



Australian Government



Queensland Government

Bioregional Guidance Planning FAQs

MAY 2026

Purpose of this fact sheet

This document provides a high-level reference to support understanding of bioregional guidance planning information and related concepts. It brings together key definitions, explanations and guidance to assist readers in navigating the material.

The document does not need to be read in full. Readers should use the contents page to locate and refer to sections relevant to their interests or role.

This fact sheet should be read in conjunction with other information about bioregional guidance planning: www.environment.qld.gov.au/management/planning-guidelines/bioregional-planning

Contents

Purpose of this fact sheet.....	1
Contents	2
All plan areas	4
Overview of bioregional guidance planning.....	4
What is bioregional guidance planning?	4
Why are bioregional guidance plans being developed?	4
What are the benefits of bioregional guidance planning?	4
Who is developing bioregional plans?	5
Where is bioregional guidance planning being piloted in Queensland?	5
How is bioregional guidance planning being developed?	5
What is the difference between 'regional planning' and 'bioregional planning'?	6
Benefits to Stakeholders.....	7
Who are the intended users of bioregional guidance planning and how will they benefit?	7
Developers and industry groups	7
Government planners and regulators	7
Landholders and local communities	7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.....	8
Process for bioregional guidance planning	9
When will the bioregional guidance planning be completed?	9
What are the steps in developing bioregional guidance plans?	9
What work has already been completed or is underway?	9
Stakeholder engagement and public consultation.....	11
When will stakeholders be consulted?	11
What has the stakeholder engagement process involved?	11
When will public consultation occur and how can I have my say?	12
How are the views of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples considered in bioregional guidance planning?.....	12
Values and impacts	13
What environmental values are covered by bioregional guidance planning?	13
How are social, cultural and economic considerations integrated into bioregional guidance planning?	13
What impacts are considered?	13
How does bioregional guidance planning address cumulative impacts on the environment?	13
Data and analysis	14
What is a bioregion?	14
What time horizon does bioregional guidance planning use?.....	14
What information is being used in bioregional guidance planning?	14

How area areas with insufficient data handled?	14
What spatial data has been produced and what does it show?	14
How can developers and the community access the data?	15
Implementation.....	16
How will the bioregional guidance plans take effect?	16
When will reforms to Australia’s national environmental laws come into effect?	16
Will the bioregional guidance planning be aligned with Queensland legislation?	16
Will the bioregional guidance plans have a regulatory effect on developers?	17
How will the bioregional guidance plans provide benefits if they aren’t regulatory?	17
How will the bioregional guidance plans be monitored, evaluated and improved?	17
How could the pilot bioregional guidance plans lead to stronger development guidance in the future?	18
Interaction with existing development processes and land rights	19
Do developers still need to get approval under the EPBC Act, Queensland Planning Act or relevant resources acts?	19
Will the pilot bioregional guidance plans apply to existing applications?	19
Will the pilot bioregional guidance plans impose binding requirements on developers?	19
How will bioregional guidance planning inform delivery of offsets?	19
Will the pilot bioregional guidance plans affect my landholder rights? Will it include compulsory acquisition?	20
Specific plan areas	20
South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt North	20
Why is urban development the focus?	20
How were the bioregional guidance planning boundaries determined?	20
How will the findings from the South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South be used?	21
Brigalow Belt North	22
Why are wind farm developments the focus?	22
Will the pilot bioregional guidance plan result in more wind farms in my community?	22
How is a ‘wind farm development’ defined in the draft bioregional guidance plan?	23
How were the bioregional guidance planning boundaries determined?	23
Gulf Plains	24
Why the focus on minerals?	24
Will the pilot bioregional guidance plan result in more mining or development in my community?	24
What activities are included in the definition of ‘minerals mining’?	24
How were the bioregional guidance planning boundaries determined?	24

All plan areas

Overview of bioregional guidance planning

What is bioregional guidance planning?

Bioregional guidance planning is a strategic approach established under Australia's [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)](#), which guides how cumulative impacts to [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#) should be managed in an area of economic importance.

Bioregional guidance planning will give guidance to government regulators, developers and the wider community about:

- areas where significant efforts should be made to avoid development impacts on MNES
- areas to focus protection and restoration efforts
- effective measures to manage impacts and improve environmental outcomes.

Bioregional guidance planning considers cumulative impacts of development on MNES, rather than just project-by-project impacts.

Why are bioregional guidance plans being developed?

Bioregional guidance plans are being developed as part of the response to the [second independent review of Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)](#) in 2020, also referred to as the Samuel review.

Bioregional guidance planning seeks to:

- address the continued decline of biodiversity due to cumulative impacts and future threats
- increase transparency of assessment processes under the EPBC Act
- address shortcomings of project-by-project assessment.

What are the benefits of bioregional guidance planning?

Bioregional guidance planning will provide better environmental outcomes and greater certainty for industries by offering clear guidance on managing development impacts within the context of other threats (such as pests, bushfire and climate change). It will support decision-making under Australia's national environment law – the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)](#) – for projects that may affect [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#).

For more detail about the benefits for different stakeholders see below [Benefits to Stakeholders](#).

Who is developing bioregional plans?

The Australian Government is working collaboratively with state governments to deliver eight [bioregional planning pilot projects](#) across Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

In Queensland, bioregional guidance planning is currently being piloted in three areas by the Queensland Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI). DETSI is working closely with other Queensland Government agencies to ensure that the bioregional guidance plans align with other Queensland Government priorities including housing, renewable energy and minerals mining.

Where is bioregional guidance planning being piloted in Queensland?

