

How to make a planning submission

A guide for the Murray community

Your feedback matters. This guide explains what makes a submission effective and how to make yours count.

Your voice in planning decisions

When a planning proposal is advertised for public comment, it is an invitation for the community to genuinely participate, not a formality. Your submission can raise issues that planners haven't identified, highlight local impacts, or bring knowledge that only residents and neighbours possess.

You don't need to be an expert or use legal language. You just need to be clear, factual and focused on the planning impacts of what is being proposed.

One important thing to understand: Planning decisions are made on planning merit, not by popularity or by the number of submissions received.

A single well prepared submission that clearly identifies a genuine planning issue can carry more weight than a large number of submissions that don't engage with the planning aspects of a proposal.

What kind of planning proposals can I comment on?

The Shire advertises a range of planning matters for public comment. The type of proposal affects what planning issues are relevant to raise.

Development applications

These assess a specific proposal for a site, for example, a new building, an extension, or a change of land use. Relevant issues typically include how the development affects neighbouring properties, traffic, amenity, and the character of the local area.

Strategic proposals

These include structure plans, scheme amendments and local planning policies. They guide how land will be used and developed across a broader area over time. Relevant issues might include housing density, infrastructure capacity, transport connections, environmental protection, and long term community growth.

Before you write

Taking a little time to prepare will make your submission more useful and more likely to be taken into account.

- 1 Read the advertised documents carefully.** Plans and supporting information are available from the Shire website - murray.wa.gov.au/publicnotices.
- 2 Make sure you understand what is actually being proposed,** not what you may have heard about it. If you're unsure, contact the Shire's planning team on 9531 7603 before submitting.
- 3 Consider the likely planning impacts.** How might this affect your property, your street or your community? Can you point to a specific planning issue?
- 4 Check the closing date.** Late submissions may not be able to be accepted due to statutory timeframes.

What makes a submission effective?

The most useful submissions clearly explain a specific planning issue, describe how the proposal may cause that impact, and connect it to a relevant planning consideration. They are factual, respectful and concise.

Relevant matters for development proposals may include:

- Privacy and overlooking impacts on neighbouring properties
- Traffic generation, parking and vehicle access
- Noise, dust or other amenity impacts
- Building height, bulk, scale and visual appearance
- Streetscape and neighbourhood character
- Environmental impacts including vegetation, drainage and contamination
- Heritage values and considerations
- Bushfire or flood risk constraints

Relevant matters for strategic proposals may include:

- Future land use patterns and long term growth directions
- Housing density and urban form
- Infrastructure capacity - roads, water, sewerage
- Transport connectivity and access
- Environmental protection and public open space
- Consistency with State and local planning objectives

What generally carries little weight?

Decision makers are required by law to assess proposals objectively on their planning merits. The following matters are generally not considered relevant planning grounds. Including them in your submission won't strengthen it, and may distract from the issues that can make a real difference:

- The impact on property values
- Business competition concerns
- Rumours, assumptions or unverified claims
- Personal disputes with an applicant or neighbour
- Who the applicant or landowner is
- Objection to change in general, without a specific planning reason
- Personal or moral views not connected to planning impacts

It is also worth noting that the Shire assesses the proposal as submitted. While your submission may suggest improvements, planning authorities cannot redesign a proposal or relocate it on behalf of an applicant.

A simple structure to follow

There is no required format for a submission. The following structure may help make your submission clearer and easier to assess:

1. Who you are and your connection to the proposal

Eg. "I am a resident at [address], adjacent to the subject site."

2. The specific issue you are raising

Eg. "I am concerned about the proposed building height and its impact on solar access to my rear garden."

3. Why this is a relevant planning matter

Eg. "The proposed development would shade my outdoor living area for the majority of the day during winter months, significantly reducing the amenity of my property."

4. Any suggested improvement (optional but welcome)

Eg. "Reducing the height of the northern wall by one metre would substantially address this issue while still allowing the applicant to achieve their stated objectives."

AI writing tools can help organise your thoughts or improve clarity and there is nothing wrong with using them as a starting point. But the most useful submissions contain specific local observations that only you can provide. A submission that could apply to any site, anywhere, will carry far less weight than one grounded in your direct knowledge. If you use AI, treat it as a drafting aid, then make sure your own voice and local detail come through clearly in the final submission.

Tips for writing an effective submission

✓ Do	✗ Don't
Be clear, factual and respectful	Make personal attacks or inflammatory comments
Focus on planning impacts and outcomes	Focus on property values or personal preferences
Reference specific parts of the proposal	Rely on rumours or unverified claims
Use your local knowledge - it is valuable	Assume unpopularity alone is grounds for refusal
Suggest practical improvements where you can	Lodge multiple submissions on the same proposal
Lodge one well prepared submission	Copy a template without adding your own concerns

Submit before the closing date

A note on petitions and template submissions

Petitions and template letters will be considered, and the number of signatories noted as an indicator of community interest. However, a petition does not replace an individual submission. Greater weight is given to submissions that explain specific planning issues and their likely impacts in your own words.

If you are coordinating a group response, encourage each participant to personalise their submission around their own specific concerns, rather than submitting an identical document.

What happens after I submit?

All submissions received during the advertising period are formally recorded and reviewed by Shire planning staff as part of the assessment process. After the period closes, a planning officer prepares a report that:

- summarises all submissions received
- responds to the planning issues raised
- makes a recommendation to Council or the delegated decision maker

Submissions may lead to additional assessment, design changes, conditions of approval, or in some cases inform a decision to refuse or amend a proposal. You will not automatically receive an individual written response, but the officer's report will address the issues raised.

If the proposal is to be decided by the Council and you would like to address the Council directly, you may be able to request a deputation to attend the Council meeting at the time the matter is to be decided. Contact the Shire's planning team on 9531 7603 for details.

Get in touch

Shire planning staff are available to help you understand what is being proposed and whether your concerns are relevant planning matters. You are encouraged to speak with us before lodging your submission.

Planning proposals currently on public exhibition are listed on the Shire's website along with supporting documents and submission closing dates.

Contact	Details
Phone	(08) 9531 7777
Email	mailbag@murray.wa.gov.au
Address	1915 Pinjarra Road, Pinjarra WA 6208
Postal	PO Box 21, Pinjarra WA 6208
Website	murray.wa.gov.au
Office hours	Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm

This guide is produced by the Shire of Murray Planning Service Team. For the most current information on proposals under consideration, please visit murray.wa.gov.au/publicnotices.

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