



Bioregional Guidance Plans: Interactions with other Commonwealth programs and policies

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Purpose of this fact sheet

This fact sheet is intended to help stakeholders understand how bioregional guidance plans interact with and draw on other Commonwealth programs and policies. This fact sheet was prepared by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Further information about bioregional guidance plans, and bioregional planning is available at: www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/epbc-act-reform/bioregional-planning

Environmental law reforms

The Australian Government has delivered on its commitment to strengthen and streamline Australia's national environment laws, following the passage through Parliament of the *Environment Protection Reform Bills 2025* on 28 November 2025.

The reforms align with the key recommendations of the 2020 Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the Samuel Review). Once fully implemented, the reforms will deliver stronger environmental protection and restoration; more efficient and robust project assessments; and greater accountability and transparency in decision making. They include improved provisions relating to bioregional planning.

More information about the reformed environmental laws can be found here:

www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/epbc-act-reform

What is a Bioregional Guidance Plan?

Bioregional Guidance Plans are landscape-scale tools that aim to improve environmental outcomes. They provide clear guidance about where development impacts should be avoided, measures to manage cumulative impacts, and protection and restoration opportunities. This information is intended to help industry, regulators, and the community during decision-making.

They include information and guidance about the environmental values in a region to improve our understanding of a region's environment. This supports smart planning, development and investment decisions. Plans can include maps, relevant data, and practical guidance.

The information and data in Bioregional Guidance Plans can help facilitate the streamlining of assessment processes under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), enabling more informed and timely decision-making. Proponents can use the information in plans to understand regional priorities and values, identify less environmentally sensitive areas which may be better suited to development, and reduce their impacts by applying the guidance.

Interactions with other programs and policies

Bioregional plans with regulatory zones ('Bioregional Plans')

Bioregional Plans are another pathway for bioregional planning under the reformed EPBC Act. In addition to the information, maps, data and advice that Bioregional Guidance Plans contain, a Bioregional Plan has more direct regulatory effects creating zones for development and conservation with binding rules and enforceable requirements.

Bioregional Guidance Plans cannot be automatically converted into Bioregional Plans. Further steps are required including:

- Setting objectives and outcomes for the Bioregional Plan.
- Identifying development zones where specific projects can proceed under defined rules.
- Identifying conservation zones where certain actions would be prohibited.
- Designing offset arrangements to manage unavoidable development impacts.

Preparing a Bioregional Plan requires robust data and modelling. It may require additional data collection and analysis to build on the information, maps, and advice in a Bioregional Guidance Plan.

Development of a Bioregional Plan would also involve further stakeholder engagement, including public consultation on the draft plan. Stakeholders would have opportunities to comment on proposed zones, development conditions, and proposed protection and restoration measures.

As with Bioregional Guidance Plans, Bioregional Plans would be developed in partnership with the relevant State or Territory government, who would also need to agree to the plan before it could be made.

Strategic assessments under the EPBC Act

Strategic assessments are landscape-scale assessments of plans, policies or programs that can approve a class of actions over a large-scale area for long timeframes under the EPBC Act. A Bioregional Guidance Plan provides information and data that can support the development of a strategic assessment proposal. Where a Bioregional Guidance Plan is relevant, it will also inform any decisions made about the strategic assessment.

Like Bioregional Plans with regulatory zones, strategic assessments manage cumulative impacts at a landscape-scale across multiple projects. However, strategic assessments can focus on smaller or larger areas, can be developed by industry, and do not have the holistic conservation planning elements or adaptive management features of a Bioregional Plan.

30 by 30

Australia has committed to protect and conserve 30% of its land and 30% of its marine areas by 2030 (known as the 30 by 30 target). Bioregional Guidance Plans can support this goal by improving and making available environmental data. This data can complement national and state data sources by providing region specific guidance on areas that are important for biodiversity with low levels of protection, informing conservation and investment decisions.

Nature Repair Market

The Nature Repair Market is a legislated national biodiversity market. It is designed to increase investment in nature and deliver high integrity biodiversity outcomes.

A Bioregional Guidance Plan can provide information in a region that could guide government and private investment in restoring and caring for the environment.

A Bioregional Guidance Plan provides data and information about environmental values in a particular bioregion. This may include identification of regional priorities that help inform proponents designing projects under the Nature Repair Market, or investors in Nature Repair Market projects.

World and National Heritage listed places

Bioregional Guidance Plans will play a role in supporting the consistent and proactive adaptive management of cumulative impacts on listed heritage areas within the broader landscape. Plans will complement World and National Heritage protection by supporting decisions about whether and how projects can go ahead in surrounding areas without significantly impacting the listed heritage values. Decisions on World and National Heritage areas rely on informed data and information about listed areas and surrounding regions to assess and manage heritage values. Bioregional Guidance Plans provide strong regional information which can inform conservation decisions around Australia's World and National Heritage listed places.

Conservation Planning

Documents such as recovery plans, conservation advices and protection statements focus on the protection and conservation of flora and fauna, most often at a national scale. These statutory conservation planning documents will inform Bioregional Guidance Plans. Bioregional planning occurs at an ecologically relevant scale and incorporates regional level information, including guidance on conservation priorities and mitigation strategies that complement national scale conservation planning guidance. Additionally, conservation planning documents (particularly protection statements) must be closely considered when bioregional plans with regulatory zones are being developed, ensuring that regional and national approaches to regulation are clear and consistent.

Natural Resource Management Plans

Bioregional Guidance Plans will include objectives and outcomes relevant to each region. In developing the Bioregional Guidance Plan, we will consult widely. This will likely include collaborating with Natural Resource Management organisations.

Bioregional Guidance Plans will consider and incorporate relevant data sources. NRM Plans are likely to be one of these sources in a region.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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