Bioregional guidance planning is currently being piloted in three areas, focusing on a specific activity in each area:

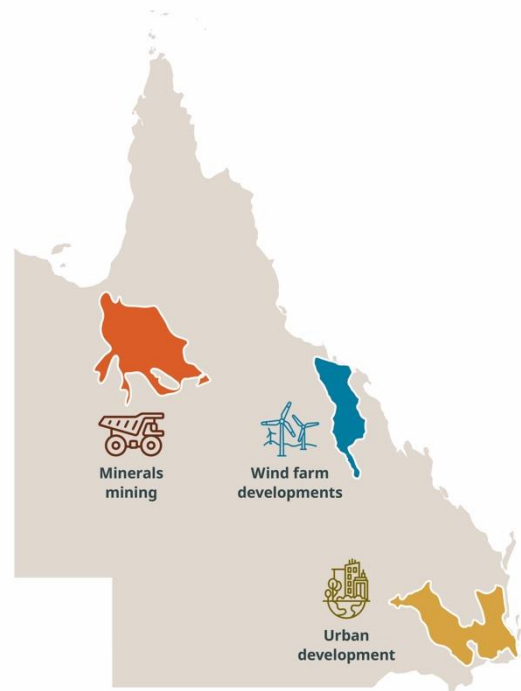
- potential urban growth expansion areas in South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South bioregions
- wind farm developments in the Collinsville area of the Brigalow Belt North bioregion
- minerals mining in the Julia Creek and Richmond area in the Gulf Plains bioregion.

How is bioregional guidance planning being developed?

The Queensland Government has been working with stakeholders to understand values, analyse potential impacts, and develop guidance on avoiding and mitigating impacts on MNES.

Bioregional guidance planning involves:

- technical reviews of spatial conservation analyses
- understanding the environmental, social, cultural, and economic priorities, or values, in the plan area
- analysing cumulative impacts on MNES, focused on a particular industry in each plan area
- developing better guidance for a range of stakeholders on improving outcomes for MNES in each plan area
- understanding the possible impacts on social, cultural and economic priorities of the guidance provided in each plan
- establishing ongoing governance and monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and improvement frameworks.



Will the bioregional guidance plans affect regulatory requirements for developments?

Bioregional guidance plans do not change regulatory requirements nor remove the need for assessment under existing frameworks, including the EPBC Act. Queensland's bioregional guidance plans will not establish development or conservation zones. They provide information and advice that sends clear signals to proponents about how to experience a simpler and faster assessment with reduced requests for further information when seeking Australian Government environment approvals.

What is the difference between ‘regional planning’ and ‘bioregional planning’?

In Queensland, ‘**regional planning**’ refers to [statutory plans under the *Planning Act 2016*](#), 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.

Bioregional guidance planning could be used to inform and support regional planning under the *Planning Act 2016*, though they will not – by themselves – have regulatory effect under Queensland legislation.

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation is working closely with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning to support how the results of the bioregional guidance planning could be one of several inputs that inform the review of regional plans.

For more detail, see the [Bioregional guidance planning and Queensland legislation fact sheets](#) on our website.

Benefits to Stakeholders

Who are the intended users of bioregional guidance planning and how will they benefit?

Bioregional guidance planning is primarily aimed for use by:

- developers, industry, and government regulators to guide decision-making under the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)](#)
- government planners undertaking strategic environmental or land use planning.

It may also provide valuable insights for landholders, communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Developers and industry groups

Bioregional guidance planning is intended to benefit developers and industry groups by increasing certainty and reducing the time and costs of development approvals.

The plans will provide guidance on areas where significant efforts should be made to avoid development impacts. They will also identify [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#) that may have lower ability to tolerate development impacts. They will guide avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures (including offsets) to support site selection, project design and environmental assessments.

Developers who follow the guidance plan may experience a faster environmental assessment process under the EPBC Act. This may include projects being more suitable for simpler assessment methods such as on preliminary documentation rather than by environmental impact statement.

Government planners and regulators

Bioregional guidance planning is intended to assist national regulators in making more efficient and transparent decisions under the EPBC Act. It provides improved data on environmental values and cumulative impacts, helping to streamline assessments and ensure consistent application of national environmental law.

Local and state government may benefit from improved environmental data and guidance that can be used to inform land use planning, infrastructure development, and policy decisions. By identifying areas of high environmental value and recommending measures to avoid or manage impacts to MNES, the planning may help align local and state planning frameworks with national environmental priorities under the EPBC Act. This supports more consistent decision-making across levels of government and helps ensure that areas unlikely to be approved for development under the EPBC Act are appropriately considered when identifying areas prioritised for development through Queensland's planning framework.

Landholders and local communities

Bioregional guidance planning is intended to give landholders and communities better access to information about the nationally significant environmental values in their region—such as threatened species, wetlands, and heritage places—and how these may be affected by development. This helps people understand what's important in their local environment and how it should be managed.

The plans will also identify areas suitable for restoration or offset investment, helping landholders and communities understand opportunities to participate in conservation initiatives without changing existing land use rights.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Bioregional guidance planning considers the social, cultural, economic and broader environmental impacts of the measures recommended in the plans. It identifies opportunities to enhance outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Examples of this include:

- Encouraging culturally appropriate pathways to identify, protect and maintain access to culturally significant sites.
- Recommending opportunities for employment to support management and restoration opportunities.

Process for bioregional guidance planning

When will the bioregional guidance planning be completed?

