

ISNSW/ACT Twilight CPD Seminar

Tuesday, 24 March 2026



ACT Office of the Surveyor-General Update

24 March 2026



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Contents

1. [Survey Practice Advisory Committee](#)
2. [Associate Surveyors](#)
3. [Engineering Surveyors](#)
4. [Pathway to Registration in Victoria](#)
5. [OSGLI Supervision Audit](#)
6. [OSGLI Survey and Examination Update](#)
7. [OSGLI Land Information Team – LiDAR, 1 Stop Shop and Aerial Imagery](#)
8. [Control Surveys – Update](#)
9. [ACT Happenings](#)



Survey Practice Advisory Committee (SPAC) – Membership

SPAC must comprise a minimum of 5 or up to a maximum of 7 members:

- Surveyor-General (Chair) – Automatically a member
- 3 Registered Surveyors,
 - 2 must be professional entity representatives, (ISNSW) and
 - 1 other
- At least 1 non-registered surveyor
 - Or more!!



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Survey Practice Advisory Committee – Membership proposal

To meet

- ACT government requirements for committees
- Increase diversity in membership

To include

- 3 Registered Surveyors, and
- Up to 3 people, not being registered surveyors, who may be:
 - An Associate Surveyor,
 - From the Surveying/Spatial industry, and
 - From other related industry groups such as lawyers, planners, architects, developers or builders



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Survey Practice Advisory Committee – SPAC

Recruitment starting soon. OSGLI will:

- Publish the membership position descriptions and selection criteria
- Call for Expressions of Interest (EOI)
 - EOI to be less than 2 pages and address the selection criteria.

Appoint a new SPAC by July 2026 – Hopefully!!

- In the interim OSGLI will engage via updates, polling and direct emails with surveyors.



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Associate Surveyors Poll – November 2025



Question: How beneficial would the following training areas be for your future career aspirations?

Top 7 responses

Survey Law	Cadastral Survey Control
Compliance surveys	Equipment Calibration
Rural Surveys	Urban boundary surveys
Boundary System	

56 Associate Surveyors and growing



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Associate Surveyors Poll – November 2025



Question: What future events would you prefer?

The 4 main responses

Micro credentials

Delivered in a short form way

Structured learning approach

Using evening events



Engineering Surveyors - Certification

The Certified Engineering Surveyor credential, is now being delivered by Surveyors Australia (SA)

ISNSW is re-developing its own Engineering Surveyor Certification

- May be a Certificate IV minimum qualification
- A practical experience period
- Additional training and competency assessments



Surveyors
Australia

CERTIFIED
ENGINEERING SURVEYOR
FRAMEWORK

Verified. National.
Professional.

The New Certified Engineering Surveyor Framework
The National Standard for Engineering Surveying

- ✓ Extended eligibility pathways
- ✓ Apply now and upload evidence progressively
- ✓ Comprehensive Competency Framework
- ✓ Fit-for-purpose Project Contexts
- ✓ New Application Portal
- ✓ Dedicated Engineering Webinar Series

APPLICATIONS OPEN



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Engineering Surveyor certification pathway – Possible Program

- Common competencies for everyone to do
- May deliver micro-credentials
- A structured learning program delivered in 2 years
- Each training module
 - Online, and
 - Face to face, or
 - Or just a final exam

Engineering surveying certification

6 common competency modules for all surveyors

- Survey measurements, Computations & Control Surveys
- Land Record Systems and Survey Information
- Law and Professional Practice
- Planning and Engineering practice
- Cadastral Surveying Introduction
- Land Development Surveys

Plus 3 Engineering specific modules

- Multi storey buildings
- Civil engineering surveys (subdivisions)
- Bridges and tunnels



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Developed a Competency framework :

- Common surveying competencies applicable anywhere in Australia, and
- Jurisdictionally based cadastral competencies.

Pilot program

- A supportive, structured learning process delivered in < 3 years - 2025,26,27
- Attend face to face training

Cadastral Surveyors – Victorian Pathway to Cadastral Registration



Year 1 - 2025 Completed	Year 2	Year 3
Survey measurements & computations - 1	Survey measurements & computations - 2	Land Law and Boundary Definition - 3
Record Systems and Survey Information - 1	Record Systems and Survey Information - 2	Professional Practice
Land Law and Boundary Definition - 1	Land Law and Boundary Definition - 2	Field Assessment
Planning and Land Development -1 (By PIA)	Planning and Land Development - 2	Final Interview



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OSGLI Audits of Supervision - by Registered Surveyors

2024 Pilot quality assurance review - Results:

- Responses focussed more on how they supervised staff, rather than how they kept records
- Overreliance on remote supervision
- Full report within SPAC July 2025 minutes on the website

Another supervision audit to start soon.

- Audit is intended to be educational and not part of any disciplinary process.



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OSGLI Survey and Examination Update

Examination Timeframes

- Plan lodgement volume increased but timeframes still being met.

Must lodge - With X plan lodgement:

- Greenfield Levelling Results – the Control Survey Report etc
- Greenfield Datum Ground Level (DGL) survey as part of the DP examination
 - Will not hold up the plan
- EDM Calibration report
 - SPD17(d) results must be lodged after calibration is completed

TGE Plans

- Should be to a similar standard as a DP
- Found one that showed temp block numbers not the registered block numbers

Control Surveys – OSGLI levelling

Upgrade of U/U marks using field book metadata

- Difficulties in obtaining records from Archives.
- Some fieldbooks don't give enough information

OSGLI infill levelling contracts will be consistently released

- Class LF (Differential Levelling) or
- Class C (3D EDM Traversing)
- Contact the office if you want (or not) to be asked to quote.

Please provide feedback on Guideline 2 to

- actplasurvey@act.gov.au



Surveyor-General
of the Australian Capital Territory

Guideline No.2

Control Surveys

Office of the Surveyor-General and Land Information

ACT Government

September 2025



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Survey Mark – Updated Costs

<u>Items</u>	Price ea. <i>incl. GST</i>
CRM Brass Plaque	\$70
SRM Kit - small cover box, 1.35m GISP, ID tag	\$135
SRM Small cover box	\$115
GISP 1.35m	\$15
1m stainless steel rod, top & end cap, ID tag **	\$125
2m stainless steel rod, top & end cap, ID tag	\$225
Stamped ID Tag	\$5
Boundary Mark Token Kit - 10 tokens and 10 fixing pins	\$55

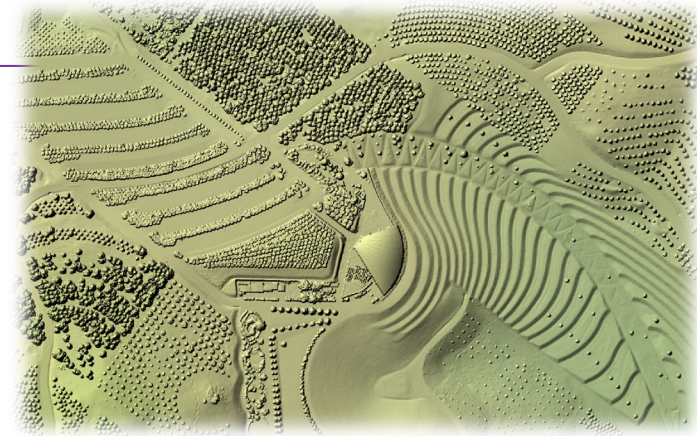


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OSGLI Land Information Update – LidDAR and Imagery

- LiDAR awaiting approval from legal. Includes:
 - contour interval
 - 1 metre
 - 0.5 m soon maybe.
 - Tree canopy
- Aerial Photography contract ends 30/6/2026.
- A new imagery capture program intended to start next financial year. Budget dependent.



