



Approach to exposure draft master plans and major development plans

October 2026

The department acknowledges that some airport-lessee companies voluntarily provide exposure drafts of master plans and major development plans to the department before commencing the statutory consultation processes required under the *Airports Act 1996* (the Act). To support consistent administration, the department is clarifying its approach to the consideration of exposure drafts.

Will the department review an exposure draft?

The department may, at its discretion, review an exposure draft and provide written comments. The nature and extent of the review will generally reflect the maturity, complexity and regulatory significance of the proposal. The department may decline to undertake a review or limit its scope where the document is materially incomplete, insufficiently developed or otherwise unsuitable for review.

What will the review cover?

Comments will generally focus on significant or apparent statutory content issues, regulatory matters, and whether the document contains sufficient information to support meaningful public consultation.

The department may also seek comments from other Australian Government agencies for this purpose.

The department does not undertake comprehensive quality assurance or a complete statutory assessment at the exposure draft stage.

What is the effect of the department's comments?

Exposure drafts are not a statutory requirement and any review undertaken by the department is separate from, and does not affect, the formal assessment of a master plan or major development plan under the Act.

Any comments are preliminary, non-exhaustive and based on the information available at the time. They do not constitute advice, approval or endorsement, indicate the outcome of a future assessment or decision, or prevent other matters being raised later. The airport-lessee company remains responsible for ensuring that its plan complies with the *Airports Act 1996* and any other applicable legislation.

Airport-lessee companies may contact the relevant state or territory team in Airports Branch to discuss significant proposals and the proposed timing of an exposure draft. Airport-lessee companies should be aware that this process, including seeking comments from other Australian Government agencies, could take a minimum of 4 to 6 weeks, depending on other regulatory priorities.