lodging applications, checking on them, notifying mandatory stages of the constructions - The amount of time it takes to find what you want
PlanSA Response	There are many user accounts that have been set-up to access the DAP by applicants that may only ever lodge one application. The number of single-application user accounts will continue to increase over time. The existing submission process will be reviewed to provide a more tailored experience for the different users.	
Outcome	This project is dependent on the website redesign project and the technology selected. The requirements and design of a new online submission form will be scoped after the website redesign project.	

Improve relevant authority data management	
Action 1.8	**Enable specific users to rectify errors within the system.**

	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Council	• System doesn't have the ability to correct mistakes • Allow relevant authorities to make corrections/adjustments • Information is not easily edited • Councils should be able to remove accidentally linked documents and edit data fields
PlanSA Response	An opportunity exists to investigate increasing the ability for relevant authority users to 'self-service' changes to development applications in the DAP. This seeks to reduce (or potentially remove) the need for PlanSA to manually update the system with some commonly requested changes. Currently these requests are reviewed and approved by a delegate within PLUS. Further investigation is required to determine if relevant authorities could have a designated person within each organisation, who is responsible for making changes and providing a clear audit history about the changes that have been implemented.	

Outcome - IN PROGRESS	**The following enhancements have been delivered:**
	Building Verification
	- Ability to indicate building consent is to be assessed in multiple stages. · Ability to add another stage. - A new Reset Consent to Verification action is available within the Related Actions tab of the Building Consent. This allows the relevant authority to amend details only available during verification i.e. staging or reassigning the consent to another authority if it is already under assessment. Notification of the action will be sent to the applicant and recorded in the audit history.
	Public Notification
	- Public Notifications that are pending commencement or in-progress can now be cancelled and - Users can create a subsequent round of public notification without having to wait for the existing round to be completed. Cancelled public notifications will be taken off the 'Have your say' page of the website within one hour.
	Essential Safety Provisions (ESP) - Updating provisions
	The ability to edit the ESP NCC 2022 rules to reflect the building/building work is now available for columns 'Essential Safety Provisions', 'Applicable ESP Installation Standards' and 'Maintenance and Testing Standards' and includes option to add multiple performance solutions. Latest version · Guide - Assess a building consent (PDF, 3460 KB)
	Document Management
	- Internal for RA eyes only flag for documents – ability to toggle if documents are internal or not for document types that are not required to be visible by statutory rules. - Ability for the Relevant Authority to upload documents after development approval decision - Ability for the Applicant to upload certain documents after Development approval

- Ability to supersede multiple documents (uploaded by the relevant authority or applicant) at once.

Notifications

- Ability to setup standard notifications by organisation
- Ability to modify Building Notification at building consent at DA Approval
- Ability to find Acknowledged Building Notifications and Edit
- Ability to setup standard notifications by organisation

Other Priorities (PDI Act or Regulation change required)

Greater efficiencies in application assessment within the DAP		
Action 3.1	**Improvements to development application processing workflow to reduce admin and data entry.**	
	Survey Respondent	**Feedback**
	Accredited Professionals	• Too linear and lengthy development assessment workflow
	Council	• Linear nature of the system – inability to do multiple processes at once (planning and building concurrently) • Applicant to pay fees upfront to verify and assess together • Time consuming and at least 15% more admin time required
	Applicants	• Submitting applications and having to wait 30-days to be asked for information
	Referral Bodies	• Delays in the referral process, not receiving notice of the referral when the PlanSA portal lists it on the public register • Have a system that saves time
PlanSA Response	Subject to recommendations in the Expert Panel Report. The DAP platform was developed to provide state-wide access to an application processing system for all applicants and decision makers. However, in some cases the requirements of the Act dictate that certain tasks and processes need to be undertaken, which has resulted in the issues above. There is opportunity, with the support of the Expert Panel and the State Government to review the original legislative framework to support greater efficiency in the application assessment.	

Building notifications submitted directly into the DAP	
Action 3.1	**Investigate opportunities to support builders submitting notifications through the DAP, through the integration of software and development of a mobile application.**
	Survey Respondent / **Feedback**
	Council — • Builders should directly submit building notification instead of email/phone to councils
	Accredited Professionals — • Streamline building notifications for builders to make it easier for them to submit them • Better integration with volume builders IT systems (e.g., submissions, building notifications)
PlanSA Response	Currently the Act contemplates that building notifications can be submitted either through the DAP or directly to the council by email or phone. The option to notify directly to council, results in additional administrative work as councils then need to manually enter this information from the builders, into the DAP to be able to appropriately manage building inspections. • A proof of concept is currently being explored to allow emails to be uploaded directly into the DAP. • A change to the legal requirements, supported through a process to more easily allow builders to submit notifications, will be explored.