OSGLI Land Information Team - One Stop Shop for Surveyors

- New print templates coming soon
- Publishing X Plan - Survey Reports from now
 - Past reports are still available on request
- Uploading Border survey plans
- Next will be District and Division DPs



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ACT Happenings

Associate Surveyor event

- Date: Tuesday, 21 April 2026. 5pm start for about 2 hours
- Location: OSGLI offices at Dickson ACT.
- Includes dinner
- See the ISNSW events calendar for further details.



**Institution of
Surveyors**
New South Wales

Let's Locate

- Geospatial Day – 4 May 26 at Geoscience Australia
- Planning and Geospatial immersion event – 6 to 9 July 2026
- **Geospatial Hub – Canberra Careers Expo – August 2026 ????**
- Surveying and Mapping immersion event – 28 Sep to 1 Oct 2026



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Surveyors are better with numbers?



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The End

Managing Field notes and Survey Records

24 March 2026



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Contents

1. [Survey records - Problems](#)
2. [BOSSI field notes – Determination - Draft](#)
3. [ACT Cadastral survey records - requirements](#)
4. [ACT Control survey records - requirements](#)
5. [Calculation Sheets](#)
6. [Where to now – Future options](#)



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Survey Records – Our Problems

Fieldnotes

- A move away from manual fieldnotes
- Digital field records in proprietary form and not in a standard format
 - **Not intelligible!!**

Calculations sheets

- Not created and not easily understood

Survey records may not be maintained by the Registered Surveyor

- Maybe lost, or only with the previous survey firm

[Return to contents](#)

BOSSI Guidelines - Draft

Board of Surveying
& Spatial Information



Guidelines for Field Notes

February 2026
Edition 3



Goals & Objectives

- Evidence of survey measurement, observation, findings, marking and decision making is available
- Ensure access to records continue across time
- Ensure surveyors records are available when required in compliance with statutory requirements
- Guidance for hardcopy and electronic field notes
- *Ensure a minimum standard for survey records (ACT)?*

[Return to contents](#)



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BOSSI Guidelines - Draft

What are field notes?

- Handwritten or electronically .., including calculation sheets
 - *Some may see calculation sheets as separate documents*
- Electronic records from instruments
 - Original and *equivalent interoperable formats*
- Corrected records
- Imagery

[Return to contents](#)

Board of Surveying
& Spatial Information



Guidelines for Field Notes

February 2026
Edition 3



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ACT Cadastral Survey Records – Requirements

ACT Surveyors Practice Directions

Definitions

Field notes – Not well defined

- Dir 52 – Facts, reading, observations, nature of marks and other information

Calculation Sheet – *‘the document showing survey calculations as determined by the surveyor, and the boundary definition to be shown on the plan’.*

[Return to contents](#)



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ACT Cadastral Survey Records – Requirements

Surveyors Practice Directions

- Dir 12 - The surveyor must lodge, *upon request* by the SG, the:
 - Adjustment report for the control network, and
 - Calculation sheet
- Dir 52 - The surveyor must:
 - Make neat, precise, complete and readily intelligible field notes of every survey
 - Keep an archive of field notes and other relevant information/documents

[Return to contents](#)

ACT Cadastral Survey Records – Requirements

Surveyors Practice Directions

- Dir 53 - Surveyor to retain electronic copy of recorded data & copy of reduced data or positional results to facilitate plan production
 - Company retains them?
- Dir 57 - Signing and dating field notes
 - Electronic records?
 - Proposal to amend SPDs to only sign once.

[Return to contents](#)

Calculation sheets – What should it include?

An intermediary document that shows

- Boundaries
- Survey traverse adjusted connections
- Cadastral marks and structures
- Connections and comparisons between
 - Control marks and cadastral reference marks in relation to previous surveys
- Offsets from structures to boundaries
- The thinking and decision making relating to the boundary determination
 - Marks adopted and not adopted

[Return to contents](#)



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Where to now - Future options

- Provide better definitions
- Develop a minimum standard for all survey records like we did with control survey records?
- Lodge all relevant records with the X plan – Like other states?
 - Fieldnotes, calc sheets
- Require survey companies to maintain and provide records upon request.
 - Company registration?

[Return to contents](#)

“Survey records are there to support defensible decision making”



The End



Guideline No. 17: Standards and Specifications for Units Plans

William Steer
Assistant Director | Registered Surveyor

G17 Update – General Information

G17 Update – General Information

- Dimensions must = SG Guideline No. 6.

G17 Update – General Information

- Minimum height = 2.5 mm

G17 Update – Unit Subsidiaries and Index

G17 Update – Unit Subsidiaries and Index

- Renamed - ‘Subsidiary and Address Index’
 - With Subsidiaries -> full index
 - No Subsidiaries -> Address index only

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- *Site Plan must show the entire parcel wholly on one sheet wherever reasonably practicable.*

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

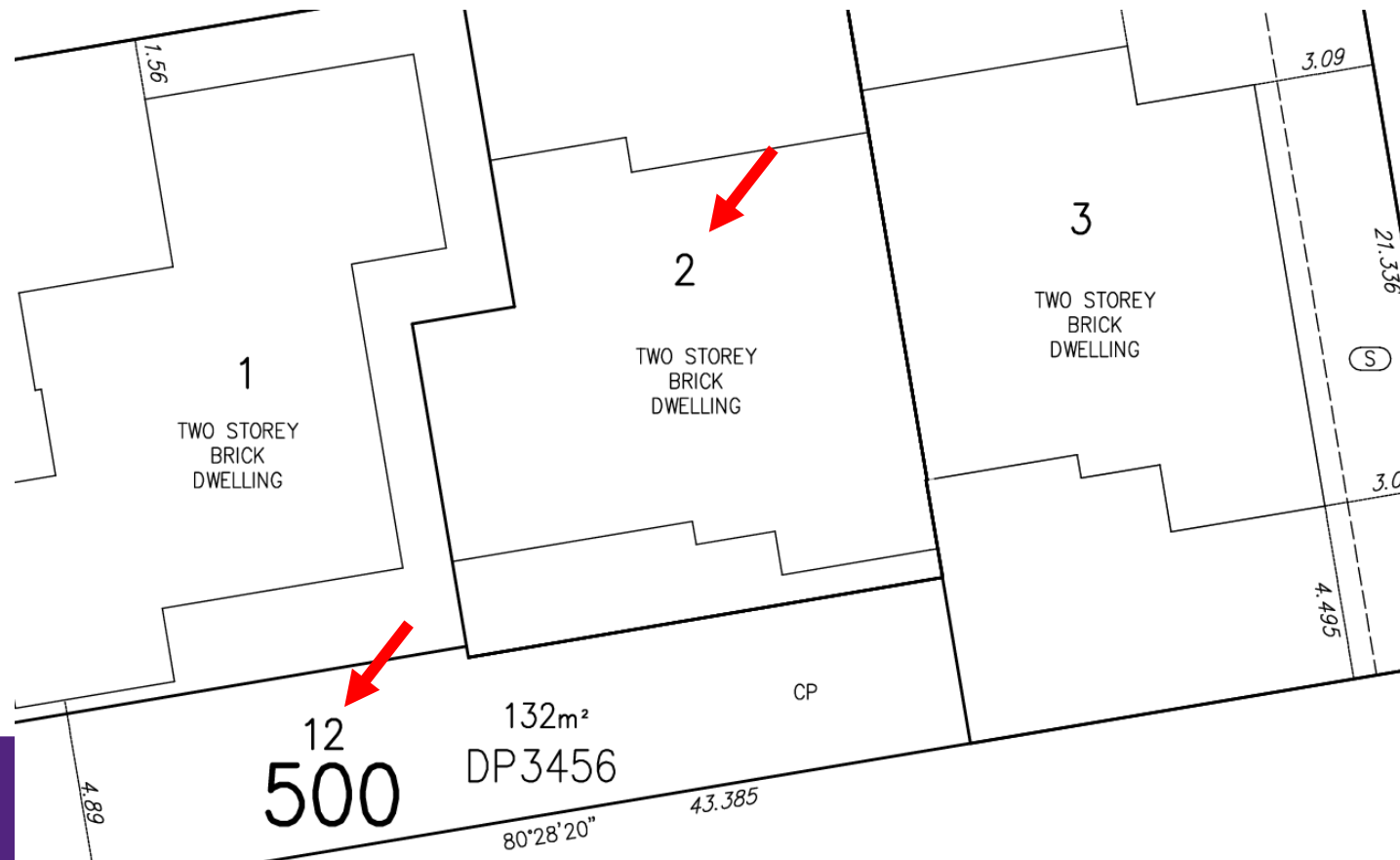
- Site Plans for Stratum Parcels
 - Simple -> one site plan at ground level
 - Complex -> a site plan sheet for each change in block configuration.
 - Updated stratum statement

