



Brigalow Belt North bioregional guidance plan – use by a proponent

MAY 2026

Purpose of this fact sheet

This fact sheet is intended to help renewable energy proponents understand how they could use the Brigalow Belt North bioregional guidance plan (the Plan), once it is finalised.

Although this use case demonstrates application to an energy proponent, the advice in the Plan could be considered for other types of development and proponents may benefit from the information in the Plan.

This fact sheet should be read in conjunction with other information about bioregional guidance planning, including the Fact Sheet: Brigalow Belt North bioregional guidance plan – use by the regulator. Together, the two fact sheets illustrate how proponents and regulators use the same information, tools and plan advice at different stages of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) assessment process:

www.environment.qld.gov.au/management/planning-guidelines/bioregional-planning

This fact sheet will be updated following public consultation and the finalisation of the Plan.

How can developers use the bioregional guidance plans?

If you are planning to undertake an action that may require approval under the EPBC Act, bioregional guidance plans can provide you with advice on:

- Specific nationally protected matters and areas where avoiding impacts should be prioritised. These are areas where you are likely to have a longer and more complex EPBC Act assessment process.
- Areas where protected matters are more likely to be able to tolerate impacts, subject to site-specific assessment. These are areas where you are likely to have a simpler and faster assessment process.
- Mitigation measures that are most likely to be effective at managing impacts on protected matters.
- Opportunities to contribute to activities which have a broader benefit for protected matters in the Plan area, such as voluntary involvement in restoration projects to improve social licence.
- Co-benefits with social, cultural and economic values in the plan area, and opportunities to minimise trade-offs.

This can help you locate and design your project to reduce the risk of investing in areas where a project may have an unacceptable impact; reduce and manage residual significant impacts to decrease offset liability; facilitate streamlined assessment processes under the EPBC Act; and maximise social licence through social and economic considerations.

Case study – what does this look like in practice?

Scenario

A renewable energy company is planning to construct and operate a wind farm development with 110 wind turbine generators and associated ancillary infrastructure within the Plan area. The renewable energy company aims to minimise costs, reduce time spent obtaining approvals under the EPBC Act, and maximise social licence.

This is a fictional scenario and does not represent that any similar project would ultimately be approved under the EPBC Act. Each project referral must be considered and assessed based on the specific facts.

Identifying and refining a project site

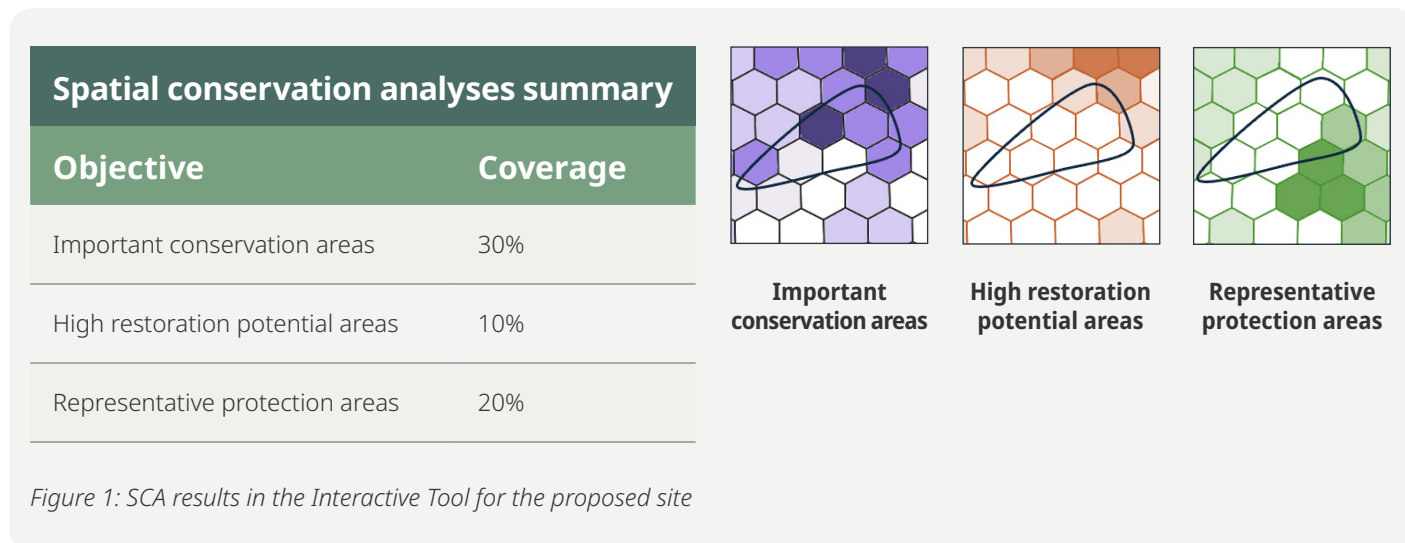
The renewable energy company's project is most likely to have a more efficient EPBC Act assessment process if advice from the Plan is used from early project planning onwards.

