



QUARTERLY REPORTING Q1 2013–14

**APPROVALS SUMMARY**

**REPORT**

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As part of the changes to machinery of government the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) was separated on 1 July 2013 into two agencies: the Department of Environment Regulation (DER) and the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW). Any information in this report for the period up to 30 June 2013 relates to activities under the former DEC.

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## Works approvals and licences

For major resource project approvals, the Department of Environment Regulation (DER) has set a target to grant 100 per cent of works approval and licence applications within 60 working days.

During the July to September 2013 quarter DER received a total of 19 new works approval and seven new licence applications for major resource projects. This is the lowest number of major resource new works approval applications since the first quarter 2009–10, with the number of licence applications nearly half that received in the last quarter of 2012–13.

A total of 40 works approvals were granted, an increase from 29 granted in the last quarter. Eleven licence applications were granted, which is much higher than the five granted the previous quarter.

Ninety two per cent of new works approval applications were granted within the target timeframe, a slight drop from the previous quarter when the target was achieved.

DER granted 100 per cent of new licence applications within the target timeframe this quarter, consistent with the previous quarter. The average processing time for major resource project works approvals and licences during the first quarter 2013–14 remained steady at 48 and 50 days respectively.

For non-major resource project (other projects) approvals, DER has set a target to grant 80 per cent of licence and works approval applications within 60 working days. During the July to September 2013 quarter, 21 new works approval and 16 new licence applications were received for other projects.

There has been a steady decline in the number of new works approval applications received for other projects since the second quarter 2012–13.

Nineteen other project works approvals were granted by DER in the first quarter of 2013–14. The number of licence applications granted for other projects this quarter was the highest since the second quarter 2012–13.

Seventy-four per cent of new works approvals were granted within 60 working days, slightly below the 80 per cent target, and a slight improvement from 68 per cent granted last quarter.

Seventeen other project licences were granted this quarter. Eighty-eight per cent of other project licence applications were granted within 60 working days, higher than the 80 per cent target. This is an improvement on the previous quarter when 64 per cent of licences for other projects were granted within the target timeframe.

The average processing time for other project works approval applications decreased this quarter to 49 days, a drop from 53 days the previous quarter.

The average processing time for new licence applications this quarter was 39 days, which is the lowest processing time since recording began in the fourth quarter of 2008–09.

DER is well advanced in introducing further industry licensing reforms that should result in a more streamlined and timely approvals process, and certainty of outcome. Reform initiatives include the Re-Engineering for Industry Regulation and Environment (REFIRE) program and improvements to application processes.

# Approvals summary

## Works approvals and licences

Department of Environment Regulation	Oct–Dec 2012	Jan–Mar 2013	Apr–Jun 2013	Jul–Sept 2013
<b>Works approvals (major resource projects only)</b>				
No. of applications carried over from previous periods	31	27	36	44
No. of applications received	36	46	40	19
No. of applications granted/refused	40	35	29	40
No. of decisions that were subject to 'stop the clock'	11	25	23	21
No. of applications withdrawn	0	2	3	0
Average time for decision (business days)	49	49	42	48
Percentage of applications that were finalised within benchmark timeframe of 60 business days	88%	83%	100%	92%
No. of open applications as of end of quarter	27	36	44	23
<b>Licences (major resource projects only)</b>				
No. of applications carried over from previous periods	19	21	19	27
No. of applications received	16	7	13	7
No. of decisions that were subject to 'stop the clock'	14	9	7	12
No. of applications granted/refused	14	9	5	11
No. of applications withdrawn	0	0	2	1
Average time for decision (business days)	48	48	48	50
Percentage of applications that were finalised within benchmark timeframe of 60 business days	86%	89%	100%	100%
No. of open applications as of end of quarter	21	19	27	22
<b>Works approvals (other projects)</b>				
No. of applications carried over from previous periods	25	40	32	27
No. of applications received	31	29	24	21
No. of applications granted/refused	15*	35	28	19
No. of applications withdrawn	1	2	1	0
Average time for decision (business days)	47*	61	53	49
Percentage of applications that were finalised within benchmark timeframe of 60 business days (target is 80%)	80%*	54%	68%	74%
No. of open applications as of end of quarter	40*	32	27	29
<b>Licences (other projects)</b>				
No. of applications carried over from previous periods	18	21	21	19
No. of applications received	17	11	11	16
No. of applications granted/refused	13	10	11	17
No. of applications withdrawn	1	1	2	1
Average time for decision (business days)	46	53	56	39
Percentage of applications that were finalised within benchmark timeframe of 60 business days (target is 80%)	85%	75%	64%	88%
No. of open applications as of end of quarter	21	21	19	17

\*The figures have been corrected from previous records because one works approval was erroneously counted as being granted.