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- Vol/Fol box must be left blank

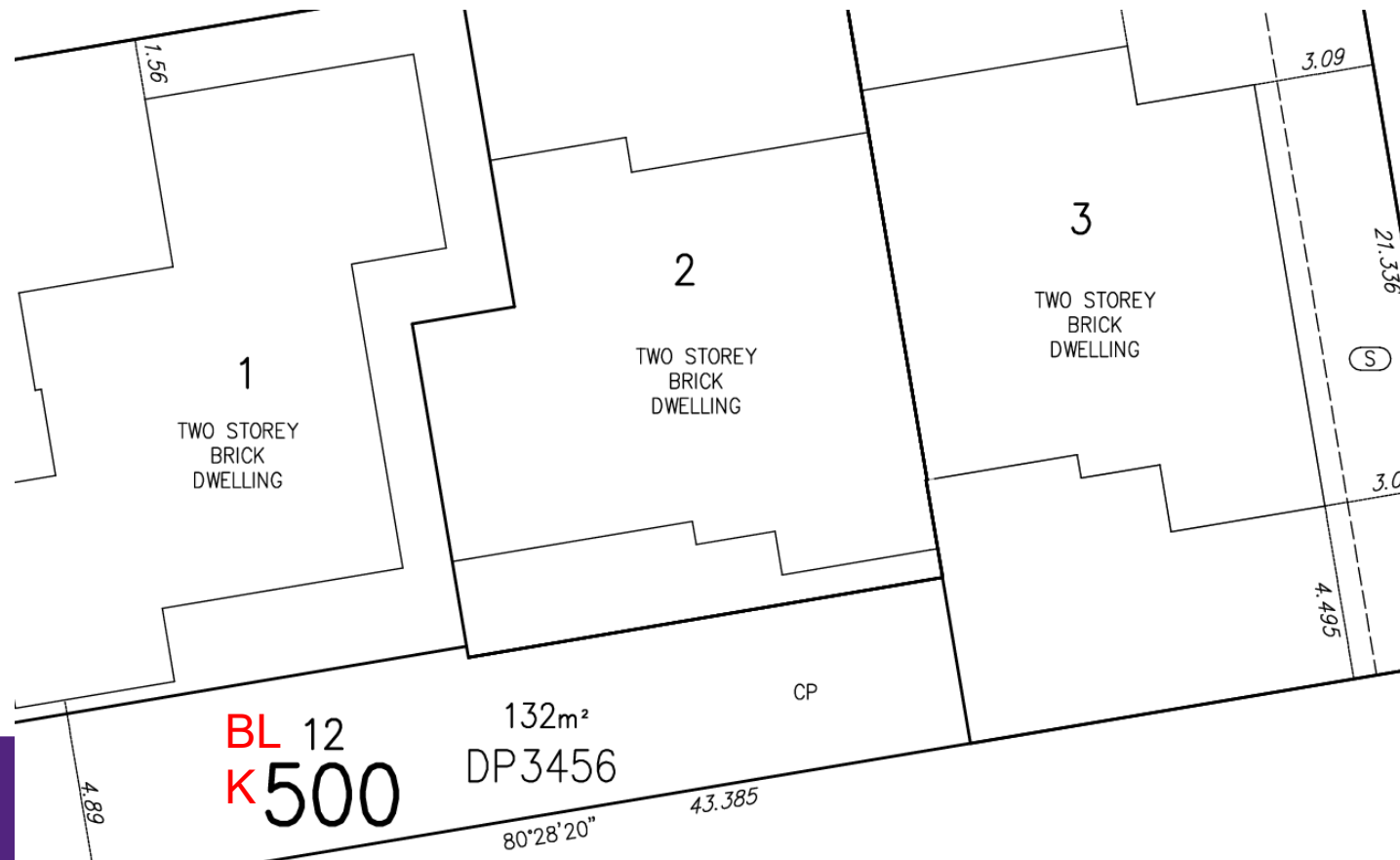
G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- How should we differentiate between block and unit numbers on a class B site plan?



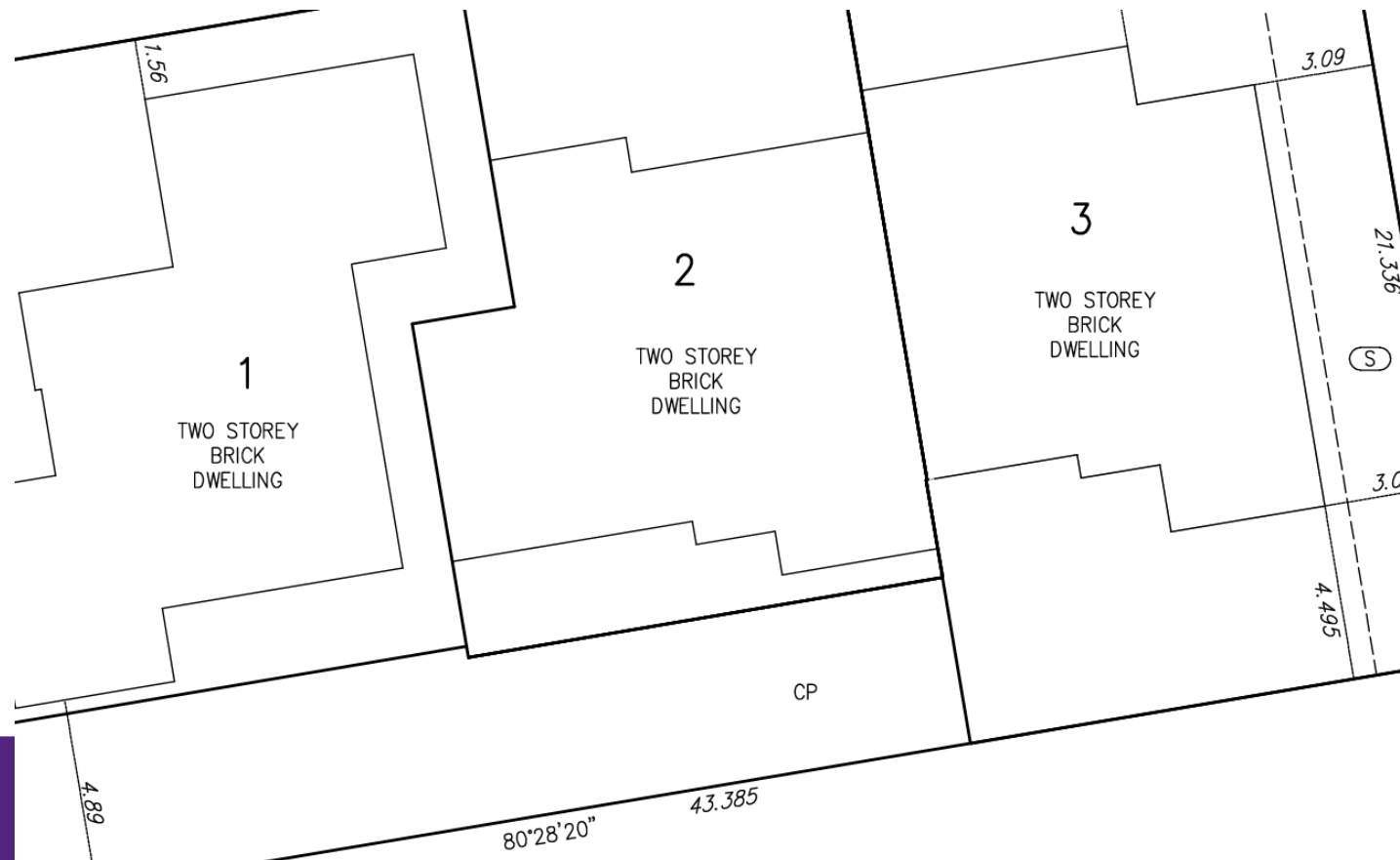
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G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

