



May 2026

Impact of the Australian Government's 2025 environment protection reforms on Queensland

Call for Submissions

Have your say

The Queensland Government has asked the Queensland Productivity Commission (Commission) to undertake an inquiry into the impact of the Australian Government's 2025 environment protection reforms on Queensland.

The Commission has released this Call for Submissions to:

- outline the scope of the inquiry
- identify key matters on which the Commission is seeking information and feedback.

Make a submission

You can lodge a submission or a comment through the **online portal** on the Commission's website:

www.qpc.qld.gov.au

Alternatively, you can lodge a submission or comment by:

- **email** — enquiry@qpc.qld.gov.au
- **post** — PO Box 12078
GEORGE STREET QLD 4003

Please include your contact details with your submission.

Submissions, except for any confidential attachments, will be published on the Commission's website. However, if you are providing genuinely confidential material, please provide this material as a clearly marked separate attachment.

Further information on making a submission is available on the Commission's website at www.qpc.qld.gov.au.

Submissions are due by **13 July 2026**.

Register your interest

You can [register your interest](#) to ensure you receive our email alerts on key inquiry developments, including the release of reports, call for submissions and details of public consultation.

Contact us

Enquiries regarding this inquiry can be made by email enquiry@qpc.qld.gov.au or by telephone (07) 3522 8469.

Key dates

13 April 2026	Terms of reference
29 May 2026	Call for Submissions released
June to July 2026	Consultation
13 July 2026	Due date for submissions
November 2026	Interim Report released
Nov to Dec 2026	Further consultation and call for submissions
13 April 2027	Final Report to Government
Within three months	Release of Final Report following government response.

Queensland Productivity Commission

The Commission is an independent statutory body that provides independent advice on complex economic and regulatory issues.

The Commission has an advisory role and operates independently from the Queensland Government — its views, findings and recommendations are based on its own analysis and judgments.

Further information on the Commission and its functions can be obtained from the Commission's website www.qpc.qld.gov.au.

About the inquiry

The Queensland Government has asked the Queensland Productivity Commission (Commission) to undertake a public inquiry into the impact of the Australian Government's 2025 reforms to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) on Queensland. The Commission has been asked to examine how the 2025 reforms affect Queensland in practice, by focusing on regulatory burden, economic impacts, implementation risks and operational arrangements.

The terms of reference for the inquiry ask the Commission to investigate:

- the regulatory burden and compliance impacts of the 2025 reforms, including impacts on costs, timeframes, uncertainty and duplication, and particularly where they interact with Queensland's existing regulatory and planning frameworks
- how the 2025 reforms impact the capacity of different landholder groups to comply with the amended requirements
- the implications of the 2025 reforms for investment (including housing delivery and infrastructure), business viability, productivity and economic activity in Queensland
- the impacts across different industries, regions and types of proponents
- the extent to which the 2025 reforms affect the ability of landholders and governments to manage land for practical purposes (for example, fire mitigation, weed and pest control), and any unintended consequences for community safety, infrastructure resilience or operational risk.

The terms of reference also request the Commission explore:

- the extent to which Commonwealth–State bilateral agreements, accreditation frameworks and related arrangements provide opportunities to reduce duplication and improve certainty
- practical options to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and improve efficiency, certainty and proportionality in the application of the 2025 reforms in Queensland
- the broader implications for land management, stewardship and environmental markets and regional economies
- opportunities to improve alignment between Commonwealth and Queensland frameworks without undermining Queensland's regulatory autonomy
- the extent to which the 2025 reforms shift regulatory, administrative or financial responsibilities to the Queensland Government.

The full terms of reference for the inquiry are available in Appendix A.

Stakeholder consultation

Consultation and engagement with stakeholders, be they consumers, businesses, governments, academics or other members of the community, play a critical role in the inquiry.

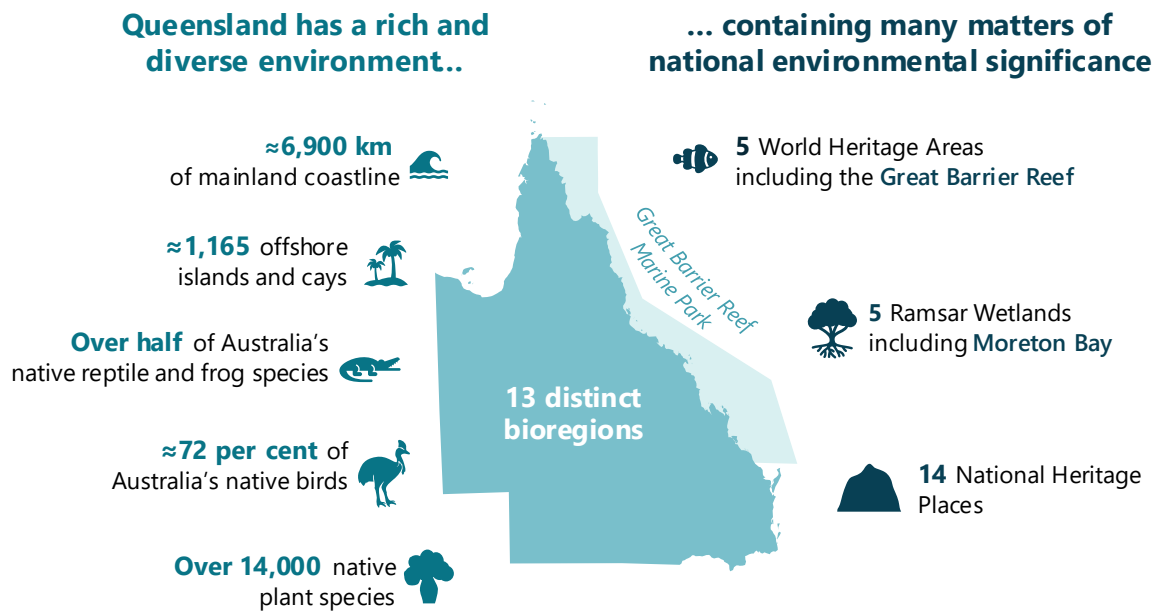
This Call for Submissions sets out a range of issues the Commission is seeking information and feedback on. Stakeholders can respond directly on the issues identified as well as any other matters relevant to the terms of reference.

As noted above, a key focus area in the terms of reference is regulatory burden and compliance impacts. The Commission encourages stakeholders to provide quantitative evidence where possible. Stakeholders should also consider what case studies or other evidence can be provided to illustrate or support the matters being raised.

The Queensland Context

Queensland has a vast landscape, unique bioregions and places of international significance.

Figure 1 Queensland’s environment and matters of national environmental significance

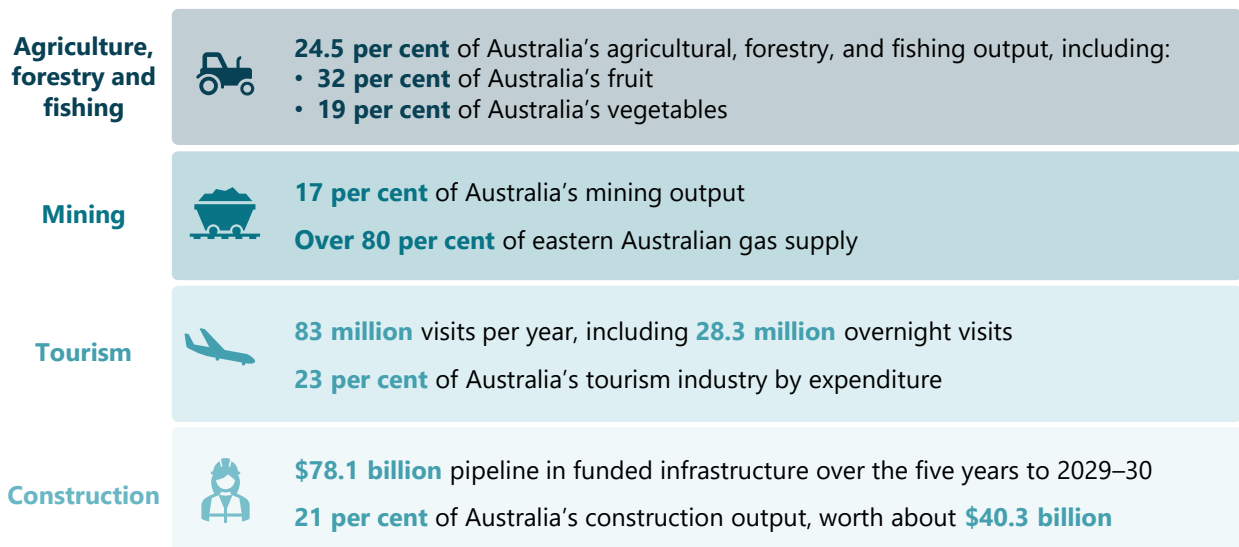


Note: ‘Ramsar Wetlands’ are those designated as internationally important under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Sources: Australian Government 2024, pp. 69–70; DCCEEW 2026e, 2026f, n.d., n.d.; DETSI 2025, 2026; Queensland Government 2025b, 2025a, pp. 11, 33.