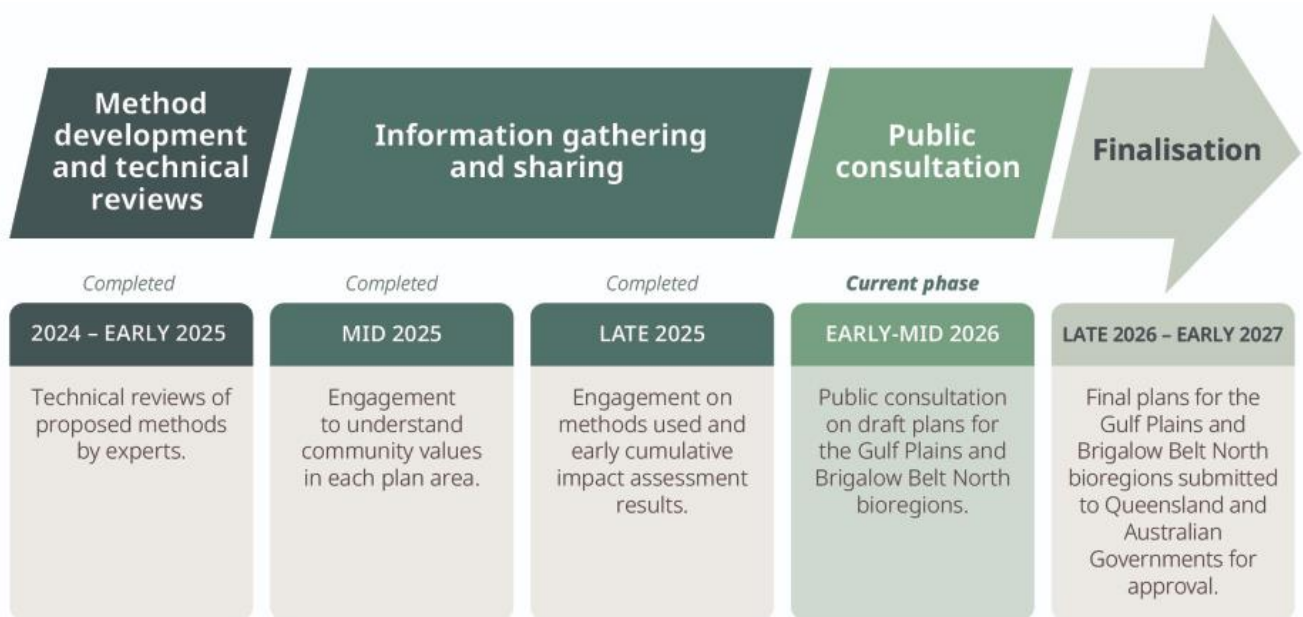
Subject to Queensland and Australian Government approvals, the Gulf Plains Bioregional Guidance Plan and Brigalow Belt North Bioregional Guidance Plan are intended to be released in late 2026 or early 2027.

The findings from South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South bioregional guidance planning will be considered as one of several inputs into the review of the South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plan.

What are the steps in developing bioregional guidance plans?

The 'Project and engagement phases' diagram below summarises the key steps in developing the Gulf Plains Bioregional Guidance Plan and Brigalow Belt North Bioregional Guidance Plan.

Project and engagement phases



What work has already been completed or is underway?

2024

During 2024, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) focused on project initiation and establishing a sound method for piloting bioregional guidance planning.

A key aspect of method development involved two technical reviews intended to ensure alignment with best practice and build confidence in the method. These included:

- **A technical review of the biodiversity values mapping method.** This was led by The University of Queensland and involved over 15 leading national and international experts from academia and research organisations, local government, conservation groups, and environmental consulting.
- **A technical review of the overarching approach to bioregional guidance planning.** This was led by environmental consultants, 2rog, and involved six leading experts with experience in academia, government, and environmental consulting. It focused on the key analytical approaches DETSI proposed to use in bioregional guidance planning.

2025

DETSI made significant progress on:

- Cumulative impact assessments that consider the potential effects the focus industry will have on [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#) in combination with other pressures in each area. For more detail, see the [cumulative impact assessment fact sheet](#) on our website.
- Spatial conservation analyses that identifies the location of key MNES values in the draft planning areas. For more detail, see the fact sheets available on our website:
 - [How to interpret and apply the spatial conservation analyses](#)
 - [The methods used for the spatial conservation analyses](#).

In mid-2025, DETSI conducted targeted, place-based engagement to understand environmental, social, cultural and economic values within the draft planning areas. Input from this process has been combined with expert research to develop cumulative impact assessments, including draft measures to manage impacts on MNES.

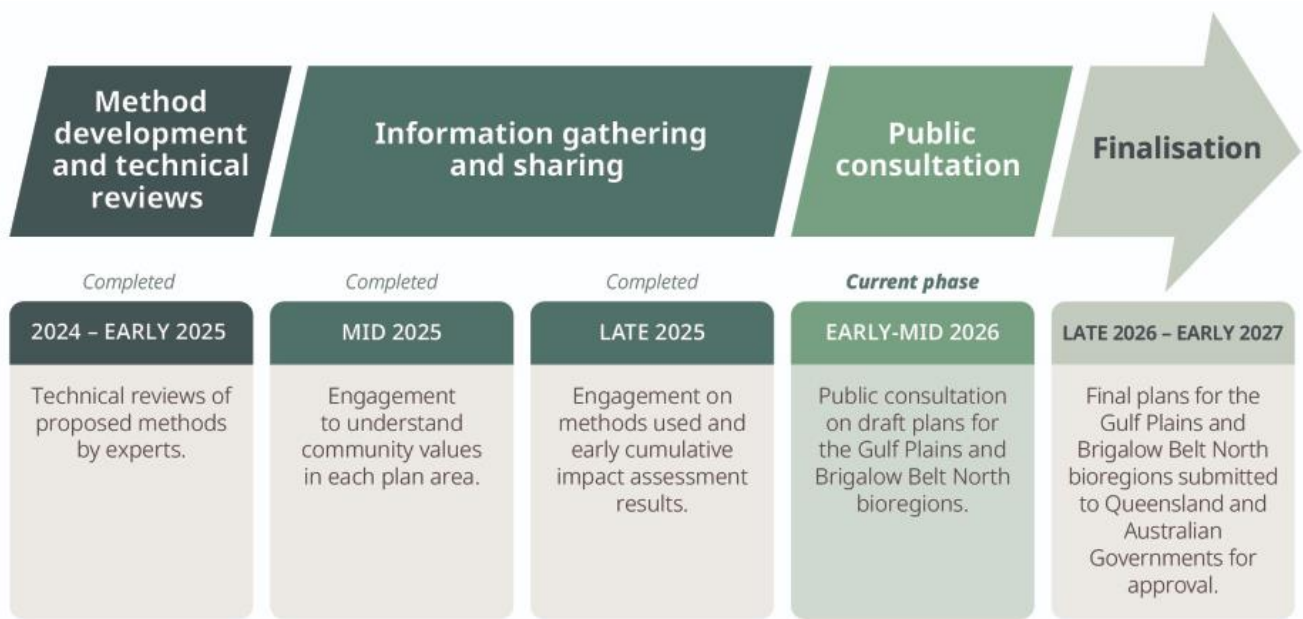
Another round of targeted stakeholder engagement occurred in late 2025 to provide an update on progress and seek feedback on some early draft advice that was identified for inclusion in the draft bioregional guidance plans, including recommended mitigation measures and their impacts on social, cultural and economic values.

