

DA vs CDC

Unsure about what exactly a DA and CDC are? The below is a break down of each and when they are best suited.

Development Application (DA)

A DA is a formal approval from the local council that allows you to carry out a construction project. This process involves submitting detailed plans and documents, then the council assesses the information and specific items like zoning, environmental impact, and how the project fits within local planning rules.

Complying Development Certificate (CDC)

A CDC is a faster approval process that lets you skip council approval if your project meets strict pre-set rules under state legislation (see below). Instead of going through the local council, a private certifier (or sometimes council) checks if your plans comply with the relevant legislation.

For example;

Building a Granny Flat - DA

If you decide to build a custom-designed granny flat that does not meet the standard requirements for a CDC (e.g. setbacks are slightly outside the permitted limits, flood or fire zone, or heritage restrictions), you would need to submit a DA to the local council, which involves a more detailed assessment, public notification, and potential amendments based on council feedback. This can have an affect on the approval time.

Building a Granny Flat - CDC

If your granny flat complies with the relevant state legislations (e.g. meets minimum setbacks, maximum height limits and site coverage rules), you can bypass council approval and get a CDC through a private certifier. This process is much faster and as long as the strict criteria is met, it could be approved in as little as a few weeks.

Relevant State Legislations

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)

Governs development approvals, including DA and CDC processes.

State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008

Sets out the rules for CDC approvals.

Local Environmental Plans (LEP)

Each council has specific zoning rules that may impact a DA.

Building Code of Australia (BCA)

Ensures structural and safety compliance for all developments.

Comparison of Legislation for DA vs CDC

Legislation	DA	CDC
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979	Provides legal framework for council approval	Provides legal framework for private certifier approval
SEPP (Exempt & Complying Development Codes) 2008	Used for assessment, but not required to comply fully	Must fully comply with this SEPP to be fast-tracked
Local Environmental Plan (LEP)	Council assesses DA against local zoning rules	CDC must comply with both SEPP and LEP
Building Code of Australia (BCA) & NCC	Must comply	Must comply

If you are unsure about what one your build will fall under we can assist and guide you down the right path, and if you are starting from scratch with just the idea, we have the resources and experience to bring your ideas to life, with our design options.