



Bioregional guidance planning and Queensland Government legislation fact sheet

MAY 2026

Background

The Queensland Government is collaborating with the Australian Government to undertake bioregional guidance planning in three pilot areas across Queensland. Bioregional guidance planning will consider cumulative impacts of development on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES), rather than just project-by-project impacts.

The bioregional guidance plans will provide greater certainty for industry and better protect the environment through improved information, strategic planning and guidance to support project assessments under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act), while operating alongside existing Queensland planning and environmental legislation.

Purpose of this fact sheet

This fact sheet is intended to help stakeholders understand how bioregional guidance planning relates to Queensland legislation and policies, particularly those related to land use planning, environmental protection and development assessment. Further information about bioregional guidance planning can be accessed on the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) website at: <https://qld.gov.au/bioregionalplanning>

What bioregional guidance planning does

Bioregional guidance planning provides valuable, strategic environmental guidance at a landscape-scale to inform development proposals and Australian Government decision-making under the EPBC Act regarding Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). The Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water must have regard to a bioregional guidance plan when making a decision under the EPBC Act to which the plan is considered relevant.

What bioregional guidance planning does not do

Bioregional guidance planning does not amend, override or replace Queensland legislation, planning or policy. The bioregional guidance plans do not intersect, regulate development, grant approvals or impose new requirements under Queensland law. All existing Queensland planning, environmental and resource approval processes continue to apply.

How Australian and Queensland legislation interacts with the bioregional guidance plans

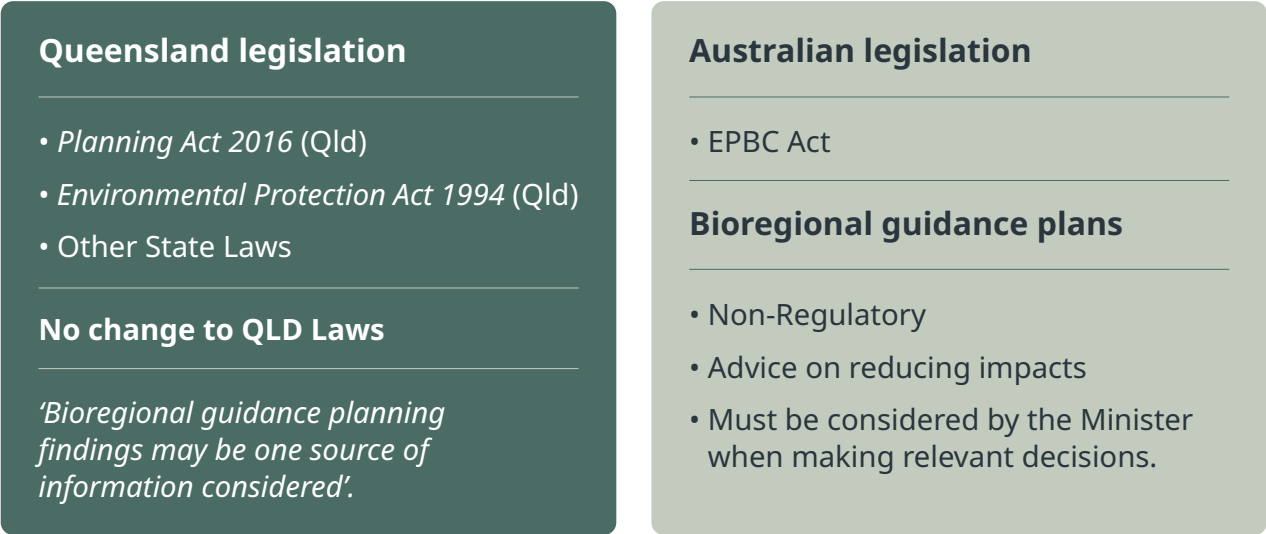


Figure 1. How Australian and Queensland legislation interact with bioregional guidance plans.

How Australian and Queensland legislation relate to bioregional guidance plans

This table shows how bioregional guidance plans operate within the Australian legislative framework and alongside Queensland legislation. It emphasises that bioregional guidance plans are guidance only and do not change Queensland laws.

Australian legislation		
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)</i> • Bioregional guidance plans are made under section 176 of the EPBC Act. • Once made, the Australian Government Minister will need to consider the bioregional guidance plans when making a decision under the EPBC Act to which the plan is considered relevant.		
↑ ↑	Guidance only (bioregional guidance plans will not have regulatory zones)	↑ ↑
Bioregional guidance plans • Strategic, landscape-scale guidance. • Focus on cumulative impacts on MNES. • Provide information on mitigation measures to avoid or reduce impacts on MNES. • Do not, themselves, approve, refuse or regulate development. • Do not alter planning or environmental assessment processes. • An information input to the assessment process under the EPBC Act		
Queensland legislation		
Queensland legislation continues to apply • <i>Planning Act 2016 (Qld)</i> – regional plans, planning schemes and development assessment. • <i>Environmental Protection Act 1994 (Qld)</i> – environmental authorities and environmental impact statement processes. • Other relevant Acts (e.g. <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld)</i>, <i>Mineral Resources Act (Qld)</i>). All existing Queensland assessment, approval and compliance requirements remain unchanged (examples listed in Appendix 1.). Bioregional guidance planning may be one source of information considered in these processes.		

Bioregional guidance planning and Queensland's regional plans under the *Planning Act 2016* (Qld)

In Queensland, regional planning' refers to statutory plans under the *Planning Act 2016* (Qld), which address economic, infrastructure and land use planning to set the long-term strategic direction for how regions will grow and respond to change over time.

While both bioregional guidance plans and regional plans consider environmental, social and economic factors, each has a different focus and use in decision making. The table below highlights some key differences.

	Queensland regional plans	Bioregional guidance plans
Legislation	<i>Planning Act 2016</i> (Qld)	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth)
Approver	Queensland Government	Australian Government
Primary focus of the plan	Reconcile State Interests (under the State Planning Policy) to coordinate land use planning in regions and deliver on government policy priorities.	Improve environmental outcomes by better managing cumulative pressures on protected matters, guiding development to less environmentally sensitive areas, and helping proponents to reduce their impacts.
Focus area	Administrative regions (see schedule 1 of the Planning Regulation 2017 (Qld)).	Ecologically relevant bioregions as per the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia based on common climate, geology, landform, native vegetation and species information.
Use in decision-making	Guides finer-detail development and infrastructure planning within the Queensland planning framework.	Must be considered in EPBC Act approvals. Findings and advice may be considered by proponents to improve the efficiency of EPBC Act assessment processes. Findings may be considered as one of several inputs into the making of Queensland regional plans (e.g. review of South East Queensland Regional Plan).
Connections between plans	Considers information on nationally protected environmental matters when understanding opportunities and constraints to development.	Considers future development and social and economic priorities to understand environmental impacts and recommend effective mitigation measures.

Appendix 1. Queensland legislation related to planning and development

Legislation	Primary role in planning and development	Status in relation to bioregional guidance plans
<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i> (Qld)	Protects Aboriginal cultural heritage and applies to most ground disturbing activities	Not affected
<i>Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995</i> (Qld)	Applies to development in coastal management districts and erosion prone areas	Not affected
<i>Economic Development Act 2012</i> (Qld)	Aims to facilitate economic development, and development for community purposes, in the state, including providing the framework for priority development areas	Not affected
<i>Environmental Protection Act 1994</i> (Qld)	Provides the framework for environmental protection, environmental authorities, environmental impact statements and management of environmental harm	Not affected. Approval and assessment processes remain unchanged. Bioregional guidance planning findings may be one source of information considered
Environmental Protection Regulation 2019 (Qld)	Prescribes environmentally relevant activities and operational requirements under the EP Act	Not affected
<i>Geothermal Energy Act 2010</i> (Qld)	Regulates geothermal exploration and production activities	Not affected
<i>Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2009</i> (Qld)	Regulates greenhouse gas storage exploration and development activities	Not affected
<i>Land Act 1994</i> (Qld)	Regulates tenure, leasing and use of state land relevant to development	Not affected
<i>Mineral and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Act 2014</i>	Regulates the common provisions that are typically part of mineral, coal and gas resource developments, like land access	Not affected
<i>Mineral Resources Act 1989</i> (Qld)	Regulates mining tenures and mineral and coal exploration and development activities	Not affected
<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> (Qld)	Protects biodiversity, wildlife and protected areas relevant to development proposals	Not affected. Bioregional guidance planning findings may be one source of information considered