The Plan can help the renewable energy company understand and manage potential impacts, so these factors can be considered early in project planning.

The renewable energy company uses the [Bioregional Planning Interactive Tool](#) (the Interactive Tool) at the concept design stage to understand risks to an EPBC Act assessment process and consider ways to avoid and reduce impacts to protected matters.

Step 1: Consider the Spatial Conservation Analyses (SCA)

The renewable energy company considers the landscape-scale Matters of National and Environment Significance (MNES) values likely located at their potential site, by looking at the spatial conservation analyses in the Interactive Tool (Figure 1).



In this example, the site:

- overlaps with a moderate area of important conservation areas
- the site is not of high restoration potential for improving vegetation condition
- there are moderate amounts of representative protection areas flagged within the site.

Step 2: Consider protected matters and irreplaceable features

To understand if this is something they can manage, the renewable energy company interrogates the irreplaceable features and protected matters information in the Interactive Tool.

They identify that this area is likely to contain irreplaceable features such as hollow-bearing trees, unique geomorphological features, and important populations of a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC).

It also identifies that 47 protected matters may occur around the area of the proposed site, and the level of impact each can tolerate (see extract in Table 1). Several of the protected matters are categorised as E4, meaning that significant efforts should be made to avoid impacts and their habitat is unlikely to be able to be offset.

Table 1 - Extract of protected matters identified in the approximate location of the proposed site in the Interactive Tool

Protected matter	Impact threshold	Likelihood of occurring
Threatened ecological community (TEC) 1	E4 – Near zero impact	Low
Species 1	E4 – Near zero impact (direct impact to individuals, and known nesting habitat) / E3 – Impacts as low as possible	Medium
Species 2	E3 – Impacts as low as possible	Medium

Step 3: Use this information, along with practical considerations, to decide how to proceed

This information allows the renewable energy company to make informed decisions about whether, and how, to proceed with the proposed site. The presence of these protected matters means the development is likely to require assessment and approval under the EPBC Act. The renewable energy company decides to have a pre-referral meeting with the Commonwealth regulator to understand their obligations.

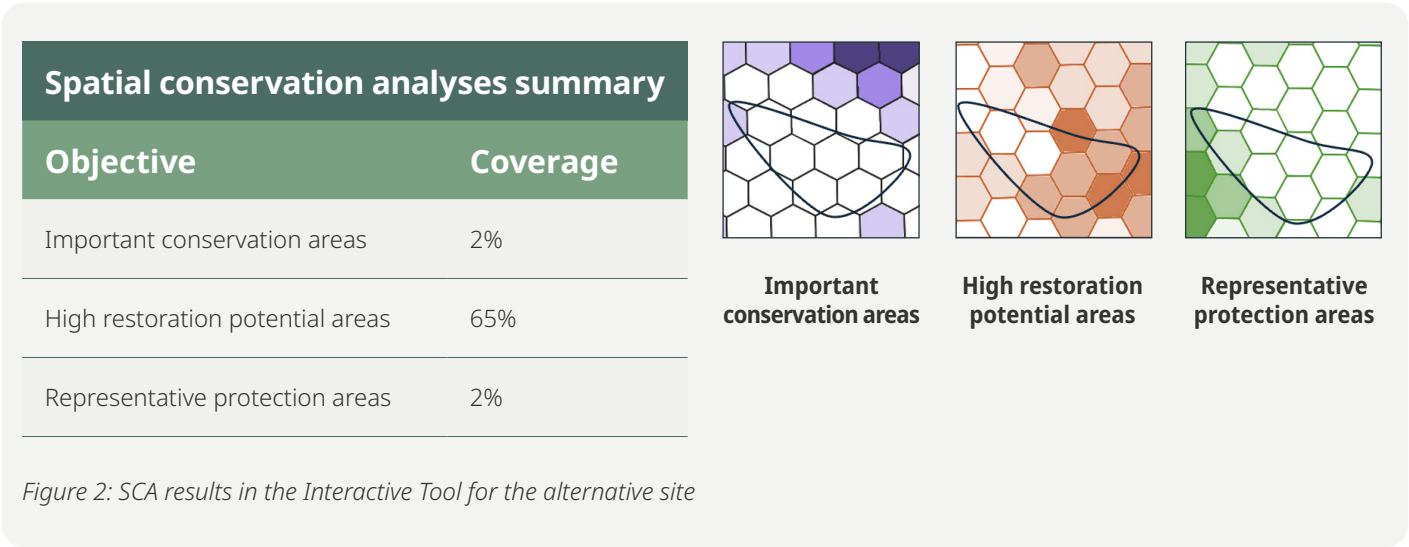
The regulator advises the renewable energy company that its assessment process would be more efficient if they align their project with the Plan. They advise that since there are multiple protected matters categorised as E4, significant efforts should be made to avoid impacts to those protect matters, and then strict mitigation is required. Significant efforts to avoid irreplaceable features would also be expected. If the renewable energy company chooses to proceed with this site, the regulator will require strong evidence that the action does not have an unacceptable impact on these protected matters.

