CAR Supporting Tool C: QLDC Disagreements and escalation in the CAR process

Introduction

QLDC may use this internal escalation pathway where the nature, risk, complexity, or consequence of a matter warrants further review. Use of escalation is at QLDC's discretion and does not create an additional approval pathway or applicant entitlement.

This CAR Supporting Tool describes how disagreements between an applicant PCBU and QLDC may be managed and escalated where the parties do not agree on:

- Whether the applicant's risk management process has identified all affected stakeholders and significant risks or impacts associated with the activity and proposed network occupation.
- Whether the applicants risk management process has adequately justified for the selection of proposed risk treatments or controls where higher treatments or controls are available.
- WAP conditions and constraints applied by QLDC in pursuit of its own goals, objectives, risk appetites and legislative duties.

Escalation pathway

Where disagreement between the applicant PCBU and QLDC cannot be resolved through standard CAR review, a structured escalation pathway may be applied.

The escalation pathway is intended to:

- Support reasoned and defensible decision-making.
- Manage uncertainty in a proportionate manner.
- Maintain clear statutory duty boundaries.
- Avoid directing or assuming responsibility for the applicant's risk management.

Escalation is not required for all CAR applications and is applied based on risk, impact, and context. See Table 7 for escalation step guidance.

Table 7: CAR Supporting Tool C CAR escalation table

Escalation stage	Trigger	Who is involved	Purpose of the stage	Possible outcomes
Stage 1 – Clarification and re-justification	Initial disagreement on risk level, proportionality, or effectiveness of controls.	Applicant PCBU and CAR reviewer.	To clarify assumptions, reasoning, and justification supporting the applicant's risk management approach.	• Additional justification provided • Minor amendments or clarifications agreed • Matter resolved without escalation
Stage 2 – Internal technical review	Disagreement remains or uncertainty	CAR reviewer and internal council SME(s)	To obtain independent technical advice on risk interpretation,	• Advice supports applicant's approach • Advice identifies gaps or conditions

Escalation stage	Trigger	Who is involved	Purpose of the stage	Possible outcomes
	cannot be resolved through clarification alone.	(e.g. transport engineer, network specialist).	proportionality, and corridor or network context.	• Further information requested
Stage 3 – Conditional access with heightened assurance	Residual disagreement or uncertainty remains, but risks are considered manageable with additional oversight.	Applicant PCBU, CAR team, relevant SMEs.	To allow corridor access to proceed while managing uncertainty through enhanced monitoring and assurance.	• WAP issued with specific conditions • Heightened RCA quality assurance during delivery • Increased applicant monitoring and reporting • Real-time feedback to inform ongoing risk management
Stage 4 – Independent / external review	Uncertainty or disagreement remains significant, or consequences are high.	Applicant PCBU, CAR team, independent external SME (as appropriate).	To obtain independent assurance on risk interpretation, control proportionality, or network impacts.	• Independent advice supports a decision • Further analysis requested • Basis established for acceptance or decline
Stage 5 – Organisational escalation	Disagreement persists after technical review, or decision has material organisational or network consequences.	Senior RCA representatives and appropriate governance or management roles.	To make a decision aligned with statutory duties, organisational risk appetite, and defensible reasoning.	• CAR accepted or declined • Conditional WAP confirmed or withdrawn • Decision formally recorded with rationale

Managing uncertainty where quantification is not reasonably practicable

In some circumstances, uncertainty may remain despite reasonable efforts to analyse and evaluate risk. This may include situations where:

- Likelihood or consequence cannot be reliably quantified,
- Available data is insufficient or not applicable to the specific context, or
- Further analysis would not meaningfully improve understanding of risk.

In these cases, QLDC may:

- Explicitly document the nature of the uncertainty,
- Record the reasoning for allowing corridor access to proceed, and
- Apply conditions and heightened assurance to manage potential network impacts.

Allowing access under these circumstances does not imply acceptance of risk by QLDC. It reflects a **reasoned and documented decision** made in the absence of determinable metrics, consistent with NZGTTM risk-based principles and recognised risk management standards.

End of CAR Supporting Tool C