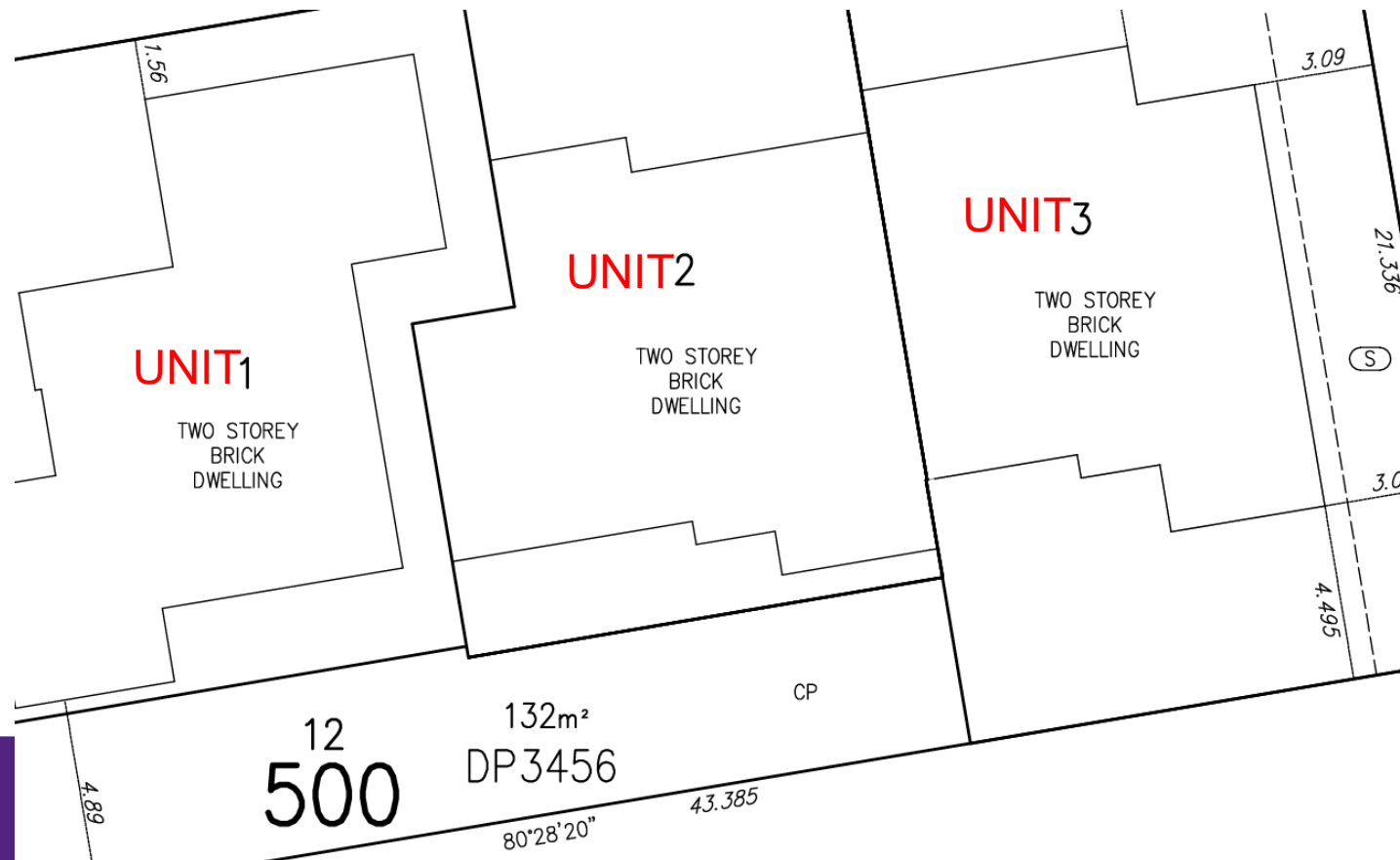
- How should we differentiate between block and unit numbers on a class B site plan?



LAND DETAILS
Block 15
Section 2014
Division THROM
Deposited Plan Number 1502
Volume/Folio 3010/184
Class of Units (A or B) CLASS B

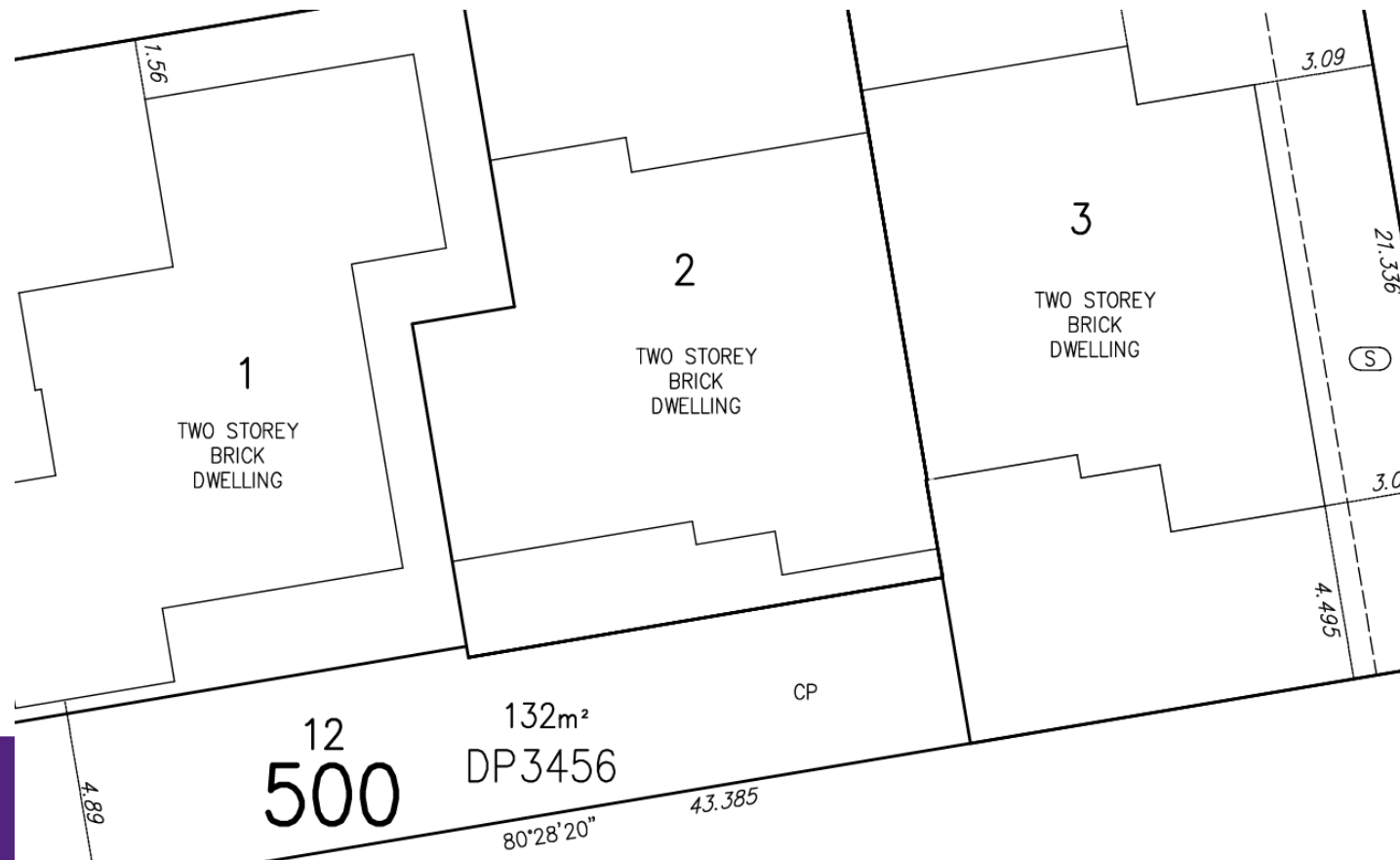
G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- How should we differentiate between block and unit numbers on a class B site plan?



