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Strategic Assessment under the EPBC Act

*Environment Protection And Biodiversity
Conservation Act 1999*

Other strategic approaches under the EPBC Act

The EPBC Act provides several other ways to strategically protect matters of national environmental significance:

Conservation agreements

The Minister can enter into an agreement to protect the conservation of biodiversity, the values and the character of certain matters of national environmental significance in relation to specific activities.

Bilateral agreements

The Minister can enter into an agreement with the states and territories that delegates to them responsibility for assessing and/or granting environmental approvals under the EPBC Act. These are subject to stringent performance requirements.

Bioregional Planning

The Minister may prepare a plan for a bioregion that is within, or contains, a Commonwealth area. Bioregional plans enable the ecologically sustainable management of biodiversity, heritage and other values.

Compliance

The Australian Government takes compliance with the EPBC Act seriously. Alleged breaches are investigated.

If you would like to discuss a compliance issue with the Department of the Environment, or have reason to believe that the EPBC Act has been, or is likely to be breached:

Phone: 1800 110 395 or

Email: compliance@environment.gov.au
or audit@environment.gov.au

For more information

Further information about the EPBC Act is available on the Department of the Environment website

www.environment.gov.au/epbc

or by contacting the Department's Community Information Unit, email ciu@environment.gov.au or free call 1800 803 772.



environment.gov.au

As well as dealing with projects on a case-by-case basis, the Australian Minister for the Environment can approve actions under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act) which relate to an endorsed policy, plan or program, These are called Strategic Assessments.

What is a strategic assessment?

A strategic assessment happens early in the planning process and examines the potential impacts of actions which might stem from one or more policy, program or plan.

These may include, but are not limited to:

- local government plans, schemes or policies
- district structure plans
- strategic land use plans
- regional plans and policies
- local environmental plans
- fire, vegetation or pest management policies, plans or programs
- water extraction/use policies
- statement of planning policies
- building design policy/guidelines, and
- infrastructure plans and policies

Strategic assessments under the EPBC Act mainly involve individuals or agencies such as local councils, state ministers or government departments responsible for implementing the policy, plan or program.

What are the benefits?

Advantages of undertaking a strategic assessment include:

- early consideration of national environmental matters in planning processes
- greater certainty to the local communities and developers over future development
- reduces administrative burden for proponents and government
- capacity to achieve better environmental outcomes and address cumulative impacts at the landscape level, and
- flexible timeframes to better meet planning processes

When is it appropriate?

Strategic assessment can help to address issues such as:

- region-wide development pressures
- high growth areas with a large number of projects requiring assessment and approval
- multiple stakeholders
- complex, large scale actions, and
- cumulative impacts on matters of national environmental significance (NES) protected by the EPBC Act.

What are matters of national environmental significance?

- world heritage properties
- national heritage places
- wetlands of international importance (often called 'Ramsar' wetlands after the international treaty under which such wetlands are listed)
- nationally threatened species and ecological communities

- migratory species
- Commonwealth marine areas
- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- nuclear actions (including uranium mining)
- a water resource, in relation to coal seam gas development and large coal mining development.

How does it work?

A strategic assessment includes the following stages:

