

Your Guide to Adding a Ngurra Living 36m² Home to Your Property

Northern Territory Planning & Approval Guide

This guide helps you understand the requirements for adding a Ngurra Living 36m² modular home as a second dwelling on your NT property. Use it to assess whether your property is suitable and what approvals you'll need.

What You're Planning to Add

Understanding "Dwelling-Independent"

In Northern Territory planning terms, a **dwelling-independent** is a secondary dwelling on your property—similar to a granny flat. It must:

- Remain secondary to your main house
- Share essential services with the main dwelling
- Stay on the same property title (cannot be subdivided and sold separately)

Why the 36m² Ngurra Living Home Works Well

- **Complies everywhere:** At 36m², it's well under the maximum size limits in all residential zones (50m² standard, 80m² rural)
 - **Faster approvals:** Often qualifies as "Permitted" development, meaning you can skip the Development Application and go straight to Building Permit
 - **Lower impact:** Smaller footprint means easier compliance with site coverage, setbacks, and open space requirements
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Important Information About Floor Area

What Counts as Floor Area?

Floor area includes all enclosed, roofed spaces within the external walls of your Ngurra Living home.

Optional Wrap-Around Verandah (2.5m)

- Open verandahs (no walls, open to the elements) are **generally not counted** in floor area calculations
- **Important:** This varies by council area and must be confirmed in writing with NT Development Assessment Services before you commit
- Don't assume the verandah is "free"—verify first for your specific location

Your Property Readiness Checklist

Work through these 8 steps to determine if your property is ready for a Ngurra Living home.

Step 1: Do You Have an Existing House? ✓

- You **must already have a main dwelling** on the property
- A dwelling-independent cannot be the only dwelling on vacant land
- Your main house must remain the principal residence

Self-Assessment: Is there currently a house on your property that will remain the main dwelling?

- Yes → Continue to Step 2
 - No → The Ngurra home would be your primary dwelling (different rules apply—contact us for guidance)
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Step 2: Floor Area Compliance ✓

Your 36m² Ngurra Living home complies with floor area limits in all zones:

Zone Type	Maximum Floor Area
Standard residential (LR, LMR, MR, HR)	50m ²
Rural zones (H, A, RL, R)	80m ²
Your Ngurra home	36m² ✓

Self-Assessment:

- 36m² home only → Compliant everywhere
 - 36m² + optional verandah → Confirm verandah treatment with NT DAS before proceeding
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Step 3: Building Setbacks ✓

Your Ngurra home must be positioned a minimum distance from your property boundaries.

Boundary Type	Minimum Distance
Standard Residential Zones (LR, LMR, MR, HR):	
Primary street frontage	6m
Secondary street frontage	2.5m
Side and rear boundaries	1.5m
Rural Zones (RR, RL, R, H, A):	
Primary street frontage	10m (or 7.5m if lot < 1 hectare)
Secondary street frontage	10m (or 5m if lot < 1 hectare)
Side and rear boundaries	10m (or 5m if lot < 1 hectare)

Self-Assessment:

- Walk your property and identify potential placement areas
- Measure from boundaries to ensure minimum setbacks can be met
- Consider access for delivery and installation

- I can meet the required setbacks
 - Unsure—I need to measure or get professional advice
 - Cannot meet setbacks—may need Development Application
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Step 4: Site Coverage ✓

Site coverage is the total building footprint as a percentage of your lot size.

How to Check:

1. Find your total lot size (check your property title or council records)
2. Estimate the footprint of your existing house and outbuildings
3. Add 36m² (or ~58m² if including verandah)
4. Calculate: Total buildings ÷ Lot size = Site coverage percentage
5. Compare to your zone's maximum (varies—typically 50-60%)

Self-Assessment:

- My lot has plenty of space—site coverage should be fine
 - My lot is heavily built on—I need to verify coverage limits
 - Unsure—I need professional assessment
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Step 5: Private Open Space ✓

Both your main house and the Ngurra home need adequate outdoor space.

Requirements for the Dwelling-Independent:

- Minimum 45m² open to the sky (no roof overhead)
- Plus 24m² covered or uncovered area
- At least half must be permeable (grass/garden, not paved)
- This is **in addition to** the open space for your main house

Self-Assessment:

- My property has sufficient yard space for both dwellings
- My yard is limited—I need to verify requirements
- Unsure—I need to measure available space

Step 6: Shared Services (Critical) ✓

Both dwellings must share utilities—this is mandatory.