Stakeholder engagement and public consultation

When will stakeholders be consulted?

Throughout the process, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) has consulted with stakeholders to understand values, analyse potential impacts, and develop guidance on avoiding and mitigating impacts. The diagram below summarises the key stakeholder engagement timeframes in developing the Gulf Plains Bioregional Guidance Plan and Brigalow Belt North Bioregional Guidance Plan.

Project and engagement phases



What has the stakeholder engagement process involved?

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) contacted key stakeholders and held engagement events throughout 2025. This included local community groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, local government, environmental groups, landholders, scientific experts, business and industry representatives from a range of sectors, natural resource management organisations and Queensland and Australian government departments.

The engagement process aimed to:

- improve awareness and understanding of the draft bioregional guidance plans
- understand local values related to the environment
- work collaboratively with stakeholders to develop the draft bioregional guidance plans.

The **first phase** of engagement focussed on sharing information about bioregional guidance plans and gathering information about the cumulative impacts of development on biodiversity, social, cultural and economic values affecting the environment in each of the planning areas.

The **second phase** provided an update on progress and sought feedback on some early draft advice that may be included in the bioregional guidance plans, including recommended mitigation measures.

The **third phase** involves public consultation on the draft Gulf Plains Bioregional Guidance Plan and draft Brigalow Belt North Bioregional Guidance Plan.

When will public consultation occur and how can I have my say?

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) is undertaking public consultation on the draft Gulf Plains Bioregional Guidance Plan and draft Brigalow Belt North Bioregional Guidance Plan. The draft Plans are available on the [DETSI website](#). Submissions on the draft bioregional guidance plans can be sent to bioregional.planning@detsi.qld.gov.au.

All feedback will be considered in the finalisation of the bioregional guidance plans.

The findings from the South Eastern and Brigalow Belt South bioregional guidance planning will be considered as one of several inputs into the review of the South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plan.

How are the views of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples considered in bioregional guidance planning?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives have been invited to contribute on:

- how they would like to engage in the process and outcomes
- goals and aspirations, where they overlap with the location of [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#)
- sensitive cultural sites and environmental considerations (including data privacy)
- proposed mitigation, monitoring and management actions for MNES.

Values and impacts

What environmental values are covered by bioregional guidance planning?

The bioregional guidance planning will provide information and guidance on protecting nationally important environmental values, called [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#). MNES are protected under Australia's [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)](#). MNES include nationally significant (protected) plants, animals, habitats, and places (such as world or national heritage sites).

Given bioregional guidance planning addresses MNES, any environmental values listed under state laws – called [matters of state environmental values \(MSES\)](#) – will only be addressed where there is overlap with MNES. This may include species that are listed for protection under both Queensland and Commonwealth legislation, and species that share characteristics (such as habitat needs) with MNES values.

How are social, cultural and economic considerations integrated into bioregional guidance planning?

Bioregional guidance planning aims to understand how social, cultural and economic values overlap or interact with MNES in the plan area. For example, river systems that contain important habitat for threatened species may also benefit recreational fishing and water supply. Other plans and policies (such as regional plans) include information on many of these values. The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) has sought input from relevant stakeholders on key values before incorporating them into bioregional guidance planning.

For further information, see the [example use case fact sheets available on our website](#).

What impacts are considered?

Bioregional guidance planning has been developed at a landscape scale. Impacts from the focus industry for each plan will be considered in the context of cumulative impacts from other development types and other regional pressures, such as climate change and natural disasters.

How does bioregional guidance planning address cumulative impacts on the environment?

Bioregional guidance planning addresses cumulative environmental impacts by applying a structured Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA). The CIA ensures pressures on [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#) are analysed across the plan area by examining the focus industry and other regional pressures together, not in isolation.

The CIA method is based on expert advice and adapted from the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) international best practice guidance](#).

Bioregional guidance planning analyses measures to manage these impacts on MNES and assesses their positive and negative impacts on environmental, social, cultural, and economic values, including those of First Nations communities.

For further information, see the [CIA fact sheet available on our website](#).

Data and analysis

What is a bioregion?

Bioregions are large, geographically distinct areas of land with common characteristics such as geology, landform patterns, climate, ecological features and plant and animal communities. They can be divided into smaller subregions that are appropriate for determining boundaries for bioregional guidance plans. The draft bioregional guidance plan boundaries are aligned to the [Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia \(IBRA\)](#) subregions, which are well-established, nationally recognised landscape classifications.

