

# HOTEL GIVEN 12 MONTHS TO START BELMONT BUILD

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The developer behind plans to build a Wyndham Lux Hotel in Belmont has been warned it must begin construction in the next 12 months after first getting State planning approval six years ago.

All Metro Inner South Joint Development Assessment Panel members — except for City of Belmont councillor Jenny Davis — agreed at a meeting last week to give landowner Lux WA Pty Ltd another 12 months to start building the 120-bedroom hotel with a restaurant or bar, office and meeting rooms at 61 Great Eastern Highway.

The development was first approved in 2017 and approval extended for two years on January 9, 2019, with the project scheduled to start in early 2020.

But planning and environment lawyer Belinda Moharich, who spoke on behalf of the landowner, said the project coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and it could not proceed because there was no domestic or international travel to and from WA.

“Now that international travel has resumed, the proposed tenant Wyndham Hotels and Resorts is motivated to get the project moving again and to this end has renewed its contractual arrangements with the applicant,” she said.

“It is our submission that a further extension to the approval is capable of being granted and we would respectfully ask that the JDAP exercise its discretion in this regard to allow a two-year extension of the existing approval.”

Applicant Lateral Planning managing director Alan Stewart, who spoke on behalf of the landowner, said the COVID pandemic during 2020 to 2021 made it not “economically feasible” for the proponent to commence development works.

“However, during this time the proponent has actively been progressing the detailed design and documentation of the project to value add in response to increasing construction costs, due primarily to labour and materials supply shortages post-COVID,” he said.

The landowner had requested a two-year extension to start the development but JDAP members were recommended to refuse the move.

“We consider it’s not appropriate to grant a two-year extension — six years is certainly a long time and adding another two we consider starts to undermine the purpose of having time frames on planning approvals,” City of Belmont officer Alex Bott said.

JDAP members instead granted the landowner a 12-month extension to start the development and agreed that if the project did not substantially start before January 23 next year, no more extensions would be granted.

Deputy presiding JDAP member Rachel Chapman said although she had concerns that 12 months might not be enough time to start the development, she was willing to support the extension given the applicant indicated it would be achievable.