G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- How should we differentiate between block and unit numbers on a class B site plan?



G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- Offsets to the extremity of each building
 - Class A
 - Offsets to the extremity of each building from the relevant boundary.
 - Class B
 - Offsets to all features within 1m of the parcel boundary
 - All features relevant to unit boundaries.
 - If offset is shown to a unit boundary then not required for parcel boundary.

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- Easements

- Descriptions must be in accordance with G6.
- Easements in a BMS, TGE or CTS must be shown (linework and descriptions).
- Show vol/fol if in lease?
- Added section re proposed TGEs between units.

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- Offsets to relevant features, including fences and walls, erected on or within one metre of the parcel boundaries **along with a relevant description (see G6: 9.17).**

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- Encroaching attachments
- licence number
- linework

G17 Update – Site Plan and Surveyors Declaration

- Swing Statement
- On site plan only
- Does not have to be along north point

G17 Update – Floor Plan

G17 Update – Floor plan

- Removed requirement for exemption if a single level is over more than one sheet.

G17 Update – Foor plan

- Must show purpose of each subsidiary.

G17 Update – Class A Requirements

G17 Update – Class A Requirements

- All boundaries that are not the centre of a wall must be shown in relation to significant and stable structures or by dimensions related to the parcel boundary.
- Note - A metal/paling fence is not a wall or a significant, durable and stable structure.

G17 Update – Class A Requirements

- ‘Subsidiary boundary is parcel boundary’

G17 Update – Class A Requirements

- Units over multiple levels
- Show the word 'TOTAL' with total area
- Garages connected to unit with internal stairs are part of the unit (preferred)

G17 Update – Class A Requirements

- Guideline 11 (*Areas on Class A Unit Plans*) is being retired and all relevant information is being added to G17.

G17 Update – Class A Requirements

- Mezzanines - added section

G17 Update – Class B Requirements

G17 Update – Class B Requirements

- Common Property must be fully dimensioned

G17 Update – Class A Requirements

- Height Limitations
- Show the area limited in height hatched
- **“Unit 1 is limited in height to the underside of the eave and gutter of the building erected on Unit 2. Unit 2 projects over Unit 1”**

G17 Update – Class B Requirements

- A common (shared) wall \neq A Party Wall

G17 Update – Class B Requirements

- All proposed fences between units must be constructed and surveyed before the plan can be finalised.

G17 Update – Other changes

G17 Update – Other Changes

- Added section - **Examination Processing**

G17 Update – Other Changes

- Added section – **Boundary Authorities and amendments**

G17 Update – Other Changes

- Updated sample plans

Questions?

Any suggestions?

An aerial photograph of Canberra, Australia, taken at sunrise. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow. In the background, a large hill (Parliament Hill) has a tall antenna tower on top. A layer of mist or fog fills the valley between the hills. In the middle ground, several modern buildings are visible, and a construction crane is positioned on one of them. The foreground is filled with the dark silhouettes of trees.

Datum Ground Level Supreme Court Decision Susa v ACT Planning and Land Authority

24 March 2026

Greg Ledwidge



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Why do this presentation?

- 2 cases where neighbours have litigated. ACAT in 2023 & Supreme court 2025.
- Nearly \$1m spent in legal costs and a lot of Registered Surveyors' time diverted that would be better spent doing 'real' work for clients.
- Increasing infill work requires determining Datum Ground Level (DGL) on old blocks. Neighbours can readily challenge building heights, basement and solar envelope determinations in ACAT for a minimal \$ cost.
- Guidelines No. 3 and 15 were developed to provide a solution but now need updating following 2025 Supreme Court decision.
- Is there a better way to determine DGL on old blocks?
- “This is not critique of the work of individual surveyors involved. All registered surveyors use their professional judgement with the best intentions.”



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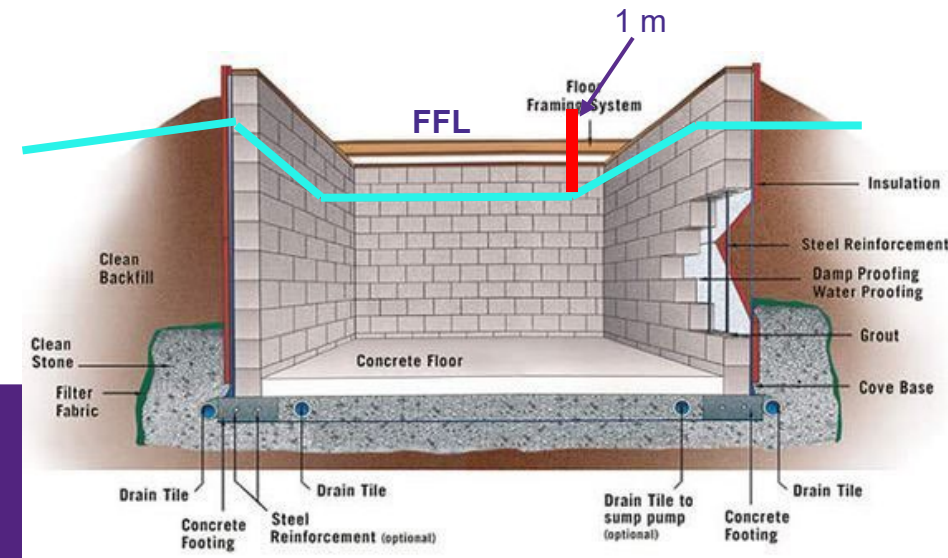
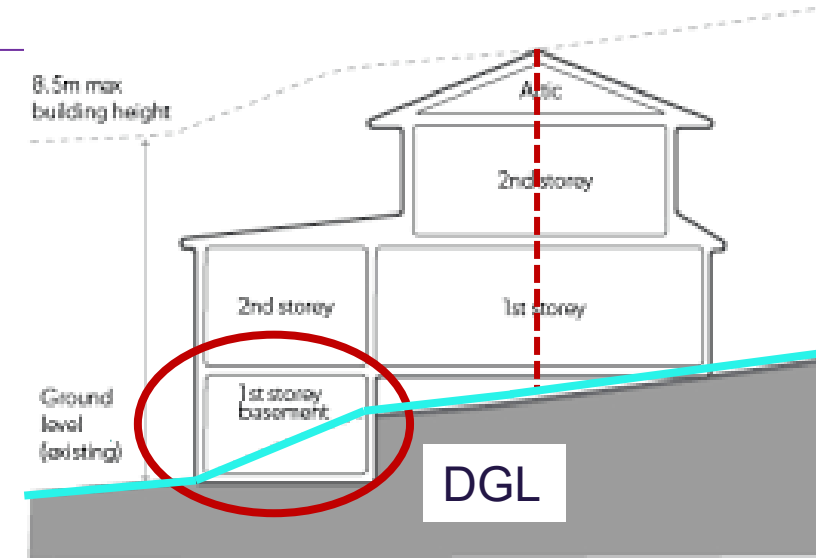
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Datum Ground Level (DGL) and Basements