What time horizon does bioregional guidance planning use?

The plans focus on anticipated development impact trends on MNES, and modelled climate scenarios to 2090. An indicative planning horizon of 2050 was used for impact trends; however, this analysis was primarily qualitative.

What information is being used in bioregional guidance planning?

With the help of experts, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) has developed a method (factsheet available on [our website](#)) for analysing and modelling environmental values using existing data, knowledge, and information. Most data sources used are publicly available (for example [WildNet](#) and [Biodiversity Planning Assessments](#)).

DETSI also gathered information and feedback from stakeholders during engagement in 2025. This included local community groups, landholders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, local government, environmental groups, scientific experts, business, agriculture and industry representatives, and natural resource management organisations.

Knowledge and information provided during stakeholder engagement has helped inform the development of bioregional guidance planning outputs. DETSI has and will continue to work with experts throughout the project.

How are areas with insufficient data handled?

A key outcome of the bioregional guidance planning process will be the identification of data gaps. Areas lacking sufficient data will be flagged in the analysis and advice will be prepared taking a precautionary approach. The draft bioregional guidance plans may include recommendations to fill key data gaps.

The Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has engaged the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to conduct supporting research to address data gaps on MNES in the northern and north-western Queensland draft plan areas. This is due for completion in December 2026.

The methods and spatial analyses are designed to be dynamic, allowing for updates as new information becomes available. This also ensures the plans remain relevant and can adapt to changes such as natural disasters or changes in development and other regional pressures.

What spatial data has been produced and what does it show?

Spatial conservation analyses (SCA) have been developed specifically to inform bioregional guidance planning. However, the robust scientific method used means that they could have broader applicability as guidance tools for a range of users, including developers, regulators, strategic planners, conservation groups, and natural resource management groups.

SCA contribute to bioregional guidance planning by producing analyses linked to three objectives:

- **Important conservation areas** - Areas containing MNES values that are difficult or impossible to recreate or restore (including through offsets).

- **High restoration potential areas** - Areas that may be valuable for restoration.
- **Representative protection areas** - Areas that are of high importance to conserve to ensure a representative set of biodiversity values are maintained and potentially recovered.

For further information, see the below fact sheets on our website:

- [How to interpret and apply the spatial conservation analyses](#)
- [The methods used for the spatial conservation analyses.](#)

How can developers and the community access the data?

To support implementation of the draft bioregional guidance plans, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) has shared a [draft Bioregional Planning Interactive Tool](#), available on [our website](#). This tool shows:

- The spatial conservation analysis (SCA), which identify areas important for MNES and the reasons they are significant
- The results of the CIA, such as interactive information on protected matters, their sensitivity to impacts, and the effectiveness of mitigation measures.

What is the draft Bioregional Planning Interactive Tool (the Interactive Tool)?

[The Interactive Tool](#), available on [our website](#), helps users understand environmental values relating to Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) and cumulative impact risks across two bioregional guidance planning areas: Brigalow Belt North and Gulf Plains.

It is designed to support early planning and project design, with a particular focus on wind farm developments (for Brigalow Belt North) and minerals mining (for Gulf Plains). It is informational only and does not replace assessment or approval processes.

Proponents of other development types can benefit from the information in the draft bioregional guidance plans (the Plans) and Interactive Tool, and can contribute to improved outcomes for MNES. This can be achieved by tailoring the Interactive Tool results to those specific projects.

The Interactive Tool can also be used to inform opportunities to undertake proactive conservation and protection of MNES values.

The Interactive Tool should be used in conjunction with the advice in the Plans. The Plans provide guidance on the implications of the information in the Interactive Tool, such as important factors to consider in applying mitigation measures.

This version of the Interactive Tool is released to support the public consultation on the Plans and has limited features. The final version may use a different platform and will connect with Geographic Information System (GIS) software for site comparison with Interactive Tool data.

Implementation

How will the bioregional guidance plans take effect?

Bioregional guidance plans will be made by the Australian Government under section 176 of the [*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)*](#). This will not remove the requirement for development proposals to be assessed under the EPBC Act. However, the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water must have regard to the relevant bioregional guidance plan when making a decision under the EPBC Act to which the plan is relevant.

When will reforms to Australia's national environmental laws come into effect?

The Australian Government's Environment Protection Reform Bills were passed by the Australian Parliament on Friday 28 November 2025.

Some parts of Australia's new environment laws commenced immediately, including:

- transitional arrangements that set out when some of the new laws will take effect
- power for the Minister to create new National Environmental Standards
- tightened rules for some land clearing activities.

On 20 February 2026, tranche 1 of the reforms commenced. This tranche of reforms delivers:

- clearer more flexible processes
- better information sharing
- more transparent expert advice for decision-makers.

Other reforms will take longer to implement. The National Environmental Protection Agency will commence on 1 July 2026. The remaining reforms will commence on or before 1 December 2026. Consultation with stakeholders on the implementation detail will continue.

Once fully implemented, the reforms will deliver:

- stronger environmental protection and restoration
- more efficient and robust project assessments
- greater accountability and transparency in decision making.

To remain up to date on the implementation of the reforms, further information is available at: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/epbc-act-reform>.

Will the bioregional guidance planning be aligned with Queensland legislation?

The current focus for bioregional guidance planning is to align with requirements under Australia's environmental law – the [*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)*](#).

Bioregional guidance planning will not be given direct effect under Queensland legislation, but the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) is working with other Queensland Government agencies to ensure that the bioregional guidance planning can contribute to the development of other plans and policies that seek to reconcile environmental and development needs, including regional planning. For example, the findings from South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South bioregional guidance planning will be considered as one of the several inputs into the review of the South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plan.