Service	What You Need
Wastewater	Connected to town sewer OR both dwellings share one septic system
Water	Connected to town water OR both dwellings share one bore
Power	Both dwellings connected to one power supply
Access	Both dwellings share one driveway entry point

Self-Assessment Questions:

Wastewater:

- My property is connected to town sewer
- My property has a septic system—I need to check if it can handle a second dwelling
- My property has a septic system—I know it will need upgrade or new system

Water:

- My property is connected to town water
- My property has bore water

Power:

- My property has power connection
- My property is off-grid (solar/generator)

Common Issues to Watch For:

- **Septic systems:** Older systems may not have capacity for a second dwelling—assessment and potential upgrade required

- **Rural properties:** Often rely on bore water and septic—both need evaluation
 - **Septic + native vegetation:** New/upgraded septic fields may require vegetation clearing (see Step 8)
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Step 7: Vehicle Access ✓

- Both dwellings must share **one vehicle access point** from the road
- Creating a second driveway entry requires separate approval
- Your existing driveway must accommodate both dwellings

Self-Assessment:

- My existing driveway can serve both dwellings
 - I want a second access point—I understand this needs separate approval
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Step 8: Zone-Specific Considerations ✓

Different property zones have additional requirements.

If Your Property is in Rural Living (RL) Zone—Read This Carefully

Rural Living zones have the most complex requirements. Check these additional items:

1. Residential Density

- Your lot must be large enough to support two dwellings under the density formula
- Typical RL lots can accommodate two dwellings, but this must be verified
- Check your exact lot size and confirm with NT DAS

2. Native Vegetation Clearing

- If total clearing exceeds 1 hectare (10,000m²), you need additional consent
- "Total clearing" includes: building pad + driveway + parking + septic drain field

- **Biggest trigger:** Septic systems require significant clearing for drain fields

3. Wastewater Management

- Most RL properties are **not** connected to town sewer
- Septic systems require separate approvals from NT Health
- Land capability assessment needed to confirm soil suitability
- May trigger vegetation clearing requirements (see above)

Self-Assessment for RL Properties:

- I know my exact lot size: _____ hectares / m²
- The area where I want to place the home is already cleared
- Vegetation clearing will be required—I understand this may need consent
- My property is on town sewer (rare in RL)
- My property uses septic—I need to arrange assessment
- I need to contact NT DAS for pre-lodgement advice

For All Other Zones

- Confirm your property's exact zoning (use NTLIS mapping tool)
- Check for overlays: flooding, storm surge, airport proximity
- Verify services availability with your local council

Summary: Will You Need a Development Application?

✓ You Can Likely Proceed WITHOUT Development Application (DA) If:

- ✓ You have an existing main house on the property
- ✓ The 36m² floor area is under your zone limit (it is everywhere)
- ✓ You can meet the required setbacks
- ✓ Total site coverage stays within limits
- ✓ Both dwellings will have adequate private open space
- ✓ Shared services (sewer/water/power/access) are available or feasible
- ✓ No vegetation clearing over 1 hectare required (RL zones)

- ✓ No special overlays are triggered (flooding, storm surge, airport)

If all boxes checked → You can proceed directly to Building Permit stage (faster, lower cost)

△ You WILL Need a Development Application If:

- You cannot meet one or more of the above requirements
- Your property has special constraints (overlays, vegetation, services)
- You need variations to setbacks, site coverage, or other standards

What this means:

- Your application becomes "Merit Assessable"
- Longer timeframe: 8-12+ weeks for assessment
- Higher costs: DA fees plus potential consultant reports
- May require public notification depending on variations sought
- You'll need to submit a statement addressing the variations

Building Permit Requirements

Every Project Needs a Building Permit

Even if you don't need a Development Application, you **always** need a Building Permit under the NT Building Act.

Key Building Requirements:

1. Cyclone/Wind Rating

- Your Ngurra home must be certified for Wind Region C or D (depending on your location)
- Ngurra Living provides certified designs for NT conditions

2. Footings and Slab

- Must suit your specific soil conditions
- May require soil testing or engineer assessment

3. Energy Efficiency

- Must comply with National Construction Code (NCC)

4. Class 1b Requirements

- Dwelling-independents must meet NCC Class 1b building standards

Typical Building Permit Timeline: 4-6 weeks after lodgement (if application is complete)

When to Get Professional Advice

Consider engaging a town planner or contacting NT DAS early if:

- Your property is in **Rural Living (RL) zone** with native vegetation and septic system
 - Your property's **septic system capacity** is unknown or upgrade is required
 - Your property has **overlays:** flooding, storm surge, or airport proximity
 - You **cannot meet setbacks** due to lot size or shape
 - Your property has **high site coverage** already
 - **Vegetation clearing over 1 hectare** will be required
 - **Shared services** are not currently available
 - You're unsure about any of the requirements in this guide
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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I rent out the Ngurra home?