DGL underpins building design

A basement is:

- “Generally, part of a building that is wholly or predominantly below Datum Ground Level.”
- “For the purposes of the Territory Plan, a floor is a basement only if the *finished floor level* of the level immediately above is **less than 1.0 m** above DGL.”
- DGL is a varying 3-dimensional surface.



The case – Background information

- Site - Block 4, Section 4, Forrest.
 - Is located within an RZ1 suburban zone
- RZ1 development code permits
 - A maximum of 2 storeys plus a basement
- Development was designed accordingly
- Owners of Block 4 were the respondents
- Neighbours in Block 3 were the plaintiffs



The case – Background information

The existing house on the site was:

- Constructed during 1926.
- Certified as completed in March 1927.
- A lease granted 2 September 1951.
 - 25 years after construction!!
- The judge noted the Commonwealth did not issue a Crown Lease earlier as the block was probably rented to a public servant.



The case – Background information

Judicial review of DA decisions by ACTPLA

- Mar 2023 - Owners lodged a DA
- Dec 2023 - DA approval was challenged by the neighbour
- May 2024 - Owners lodged an amended DA
- The neighbour challenged the DA decision in the Supreme Court
 - Heritage issues formed part of the challenge, and
 - DGL was 1 point that was challenged, claiming the development was:
 - Not 2 storeys plus a basement, but
 - 3 storeys and in breach of the development code.



The case - Susa v ACT Planning and Land Authority 2025

The Decision

1. *The report of Matthew Stevenson dated 22 August 2025, and his oral evidence are admitted into evidence. (1)*
2. *The decision of the Heritage Council constituted by the report or recommendation in its letter dated 24 June 2024 is set aside.*
3. *The decision of the ACT Planning and Land Authority made on 26 August 2024 in relation to development application 202341493 is set aside. (4)*

It did not appear to provide a definitive decision on the merits of each surveyors DGL determination.



DGL – The Territory Plan definition 2018

“Datum Ground Level means the surface ground level as determined in a field survey authorised by a registered surveyor:

- a) at the time of **Operational Acceptance** for subdivision; or*
- b) if a) is not available, provided no new earthworks have occurred;*
- c) at the **date of grant of the lease** of the block;*

whichever is the earliest.

d) Where a), b) or c) is not available, datum ground level is the best estimate of the surface of the ground level determined in a field survey considering the levels of the immediate surrounding area and authorised by a registered surveyor”.



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The case – Applying the definition – Operational Acceptance

Part a) *at the time of **Operational Acceptance** for subdivision*

- *The term "Operational Acceptance" is, as its capitalisation suggests, an identified concept which exists in the administrative arrangements for the subdivision of land by or on behalf of the Territory government. It is an administrative process which, so far as the evidence in this case is concerned, has only existed since about 2010. [Sec 113]*
- *No Operational Acceptance ever occurred [Sec 115]*
- **OA does not apply to land developed pre-2010**



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The case – Applying the definition – The date of the lease

- a) at the time of Operational Acceptance for subdivision; or*
- b) if a) is not available, provided no new earthworks have occurred;*
- c) at the **date of grant of the lease** of the block;*

whichever is the earliest.

d) Where a), b) or c) is not available, datum ground level is the best estimate of the surface of the ground level determined in a field survey considering the levels of the immediate surrounding area and authorised by a registered surveyor”.



Granting of the lease – The First lease

- .. the lease was only granted in 1951. There was no relevant survey as at 1951 that was identified or could be relied upon. The survey most proximate to that date was 1960. As a result, even allowing some modest flexibility in relation to the timing of the survey with respect to the grant of the lease, paragraph c) of the definition of datum ground level is not applicable. [Sec 116]
 - How do you confirm no new earthworks had occurred [Part b]?
 - What would have happened if there was an authorised survey around 1951?
 - What type of survey would be reliable, fit for purpose and relevant?
- *We must go to part d) of the definition:*



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The case – Applying the definition – Best estimate

“Datum Ground Level means the surface ground level as determined in a field survey authorised by a registered surveyor:

- a) at the time of **Operational Acceptance** for subdivision; or*
- b) if a) is not available, provided no new earthworks have occurred;*
- c) at the **date of grant of the lease** of the block;*

whichever is the earliest.

*d) Where a), b) or c) is not available, datum ground level is the **best estimate** of the surface of the ground level determined in a field survey considering the **levels of the immediate surrounding area** and authorised by a registered surveyor”.*



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Best estimate – Surveyor Stapleton’s Report

- *"estimated" datum ground level "based on the current ground levels of ground considered undisturbed and the shape of the contours from the Scrivener Contour Survey of 1910". [Sec 82 (b)]*
- *Listed the contour plans he found ... which included Charles Scrivener's 1910 contour map of Canberra, but no further surveys after that time until 1960. [Sec 82 (e)]*
- *Concluded that the 1910 survey plan "provides an early indication of the levels of the site" but acknowledged that "the accuracy is questionable" for various reasons. [Sec 82 (i)]*
- *“described that he estimated the datum ground level at or around 1926 based on his own survey and the (other) surveys” [Sec 82 (j)]*



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Levels of the immediate surrounding area