DETSI is investigating opportunities to align future bioregional plans with the state's planning framework.

Will the bioregional guidance plans have a regulatory effect on developers?

No. The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) is not developing bioregional plans with regulatory zones. The current approach provides flexibility to allow the bioregional guidance plans to be adopted under current or future environmental laws, while also ensuring that improved information and guidance can be delivered as soon as possible.

Bioregional Guidance Plans cannot be automatically converted to Bioregional Plans.

Whilst a Bioregional Guidance Plan may be a starting point for a subsequent Bioregional Plan, establishing a Bioregional Plan necessitates its own statutory consultation and other legislative requirements independent of the making of a Bioregional Guidance Plan. Both kinds of plan are made in partnership with state or territory governments.

How will the bioregional guidance plans provide benefits if they aren't regulatory?

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) intends that the bioregional guidance plans will be made by the Australian Government under section 176 of the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)](#). While this is a 'non-regulatory' approach, the Commonwealth Environment Minister must have regard to the relevant bioregional guidance plan in making a decision under the EPBC Act to which the plan is relevant.

The bioregional guidance plans are intended to benefit the environment and assist in streamlining development proposals, including by providing:

- improved information on environmental and other key values which may improve the efficiency and speed of development assessments
- guidance for developers and industry groups, to support site selection, environmental assessment and project design
- guidance on appropriate regional investment opportunities for environmental protection and restoration.

How will the bioregional guidance plans be monitored, evaluated and improved?

The draft bioregional guidance plans provide an outline for developing a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework that will be used to determine their effectiveness at protecting [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#) and delivering greater development certainty under the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\) \(EPBC Act\)](#). A fulsome MERI framework will be developed following public consultation.

Following their release, the plans are intended to be reviewed on a 5-yearly basis. Updates to supporting materials, such as [the Interactive Tool](#), may be made more frequently. This may be undertaken, for example, to reflect updates to the conservation status of a threatened species or updated species habitat models.

Updates that would significantly affect the findings or advice in the Plan will only be made through a review.

How could the pilot bioregional guidance plans lead to stronger development guidance in the future?

The pilot bioregional guidance plans are intended to establish the foundations for future consideration of measures that change assessment and approval requirements and approaches, such as bioregional plans with regulatory zones or strategic assessments.

Bioregional Guidance Plans cannot be automatically converted to Bioregional Plans with regulatory zones.

The pilot plans can be an important first step toward bioregional plans with regulatory zones by refining the scope of [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#) and classes of action and identifying critical information gaps. An understanding of the social, cultural, and economic values in the plans would also support a thorough regulatory impact analysis and avoid perverse outcomes for industry and the community. However, establishing a Bioregional Plan in a region necessitates its own statutory consultation and other legislative requirements independent of the making of a Bioregional Guidance Plan.

Interaction with existing development processes and land rights

Do developers still need to get approval under the EPBC Act, Queensland Planning Act or relevant resources acts?

Yes. While the pilot bioregional guidance plans are intended to provide guidance to developers and regulators, these will not change or remove requirements for completing environmental assessments and obtaining approval for development under the Australian [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#) (EPBC Act) or Queensland legislation such as the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* (Qld), *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld) or *Planning Act 2016* (Qld).

Will the pilot bioregional guidance plans apply to existing applications?

Once a bioregional guidance plan is made, all relevant decisions on applications under the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#) (EPBC Act) must be made having regard to the plan.

However, a developer would not be expected to have considered or to be consistent with a bioregional guidance plan that was not yet made at the time of their referral. When making a decision, the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water can consider a range of relevant information. In the case of an existing application, the Minister would consider the bioregional guidance plan but would also consider that the bioregional guidance plan did not exist at the time of referral.

If new information in a bioregional guidance plan was likely to substantially change the outcome of an assessment, the department would engage with the proponent to provide them an opportunity to consider the new information and respond before making a decision that was adverse to them.

Will the pilot bioregional guidance plans impose binding requirements on developers?

No. The pilot bioregional guidance plans will not create binding actions or requirements on developers.

However, the bioregional guidance plans will be made by the Australian Government under section 176 of [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#) (EPBC Act), which would require that the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water must have regard to the relevant bioregional guidance plan in making a decision under the EPBC Act to which the plan is relevant.

The pilot bioregional guidance plans will not override existing state and local requirements, assessment, approval processes, or obligations under other legislation (including those relating to cultural heritage and Native Title).

How will bioregional guidance planning inform delivery of offsets?

Bioregional guidance planning will not change existing offset requirements or approval processes under the existing [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#) (EPBC Act). The findings provide guidance only and are not used to determine specific offset locations or assess development impacts of specific projects.

The findings may support offset considerations by providing guidance about when offsets are appropriate and inappropriate, and the likely success for particular [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#). Spatial conservation analyses may also support more strategic delivery of offsets by identifying high restoration potential areas that should be investigated first for those seeking to implement or coordinate offset activities.

For an example of how landholders may use the information in the bioregional guidance plans to investigate the restoration potential of an area, please see the bioregional guidance plans – use by a landholder example on our website.

Will the pilot bioregional guidance plans affect my landholder rights? Will it include compulsory acquisition?

No, existing landholder rights and responsibilities will not be affected. The pilot bioregional guidance plans will not override existing federal, state and local requirements, assessment, approval processes, or obligations under existing legislation. Implementation of the pilot plans will not include any compulsory acquisition of private property.

The pilot bioregional guidance plans are intended to help landholders to better understand where areas of importance for Matters of National Environmental Significance are. This includes identifying opportunities for restoration and protection investments, such as suitable locations for offsets.

Specific plan areas

South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South

Why is urban development the focus?

South East Queensland is growing and changing. By 2046 the population is expected to be about six million. That's an additional 2.2 million people requiring almost 900,000 new homes and almost one million new jobs.

Households in the region have become smaller and more diverse due to changing family structures, and people have different housing needs and preferences for certain types of housing at different stages of their lives. There is also greater demand for attached housing and smaller homes and an increase in single-person and couple-only households.

How were the bioregional guidance planning boundaries determined?

Scientific experts advised that using the [Interim Biogeographic Regions of Australia \(IBRA\)](#) subregions is an appropriate unit to map and manage environmental values.

Bioregional guidance planning was undertaken for the following IBRA subregions, which represents all those with potential urban growth expansion areas that are identified in the 2023 SEQ Regional Plan.

Within the South-Eastern Queensland IBRA bioregion, the following sub-regions are included:

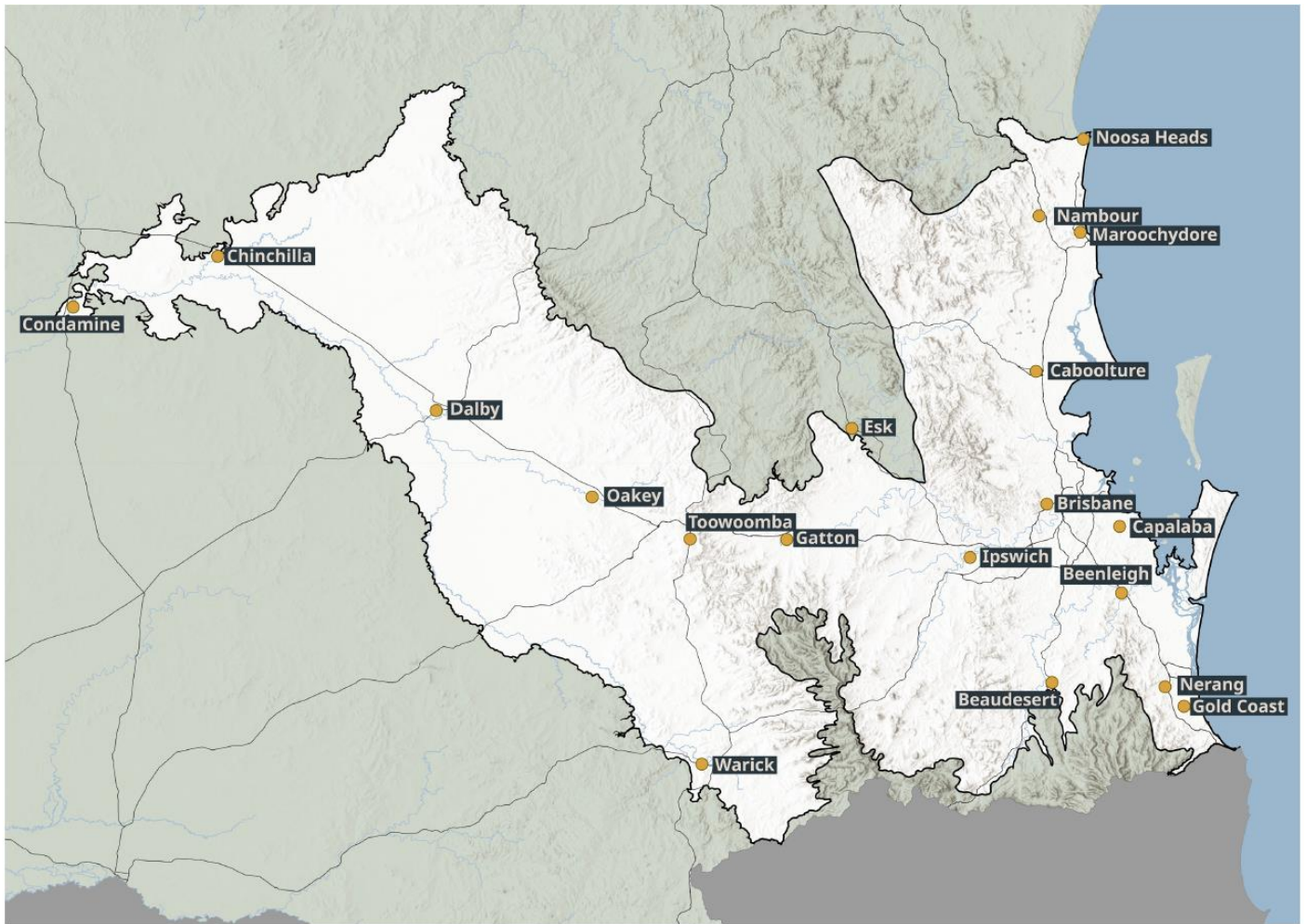
- 12.2 – Moreton Basin
- 12.3 – Southeast Hills and Ranges
- 12.4 – Southern Coastal Lowlands

Within the Brigalow Belt South IBRA bioregion the following sub-region is included:

- 11.31 – Eastern Darling Downs.

Because of the use of IBRA subregions, the bioregional guidance planning area is different from the SEQ Regional Plan boundary.

South-Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South Bioregional Guidance Planning Boundary



How will the findings from the South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South be used?

Bioregional guidance planning has been undertaken for South Eastern Queensland and Brigalow Belt South, with findings to be considered as one of several inputs into the review of the SEQ Regional Plan review rather than a standalone plan at this time.

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) is working closely with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning to determine how the results of the bioregional guidance planning could be used to inform the SEQ Regional Plan review.

Brigalow Belt North

Why are wind farm developments the focus?

The pilot bioregional guidance plan supports work being undertaken by the Queensland Government to facilitate private sector investment in new energy infrastructure to meet rising energy demand and deliver an energy system for Queenslanders that is affordable, reliable and sustainable. Bioregional guidance planning is intended to provide another tool to address community concerns and mitigate impacts from renewable energy development.

The Collinsville area has an urgent need for improved biodiversity information to inform any future wind farm developments within the context of increased land use competition and community concerns. Solar is not addressed by the pilot plan because the tensions between land required for development and environmental impacts are fewer. The pilot needs to be limited in scope to be achievable within project timeframes.

Will the pilot bioregional guidance plan result in more wind farms in my community?

No. The pilot bioregional guidance plan is not a mechanism itself that would be able to approve or reject any specific wind farm development projects.

The pilot bioregional guidance plan will provide improved information and data that can be used by developers and by government in industry planning and assessing actions referred for EPBC Act approval.

How is a 'wind farm development' defined in the draft bioregional guidance plan?

For the draft Brigalow Belt North bioregional guidance plan, the term wind farm development includes turbines, substations, transmission lines, and all directly related activities for renewable energy generation.

How were the bioregional guidance planning boundaries determined?

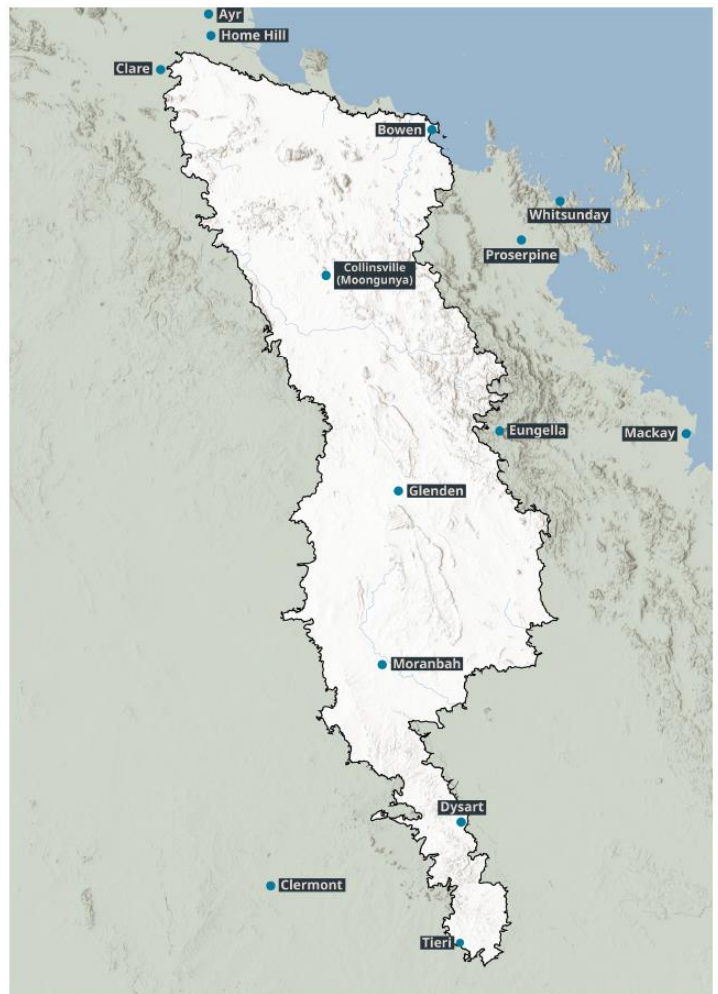
Scientific experts advised that using the ['Interim Biogeographic Regions of Australia' \(IBRA\)](#) subregions is the most effective way to map and manage environmental values.

Bioregional guidance planning was undertaken for the following IBRA subregions, within the Brigalow Belt North IBRA bioregion:

- 11.2 – Bogie River-Hills
- 11.6 – Northern Bowen Basin.

These IBRA subregions cover some areas being investigated for wind farm development around Collinsville.

Brigalow Belt North Bioregional Guidance Plan Boundary



Gulf Plains

Why the focus on minerals?

The focus on mining minerals in the Gulf Plains bioregion is driven by the region's substantial mineral wealth, its long mining history, significant economic benefits, the growing global demand for resources, and ongoing government support for the sector's development. Additionally, a growing number of industries are using critical minerals to transform and decarbonise their activities.

Will the pilot bioregional guidance plan result in more mining or development in my community?

No. The pilot bioregional guidance plan is not a mechanism itself that would be able to approve or reject any specific mining projects.

The pilot bioregional guidance plan will provide improved information and data that can be used by developers and by government in industry planning and assessing actions referred for EPBC Act approval.

What activities are included in the definition of 'minerals mining'?

The draft bioregional guidance plan focuses on expected impacts from mining of minerals in the Julia Creek area of north-western Queensland including extraction, processing, and transportation of ores. Minerals mining is defined as all associated activities from exploration to refinement, including enabling infrastructure such as common-user infrastructure and renewable energy to support on-site energy needs. The plan is not specifically designed to provide guidance for any activities associated with the mining of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas. Nevertheless, the advice in the Plan could be considered for other development types.

How were the bioregional guidance planning boundaries determined?

Scientific experts advised that using the ['Interim Biogeographic Regions of Australia' \(IBRA\)](#) subregions is the most effective way to map and manage environmental values.

Bioregional guidance planning was undertaken for the following IBRA subregions, within the Gulf Plains IBRA bioregion:

- 2.3 Woondoola Plains
- 2.5 Claraville Plains.

These IBRA subregions cover some areas under investigation by Critical Minerals Queensland for the Julia Creek / Richmond Critical Minerals Zone.

Gulf Plains Bioregional Guidance Plan Boundary