A: Yes, you can rent out the dwelling-independent as long as it remains secondary to your main house, and your main house remains the principal residence on the property.

Q: Can I subdivide my property later and sell the Ngurra home separately?

A: No. A dwelling-independent must remain on the same property title as the main dwelling. If you subdivide, the classification changes and you would need separate planning approval. The dwelling would no longer qualify as a dwelling-independent.

Q: What if my property is vacant—can I put the Ngurra home on it first?

A: Not as a dwelling-independent. A dwelling-independent requires an existing main house. On vacant land, your Ngurra home would be classified as the primary dwelling, which has different planning requirements. Contact us to discuss primary dwelling options.

Q: How long does the approval process take?

A: It depends on whether you need a Development Application:

- **No DA required (Permitted):** Proceed directly to Building Permit—typically 4-6 weeks
- **DA required (Merit Assessable):** 8-12+ weeks depending on complexity and whether public notification is required

Q: What happens if my property doesn't meet all the requirements?

A: You can still proceed, but you'll need to lodge a Development Application. The consent authority will assess whether the variations are acceptable based on:

- The purpose of the specific requirement you don't meet
- Your zone's purpose and outcomes
- Potential impact on surrounding properties
- Any unique characteristics of your property that justify the variation

Q: Do I need to use a planner or can I do this myself?

A: It depends on your property's complexity:

- **Simple properties** (meets all requirements, standard residential zone, town services): You may be able to manage the Building Permit application yourself
- **Complex properties** (RL zone, variations needed, overlays, septic): Professional planner recommended to navigate requirements and prepare applications

Q: What's the difference between NT DAS and my local council?

A: NT Development Assessment Services (NT DAS) handles planning approvals under the NT Planning Scheme. Your local council handles

building permits and local services (water, stormwater, waste). You may need to deal with both.

Next Steps: Getting Started

1. Complete Your Property Assessment

Use the checklist in this guide to evaluate your property's suitability.

2. Gather Property Information

You'll need:

- Property title (lot number, size, zoning)
- Site plan or aerial photo showing existing buildings
- Information about current services (sewer/septic, water, power)
- Any existing planning permits or building approvals

3. Check Zoning and Overlays

Use the NT Land Information System (NTLIS) to:

- Confirm your property's zoning
- Check for overlays (flooding, vegetation clearing, airport, etc.)
- View your property boundaries and dimensions

NTLIS Access: <https://ntlis.nt.gov.au>

4. Contact Ngurra Living

Once you've completed your initial assessment, contact us to discuss:

- Your property's suitability
- Design options and customizations
- Site assessment and delivery logistics
- Pricing and timeline

5. Arrange Professional Assessments (If Needed)

Depending on your property, you may need:

- Septic system capacity assessment (if on septic)
 - Soil testing (for footings/slab design)
 - Land capability assessment (RL zones without town sewer)
 - Town planning advice (complex properties or variations required)
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Key Resources and Contacts

NT Government Planning Services

- **NT Development Assessment Services (DAS)**
 - Website: <https://nt.gov.au/property/land-planning-and-development>
 - Phone: 08 8999 5511
 - Services: Pre-lodgement advice, planning enquiries, DA lodgement
- **NTLIS (NT Land Information System)**
 - Website: <https://ntlis.nt.gov.au>
 - Services: Check zoning, overlays, property details
- **NT Planning Scheme 2020**
 - Official planning rules and requirements
 - Available on NT Government website

Your Local Council

Contact your local council for:

- Building permit requirements
- Local services information (water, sewer, stormwater)
- Specific local planning conditions

Ngurra Living

- **For product information and site assessments**
 - Contact us to discuss your project and arrange a property consultation
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Important Disclaimer

- This guide provides general information only and is not legal or town planning advice
- Planning requirements can change—always confirm current requirements with NT Development Assessment Services and the NT Planning Scheme 2020
- Every property is unique—specific site conditions may trigger additional requirements not covered in this guide
- Ngurra Living recommends engaging a qualified town planner for complex properties, particularly those in Rural Living zones or with special constraints
- This guide is current as of March 2026—verify that you have the latest version

Your Ngurra Living Planning Guide

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For property-specific advice or to discuss your project, contact Ngurra Living or NT Development Assessment Services.

This guide is designed to help you assess your property's suitability for a Ngurra Living 36m² home. For detailed planning and building requirements, always consult with NT DAS and qualified professionals.