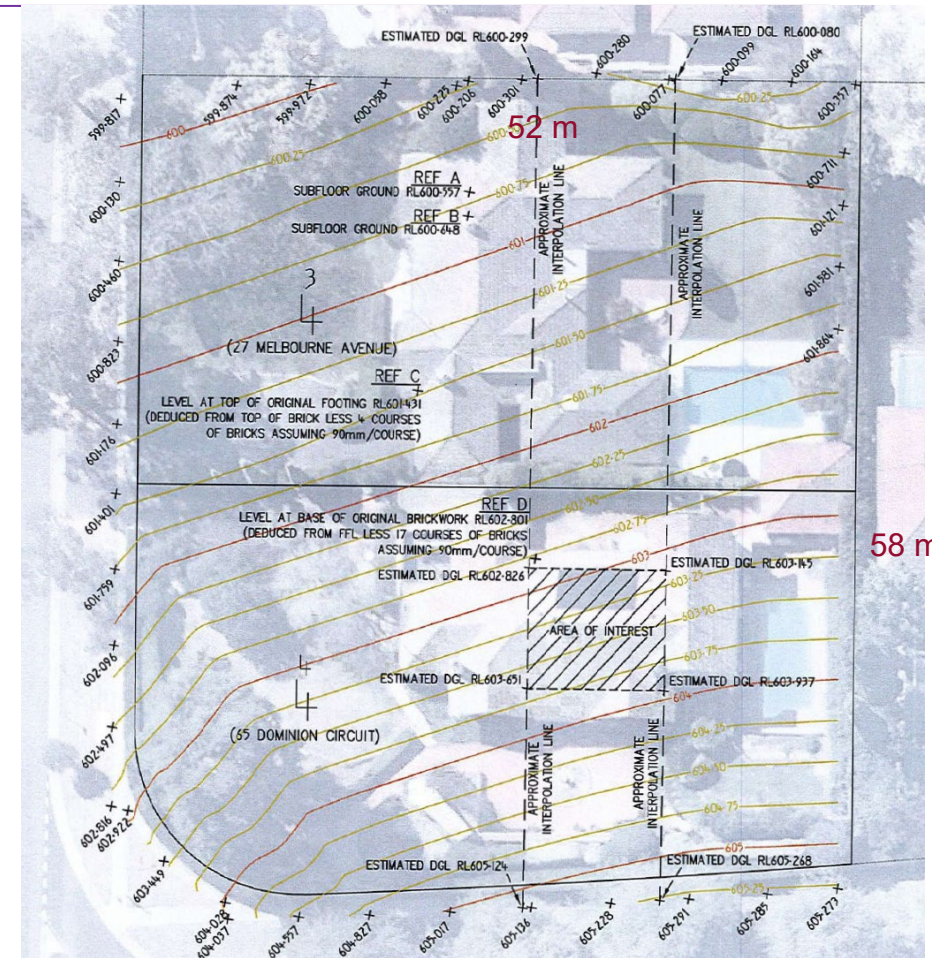
- *Spot heights used to provide levels along the boundary of blocks 2 and 3 - considered **undisturbed or minimally disturbed**. [Sec 6.14]*



DGL determination – Surveyor Stevenson – 23 July 2024

Levels of the immediate surrounding area

- Used the surveyed ground height observations around blocks 3 and 4
- Points that were ‘minimally’ disturbed



Source Matt Stevenson



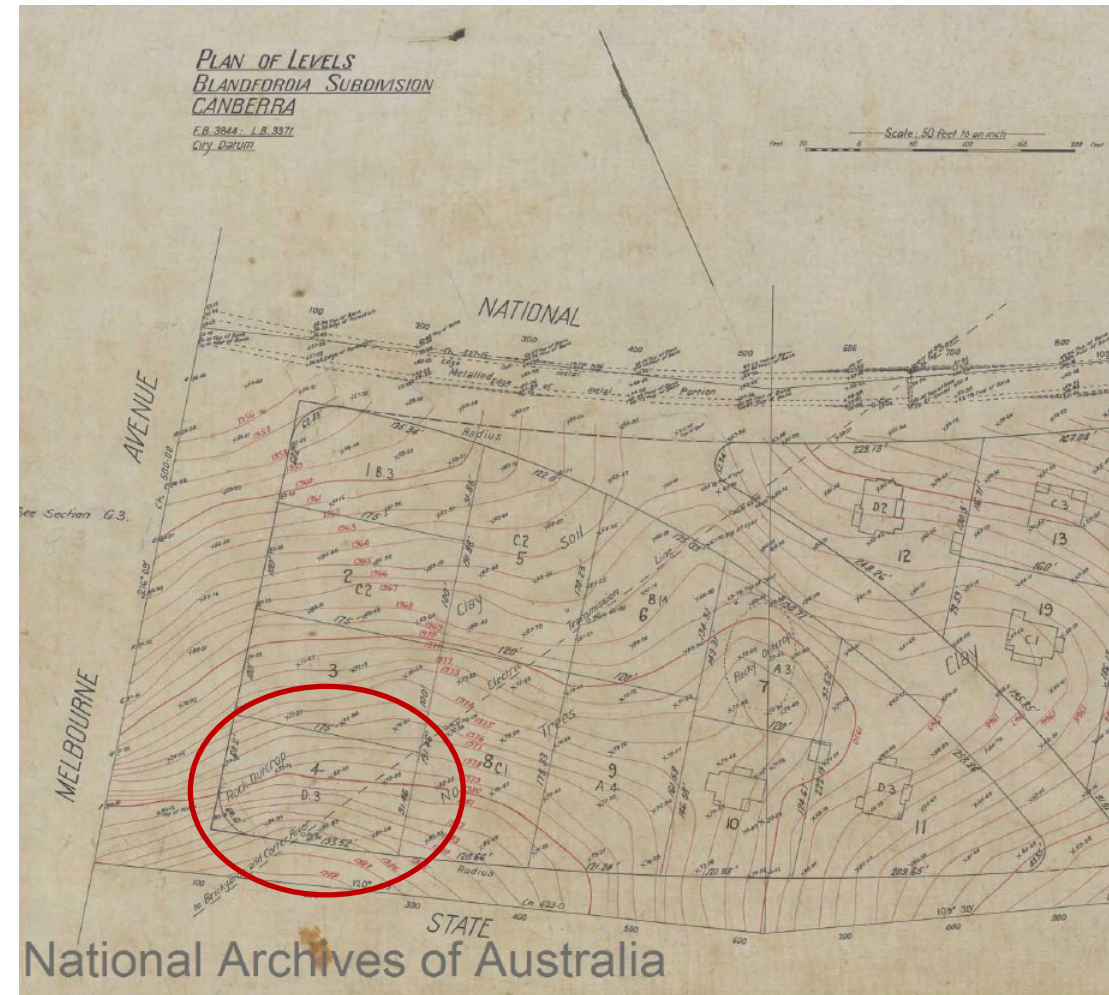
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DGL determination – Surveyor Stevenson – 2025

Used 'Blandfordia Subdivision' feature survey plan – 1922

- Found in the National Archives
- Prior to any block development
- Accurately! surveyed, in part, by a registered surveyor
- A grid of points were:
 - Setout from the control lines as shown, and
 - Then each point levelled