The developer decides to use the Interactive Tool to compare other potential sites, before they invest time and money into this location.

Step 4: Consider the Spatial Conservation Analyses for alternative sites

The renewable energy company finds that there is another site, further southwest, which is likely to be less constrained under the EPBC Act. Their own information indicates the site has strong wind resource potential.

The new site has very small amounts of landscape scale values for MNES, other than high restoration potential (Figure 2).



Step 5: Consider protected matters and irreplaceable features for the alternative site

The renewable energy company interrogates the irreplaceable features and protected matters information in the Interactive Tool for the alternative site.

They identify that a small portion of this area is likely to contain irreplaceable features in the form of areas with high densities of hollow-bearing trees.

They also identify that 22 protected matters that may occur, some of which are categorised E4 (see extract in Table 2). However, 14 of the protected matters have a low or very low probability of occurring, and the remaining are all category E2.

Table 2 - Extract of protected matters identified in the approximate location of the proposed site in the Interactive Tool

Protected matter	Impact threshold	Likelihood of occurring
Species 2	E3 – Impacts as low as possible	Low
Species 3	E4 / E3 – Near zero impact (denning habitat) / Impacts as low as possible (other habitat)	Very low
Species 4	E2 – Some impacts with appropriate compensation	Low

Step 6: Use this information, along with practical considerations, to decide how to proceed with the alternative site

The renewable energy company considers the environmental information alongside social and economic viability, land use constraints etc. and choses to do a deeper investigation of this alternative site.

This information allows the renewable energy company to forecast that they will need to think about how some of these values could be retained on the site, particularly focusing on those categorised as E4. They can also forecast that they will need to allow sufficient time and budget to confirm if protected matters are present in the area.

Understanding potential impacts and mitigation measures

Step 7: Consider sources of impacts

The renewable energy company uses the Interactive Tool to ensure they identify all of the components of their project that should be addressed in their referral information (Table 2).

Table 3 - Extract of CIA information in the Interactive Tool regarding sources of impact

Sources	Intensity ¹
Activities: primarily construction related	
Blasting and vibration (quarrying, tunnelling, major civil works)	Tertiary
Construction-related transport and traffic (haulage, workforce transport, delivery of materials)	Primary
Earthworks (excavation, cut-and-fill, foundations, road construction)	Secondary
Establishment & use of temporary/supporting infrastructure (camps, laydown yards, borrow pits, spoil areas, access tracks, site compounds, fencing, exploration works)	Secondary
General construction activities (machinery use, noise/light, site disturbance not otherwise specified)	Secondary
Land clearing	Primary
Soil, overburden and material handling (stockpiles, quarries, trenching)	Secondary
Water extraction and diversions (surface water diversions, channel modifications, bunding, groundwater pumping, bore fields, bulk supply pipelines)	Secondary

¹**Primary:** Activities or components that are central to how wind farm developments interact with the environment and typically trigger multiple impact pathways with potential for moderate to high environmental impact. Impacts are often long-term or continuous and may extend across or beyond site boundaries in the Plan area and can be difficult to reverse without strong mitigation. Layered mitigation measures and ongoing monitoring are required.

Secondary: Sources that are important but play a supporting or situational role within the industry, in practice often linked to transitional or cyclical phases (e.g. construction, periodic operations). These impacts generate some environmental impacts, but of lower intensity or spatial extent, and are typically manageable using standard best-practice mitigation measures.

Tertiary: Sources that are not applicable to the industry, or not major drivers of environmental impacts/pathways for the industry. Effects usually occur infrequently, as one-off or episodic events, and are localised, short-term, and readily reversible through routine procedures without intensive monitoring.

Step 8: Consider impact pathways

The renewable energy company uses the Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) to understand how their action may impact the protected matters likely to occur at the site, and the ways they can mitigate these impacts.

For example, the renewable energy company uses the CIA to identify that the impacts that pose the most risk for Species 3 are habitat fragmentation and land clearing. The impacts that pose the most risk for the Species 4 are aerial collision and entanglement and land clearing. The highest risks for Species 2 are land clearing and introduction and spread of weeds.

The renewable energy company looks at the mitigation measures in the Interactive Tool (Table 3) and the advice in the Plan to work out how they can avoid and minimise their impacts.

Table 3 - Extract of CIA information in the Interactive Tool regarding impact pathways and mitigation measures

High risk impact pathways	Extract of options for mitigation measures	Ability to implement	Effectiveness
Land clearing Limited ability to mitigate	Avoid clearing sensitive habitat features through exclusion zones and design layout	Manageable	Strong
	Pre-clearance surveys by ecologists to confirm species presence and refine impact boundaries and adapt design	Manageable	Strong
	Provide alternative/artificial habitat structures in adjacent suitable areas advance of clearing and/or repair or replace habitat structures post clearing	Manageable	Conditional / uncertain
Habitat fragmentation Partial ability to mitigate	Design infrastructure layouts to retain high-value habitats, maintain ecological connectivity, and enable safe fauna movement	Manageable	Strong
	Maintain, repair, and enhance habitat corridors and buffers to support ongoing ecological and genetic flows	Manageable	Conditional / uncertain
	Apply Fauna Sensitive Transport Infrastructure Delivery manual (TMR 2024)	Manageable	Strong
Aerial collision and entanglement Limited ability to mitigate	Site and align aerial structures to avoid key habitats and flight paths	Manageable	Conditional / uncertain
	Implement deterrent technologies and design/ retrofit modifications, following best-practice guidance (DCCEEW, 2024; IUCN, 2021)	Manageable	Conditional / uncertain
	Undertake habitat and attractant management near turbines (e.g. removing features that attract prey)	Complex	Conditional / uncertain
Introduction and spread of weeds Limited ability to mitigate	Develop and implement management plans to identify and target high risk species	Manageable	Strong
	Apply control programs and treatments across the Project Area to reduce impacts of priority weeds	Manageable	Conditional / uncertain
	Prevent introduction and spread of weeds through best practice operational controls including clean sourcing requirements, strict hygiene protocols for vehicles/equipment	Simple	Strong

The energy company identifies that:

- They can apply standard mitigation practices for most impact pathways.
- They should make significant efforts to avoid impacting Species 3 denning habitat. Since it is categorised as 'E4/E3', with denning habitat as the E4 component, avoidance is suggested in all but exceptional circumstances, then stringent mitigation. Offsets are unlikely to compensate for impacts to denning habitat, as this value cannot be fully replaced or restored.
- Repairing and enhancing habitat corridors is a manageable way to reduce the impact of habitat fragmentation on Species 3, but its success depends on the ability to connect to other corridors outside the project area. This will be most effective if coordinated with other major projects in the area.
- They should undertake ongoing monitoring and management of aerial collision and entanglement risk during the project's operation, to reduce the risk of this impact pathway on the Species 4. Land-based offsets are unlikely to be effective for impacts from aerial collision and entanglement because Species 4 does not land frequently.
- Because Species 4 is categorised as 'E2', offsets may be possible for impacts other than aerial collision and entanglement, after avoidance and mitigation measures have been implemented.
- They can effectively manage the prevention and spread of weeds through best practice operational controls including clean sourcing requirements, and strict hygiene protocols for vehicles/equipment (for example washdowns). Building this into the project's operation will reduce the risk of this impact pathway on species 2. This will be most effective if coordinated with others in the plan area, including landholders.

Having this information upfront allows the renewable energy company to manage impacts through siting and project design and reduces the risk of sunk costs in areas that will be very challenging and/or costly to get an approval.

Step 9: Consider Social, Cultural and Economic Values (SCEVs)

The renewable energy company wants to build social licence with the local community and wants to be able to demonstrate that their proposed mitigations for hard to mitigate impact pathways, such as the introduction and spread of weeds, are likely to succeed through broader coordination. The renewable energy company uses the information in the Plan to consider the potential impacts of these measures on SCEVs in the area.

The renewable energy company considers the values statements in the Plan, particularly the community values about 'First Nations leadership, knowledge and culture'. They see the value statement that 'opportunities for young people to be on Country and to be involved are improved, including traditional owner ranger programs and locally based career guidance and employment'. The renewable energy company proposes to work with neighbouring wind farm proponents to fund and support traditional owner rangers to monitor Species 4 across the region and restore important roosting habitat. The monitoring will improve collective understanding of how the species uses the Plan area. This will enable improvements in future mitigation measures for the species, while also having flow on benefits for the community.

