

Buildings and Mission - Obtaining Approvals

Gothic cathedrals took very many years to build, but did they have to wait as long as we do to get the permits? The process described in the last 2 blogs covered *Where to Start?* and *Where Next in the Process?*. Now we consider the approvals that will be needed. The main ones are:

Church Body Approval

Most denominations will have the property of individual churches vested or held in a trust corporation or similar arrangement. Any alterations, sales or property purchase will normally need approval from the central body and most of these have established a process that must be followed based upon each Church's mission. In some cases applications go to a senior representative or a property board for final approval.

Some churches are constituted so that a majority of individual members is needed for any significant property changes. Regardless of this it pays to get everyone on board (more likely a reasonable majority). This is the point when the ground work is very important in establishing the need for the change. If a substantial minority oppose, there is a risk of division and if no change results, a majority may feel disenfranchised. More about this in chapters 45-50 of *"Making Property Serve Mission"*.

Planning Approval

The local council's statutory planning authority needs to give planning permission and this may involve heritage approval. The letter may be simply part of the council's internal process if the site has just Heritage Overlay protection, or from the state authority (such as Heritage Victoria) if the property is on the state heritage register.

Fully scaled drawings and reports are needed to support such applications. In addition to your architect you may need input from a planning consultant, heritage consultant, landscape architect, traffic consultant, acoustic consultant and an environmental consultant in support of your application. Sometimes your planning application will need to be appealed (to VCAT in Victoria) to achieve the approval required. Good professional advice is essential at all stages if you are to commit funds wisely. Allow many months for this process.

Building Permit

This is the technical approval to ensure that the project is constructed in accordance with the National Construction Code and any relevant State Building Regulations. This requires fully detailed construction drawings which will be prepared by your architect, structural and civil engineering consultant, building services consultant (including electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, fire and security specialists). Other specialist consultants will be engaged as needed these may include acoustic and environmentally sustainable design (ESD). These are submitted to a building surveyor who will also advise on compliance with regulations and eventually issue a Building Permit for construction.

During the construction process, the building surveyor is called upon to visit the site and approve specific stages of work, eventually issuing a Certificate of Occupancy before the building can be used.

These are the main approvals needed in Australia and each follows the other in sequence.

Next time: Development Agreements



Obtaining all of the permits can take many months - the final facility can be a great help to mission, so start early . Mooroolbark Salvation Army Centre