DGL determination – Surveyor Stevenson – 2025

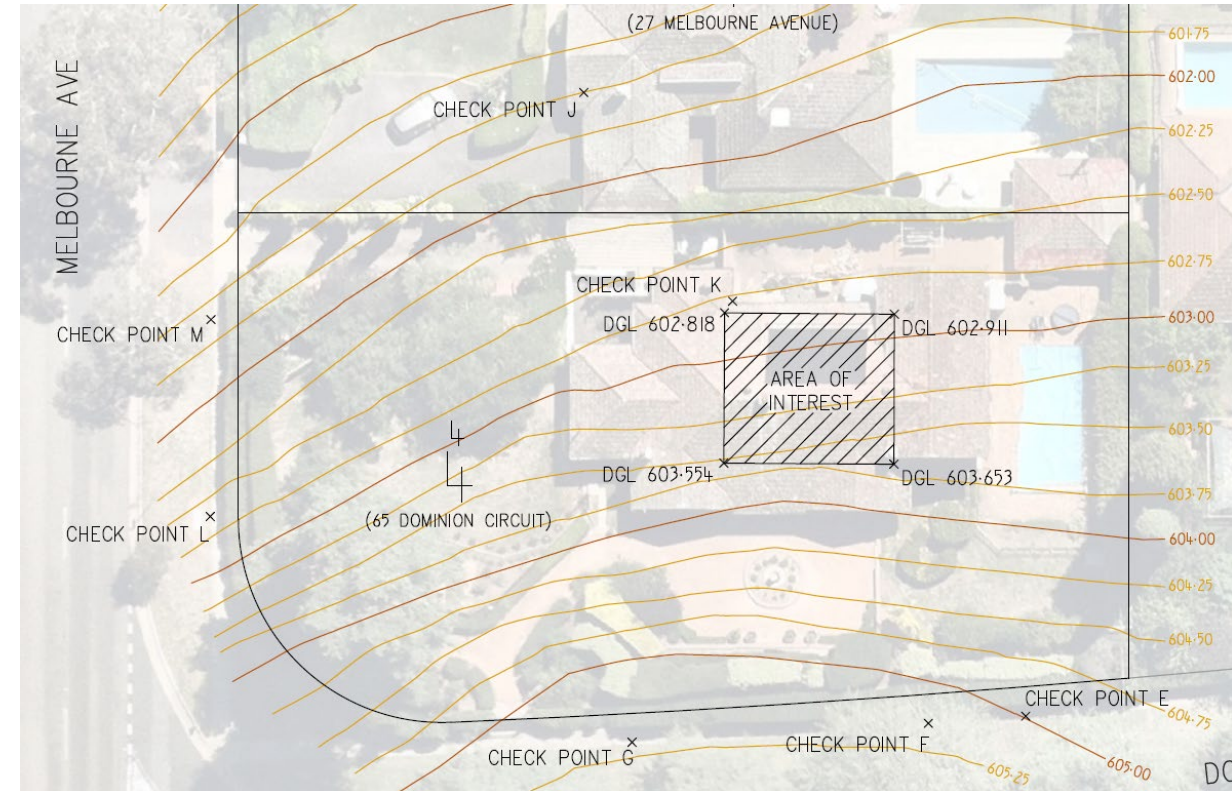
‘Blandfordia Subdivision’ survey plan

- Shows the control lines in the roads
- Spot heights on grid marks shown
- Contours shown in feet
- Contour interval (vertical) = 1 foot (0.3 m) equivalent to current standards of 0.25 m to 0.5 m
- It seems to be a survey plan that is ‘fit for purpose’.



Detail Surveys – Datum Ground Level – using the Blandfordia Plan (2025)

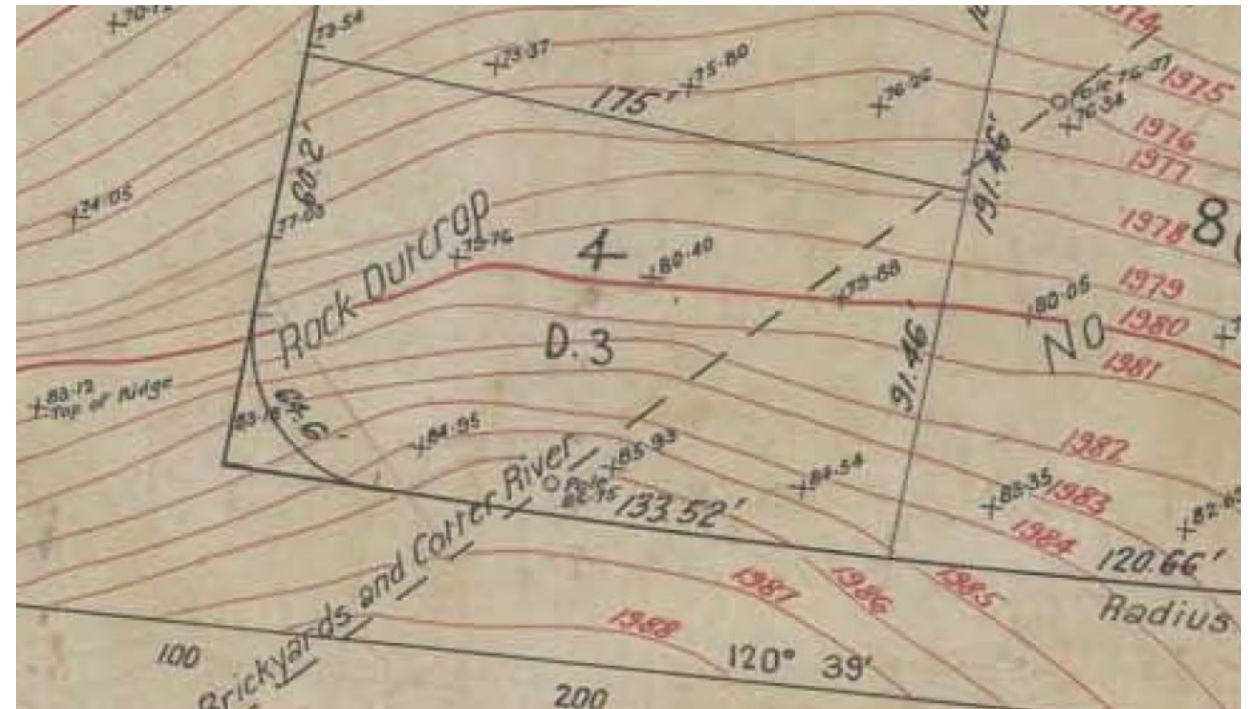
- Rotated the plan – align north
- Scale and aligned boundaries
- Replicated the ‘shape of original contours’
- Moved RLs from imperial to AHD metric
- Generated AHD contours, with a 0.25 m contour interval by interpolation
- Checked against the spot heights from previous report.



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DGL determination – 1910 plan and Blandfordia plan - Contour comparison



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DGL determination – Best Estimate Issues

To determine DGL around the time of the original development

Undisturbed or minimally disturbed ground:

- Difficult to determine often

The 'immediate' surrounding area:

- The block boundary or and how far do you go?
- The limit from Guidelines 3 & 15?

A 'fit for purpose' old survey and plan:

- The survey and plan should be reasonably equivalent of modern site detail or feature surveys
 - Vertical contour interval 0.25m to 0.5m



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DGL determination – Future

Pre 2010 and where no appropriate/fit for purpose survey exists at the time of the first lease, it will be a **best estimate** using;

- An old 'fit for purpose' survey, or if it does not exist, use
- The methodology pursuant to Guideline No. 15 for detail surveys.

A 'fit for purpose' old survey should be reasonably;

- Equivalent of modern site detail or feature surveys, and
 - Vertical Contour interval 0.25 m to 0.5 m.



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DGL determination – Future Option 1

Define ‘authoritative/reliable plan and data sources’ that are fit for purpose, for surveyors to use, this may include:

- Greenfield sites (new) would be a survey at the time of Operational Acceptance now.
- 2025 LiDAR for all Territory Land and road verges
- Blandfordia plans or equivalents – 0.3 m vertical contour interval
- 1:500 detail series plans – 0.5m vertical contour interval
- Detail surveys pursuant to Guidelines 3 & 15 – From Jan 2025



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DGL determination – Future Option 2

1 authoritative digital DGL surface for the ACT.

- To underpin all
 - House design and Solar Envelopes - Architects
 - Development Applications
 - Building Applications
 - Building Compliance actions
- Bring together all the survey plan and data sources
- Certified by the OSGLI – Registered Surveyor



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DGL determination – What now?

Need to:

- Get better design to compliance outcomes
- Eliminate or significantly reduce the loss of time by registered land surveyors being involved in litigation.
- Determine what should be the ‘best estimate’ method.

Collectively work out a solution for the future

- Need to have working group of government and private sector surveyors and others.



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A wide-angle landscape photograph capturing a serene scene at dawn or dusk. The sky is a soft gradient of blue and orange, with a bright sun low on the horizon. In the foreground, a paved road lined with young trees leads towards a modern building with a distinctive triangular roof. The middle ground features rolling green hills and a valley filled with mist. In the distance, a tall tower stands on a hill, and two hot air balloons are visible in the sky.

Questions