Legislation	Primary role in planning and development	Status in relation to bioregional guidance plans
Nature Conservation (Animals) Regulation 2020 (Qld)	Regulates interactions with protected animals, including permits relevant to development	Not affected
Nature Conservation (Plants) Regulation 2020 (Qld)	Regulates clearing and impacts to protected plants	Not affected
<i>Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004</i> (Qld)	Regulates petroleum and gas tenures, exploration and production activities	Not affected
<i>Planning Act 2016</i> (Qld)	Establishes Queensland's land use planning framework, including regional plans, local planning schemes and development assessment processes	Not affected. Bioregional guidance plans do not amend, override or give effect to this Act. Bioregional guidance planning findings may be considered as one of several inputs
Planning Regulation 2017 (Qld)	Supports the <i>Planning Act 2016</i> (Qld) by prescribing development categories, assessment triggers and referral matters	Not affected. Continues to apply unchanged
<i>Queensland Heritage Act 1992</i> (Qld)	Applies to development affecting state listed heritage places	Not affected
<i>Regional Planning Interests Act 2014</i> (Qld)	Compliments the <i>Planning Act 2016</i> (Qld) in applying the planning framework (via regional plans) to activities outside the <i>Planning Act 2016</i> (Qld)	Not affected. Bioregional guidance plans do not amend, override or give effect to this Act. Bioregional guidance planning findings may be a source of information considered
Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014 (Qld)	Supports the Regional Planning Interests Act by prescribing matters relevant to resource and regulated activity assessment matters	Not affected. Continues to apply unchanged
<i>State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971</i> (Qld)	Enables declaration and assessment of coordinated projects and major infrastructure	Not affected. Bioregional guidance planning findings may be one source of information considered
<i>Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i> (Qld)	Protects Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage values	Not affected

Legislation	Primary role in planning and development	Status in relation to bioregional guidance plans
<i>Transport Infrastructure Act 1994</i> (Qld)	Regulates development affecting state controlled roads, rail and transport corridors	Not affected. Bioregional guidance planning findings may be one source of information considered
<i>Vegetation Management Act 1999</i> (Qld)	Regulated clearing of vegetation	Not affected. Bioregional guidance planning findings may be one source of information considered
<i>Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011</i> (Qld)	Regulates waste generation, disposal and resource recovery associated with development	Not affected
<i>Water Act 2000</i> (Qld)	Governs water planning, water entitlements and water related development approvals	Not affected

Please note any other Queensland legislation not listed above is not affected as bioregional guidance plans do not change, override or give effect to any Queensland legislation. This may apply to planning, development, environmental management, land use and others depending upon the proposal.

Next steps and more information

DETSI is undertaking public consultation on the draft Brigalow Belt North Bioregional Guidance Plan and the draft Gulf Plains Bioregional Guidance Plan.

DETSI will not be consulting on a draft South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South Bioregional Guidance Plan at this time. Bioregional guidance planning has been undertaken for South East Queensland, with findings to be considered as one of several inputs into the review of the SEQ Regional Plan review.

Submissions on the draft bioregional guidance plans can be sent to bioregional.planning@detsi.qld.gov.au.

You can also provide feedback via a survey, which can be found here: www.detsi.qld.gov.au/consultation.

For information about bioregional guidance planning in Queensland visit the [DETSI](http://detsi.qld.gov.au) website or contact us at bioregional.planning@detsi.qld.gov.au.

For information about Australian Government bioregional planning visit [Bioregional planning: Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water \(DCCEEW\)](http://bioregional.planning.gov.au).

For information about Queensland Government regional planning visit [Regional planning | Planning](http://regional.planning.qld.gov.au).



Queensland Government