## Native vegetation clearing permits

For native vegetation clearing permits, DER has set a target timeframe of 80 per cent of applications decided<sup>1</sup> within 60 calendar days of receipt, and 100 per cent within 90 calendar days.

DER continued to receive a relatively high volume of native vegetation clearing permit applications this quarter, receiving 146 applications.

DER made 138 decisions on applications, which is higher than the preceding quarter's figure of 126 decisions.

DER did not meet its target timeframes this quarter, with 53 per cent of decisions made within 60 days, 43 per cent within 90 days, and four per cent taking longer than 90 days.

Of the six applications that did not meet the 90-day target time frame, one application was finalised within 93 days, two within 95 days, one within 101 days, one within 111 days, and one within 117 days. These applications required modifications and further information during the assessment process.

The average time taken to make a decision was 53 days, which is relatively consistent with previous quarters.

Of the 138 decisions made on applications, 98 clearing permit applications were granted within an average timeframe of 57 days.

Three applications for a clearing permit were refused. Of the remaining applications, 30 were withdrawn and seven declined as the applications were not valid.

The number of open clearing permit applications at the end of this quarter increased to 170, compared to 166 at the end of the previous quarter.

Over the past three quarters the number of cumulative clearing permit applications has increased by about 12 per cent, and the performance against the 60-day target time frame has fallen by 15 per cent.

DER is working to improve its performance in deciding clearing permit applications

DER's clearing permit system database records details of clearing permit applications and decisions made for both DER and the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP)<sup>2</sup>, and forms the basis of the published records available on DER's website.

The quantitative information presented in the tables in this report is provided for both DER and DMP. The qualitative information in the text provides information on DER only.

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<sup>1</sup> A 'clearing permit decision made' means an application to clear has been granted, given an undertaking to grant, refused, declined, withdrawn, amended, revoked or suspended.

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<sup>2</sup> Under section 20 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DER has delegated decision-making on clearing applications to DMP for the following activities:

- An activity under an authority granted, or a requirement imposed, under the *Mining Act 1978*, the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act 1967*, the *Petroleum Pipelines Act 1969* or the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1982*.
- An activity under a government agreement administered by the Department of State Development (DSD).

# Approvals summary

## Clearing permits

Department of Environment Regulation	Oct–Dec 2012	Jan–Mar 2013	Apr–Jun 2013	Jul–Sept 2013
No. of applications carried over from previous periods	162	148*	157	162*
No. of applications received	125	125	135	146
No. of decisions that were subject to 'stop the clock'	73	60	62	64
Average time in 'stop the clock' for decisions in days	108	108	75	149
Average time for decision in days (excluding time in 'stop the clock')	47	52	49	53
No. decisions on applications	138	116	126	138
No. of outstanding applications at end of quarter	149	157	166	170
<b>Percentage of applications that were finalised within benchmark timeframe</b>				
60 days (80% of applications finalised)	74%	61%	60%	53%
90 days (100% of applications finalised)	23%	35%	36%	43%
>90 days	3%	4%	4%	4%

Department of Mines and Petroleum	Oct–Dec 2012	Jan–Mar 2013	Apr–Jun 2013	Jul–Sept 2013
No. of applications carried over from previous periods	50*	43*	53*	48*
No. of applications received	64	56	51	48
No. of decisions that were subject to 'stop the clock'	3	2	6	33
Average time in 'stop the clock' for decisions in days	15	16	139	37
Average time for decision in days (excluding time in 'stop the clock')	61	64	68	57
No. decisions on applications	69	43	57	65
No. of outstanding applications at end of quarter	45	56	47	31
<b>Percentage of applications that were finalised within benchmark timeframe</b>				
60 days (80% of applications finalised)	61%	51%	49%	75%
90 days (100% of applications finalised)	25%	37%	33%	15%
>90 days	14%	12%	18%	10%

\*This figure is not the same as the previous reporting period due to data corrections.