The renewable energy company also considers the values statements related to 'strong diverse and inclusive economies'. They identify an opportunity to have mutual benefits – working with neighbouring landholders to manage weeds (such as coordinating timing of treatments) would increase the chance that mitigation measures will succeed for Species 2, while also supporting increased productivity the agricultural sector and having flow on benefits for the community.

Step 10: Engage experts

The Plan does not remove the need for the renewable energy company to conduct site-specific investigations.

The renewable energy company engages a suitably qualified environmental consultant to help them undertake surveys, to confirm if and where values for protected matters occur on the site, and to prepare their environmental impact assessment. The consultant should also refer to the protected matters search tool. The renewable energy company looks for someone with experience surveying the relevant protected matters.

Refining the project and proposing offsets

The environmental consultant identifies that Species 3 habitat is present within the site, but only in the southern portion of the site. They do not identify any hollow-bearing trees. The surveys the environmental consultant conducts over a 24-month period showed only 2 records of Species 4 flying in the vicinity of the project site. The renewable energy company decides the project is feasible and plans to micro-site project components and infrastructure to avoid clearing areas of high-quality habitat, especially denning habitat for Species 3.

The renewable energy company chooses which mitigation measures they will implement to reduce their impacts as much as possible, whilst remaining feasible for the project. They design the project to avoid and mitigate impacts to Species 4 to the greatest extent possible, but the project will still require clearing lower quality areas of Species 4 roosting habitat. The renewable energy company proposes to offset this residual significant impact.

Step 11: Use the restoration priority mapping to investigate offsets

The renewable energy company uses the restoration potential information in the Spatial Conservation Analyses (SCA) section of the Interactive Tool as a starting point to investigate potential offset sites. This enables them to identify areas where there is an opportunity to improve vegetation condition and compare restoration value between sites.

They can see two possible areas where Species 4 occurs and that there are areas of high restoration potential, so an offset proposal may be appropriate in one of those areas. The Interactive Tool shows that the possible offset locations are also representative protection areas and are likely to also benefit several other protected matters.

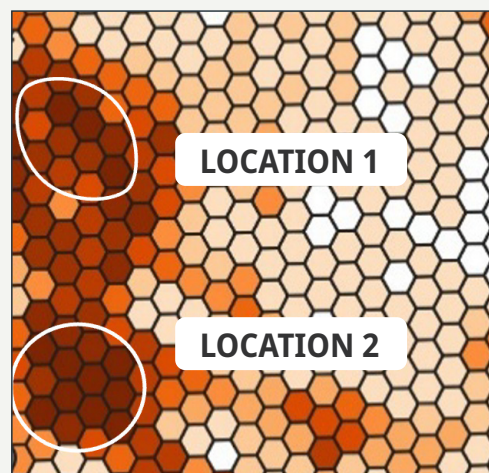
The renewable energy company verifies this via on-ground surveys, investigates other regulatory and legal requirements to secure the site for legal protection and commences conversations with possible partners.

The renewable energy company chooses to improve a site within location 2. They can demonstrate that are contributing to broader environment goals, which contributes to the company's sustainability reporting and may benefit social licence.

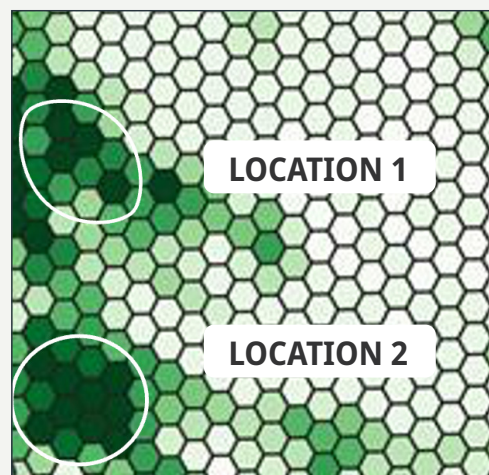
Final step: Progressing under the EPBC Act

The renewable energy company incorporates the refined project design, mitigation measures, engagement outcomes and any proposed offsets into their EPBC Act referral, clearly demonstrating alignment with the Plan and application of the mitigation hierarchy.

The proposal is discussed with the Commonwealth regulator as part of the EPBC Act process. By showing early and genuine consideration of regional values, cumulative impacts and plan advice—supported by site specific investigations—the renewable energy company reduces assessment uncertainty and supports a more efficient approval process.



High restoration potential areas



Representative protection areas

Figure 3: SCA results in the Interactive Tool for offset investigations



Australian Government



Queensland Government