The structure of Queensland’s economy means there is a wide range of activities that both depend on, and affect, the environment. Given this interrelationship between the economy and the environment, getting the settings of environmental regulation right is a priority for all levels of government.

Figure 2 Key areas of the Queensland economy interact with the EPBC



Note: Data are most recent available year. Fruit and vegetable production are by value. References to output are gross value added.

Sources: ABS 2025; AER 2025, p. 151; Hort Innovation 2025; Queensland Major Contractors Association 2025, p. 5; Tourism & Events Queensland 2026; Tourism Research Australia 2026.

Australian Government environment protections

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The EPBC Act and accompanying regulations are Australia's primary environmental legislation at the national level. The Australian Parliament passed the EPBC Act in 1999 and it commenced in July 2000.

The introduction of the EPBC Act supported Australia's obligations under international environmental agreements (Department of Parliamentary Services 2022, p. 41). It implemented aspects of the 1992 *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment* and the 1997 *Heads of Agreement on Commonwealth and State Roles and Responsibilities for the Environment*, and consolidated laws relating to environmental impact assessment, national parks, world heritage and endangered species (DCCEEW 2021; Department of Parliamentary Services 2022, p. 44; Parliament of Australia 1998, pp. 5, 7–9).

The EPBC Act seeks to:

- protect the environment, specifically 'protected matters'
- conserve Australia's biodiversity
- protect and manage important natural and cultural places
- assess the environmental impact of projects, and provide guidance on whether to approve
- control the movement of plants and animals in and out of Australia
- promote ecologically sustainable development
- appreciate the role of Indigenous peoples in protecting and sustainably using the environment
- promote using Indigenous peoples' knowledge (DCCEEW 2026b).

In general terms, the EPBC Act aims to deliver on these broad objectives via the protection of nine matters of national environmental significance (MNES) (see Box 1), along with biodiversity considerations, ecological communities and protected areas.

Box 1 Matters of National Environmental Significance

The EPBC Act protects nine matters of national environmental significance:

- world heritage areas
- national heritage places
- wetlands of international importance (also known as Ramsar Wetlands)
- listed threatened species and ecological communities
- listed migratory species (protected under international agreements)
- Commonwealth marine areas
- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- nuclear actions (including uranium mines)
- water resources (that relate to unconventional gas development and large coal mining development).

The EPBC Act also protects the environment when actions are taken:

- on Commonwealth land or impact upon Commonwealth land
- by an Australian Government agency anywhere in the world
- that impact Commonwealth heritage places overseas.

Source: DCCEEW 2025b.

Where an action may impact a MNES, referral to the Australian Minister for the Environment (the Minister) may be required for consideration and approval.

The EPBC Act operates alongside state laws. Key Queensland legislation includes the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld) (the Environmental Protection Act), the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (Qld) (the SDPWO Act) and the *Planning Act 2016* (Qld). State approval does not automatically satisfy Australian Government obligations.

Requirement for independent reviews

Under the EPBC Act, an independent review is required to be conducted every ten years.¹ Two independent reviews have been undertaken to date, the:

- first review, led by Dr Allan Hawke, running from late 2008 and released late 2009 (Hawke 2009)
- second review, led by Professor Graeme Samuel, running from late 2019 and released early 2021 (Samuel 2020).

A separate review was also conducted in 2018 to assess the impact of the implementation of the EPBC Act on agriculture and identify potential legislative and non-legislative improvements without reducing environmental standards (Craik 2018).

The Samuel Review (2020, pp. 1, 26) found the EPBC Act ‘is not fit to address current or future environmental challenges’ and made 38 recommendations for improving the operations of the Act. These focused on:

- the use of legally enforceable Standards, which would set the boundaries for decision-making to deliver the protections needed
- restoration of the environment and facilitation of the scale of investment required to deliver better environmental outcomes
- taking an adaptive approach through planning, measuring the effectiveness of implementation and making adjustments where needed
- harnessing the knowledge of Indigenous Australians to inform environmental management (The Senate 2026, pp. 109–110).

The Australian Government’s response to the Samuel Review — *Nature Positive Plan: better for the environment, better for business* (Nature Positive Plan) — was released in December 2022 (DCCEEW 2022). The Nature Positive Plan was intended to be addressed in three stages:

- legislation to establish a Nature Repair Market (passed in December 2023)
- the establishment of the National Environmental Protection Agency, Environment Information Australia and faster environmental approval decisions
- to establish Standards and other major reforms (Gibson 2024, p. 20).

The first stage of reforms was completed by April 2024, evidenced through the passage of legislation to establish a Nature Repair Market, creating a framework for a legislated, national, voluntary biodiversity market, along with expanding the water trigger within the EPBC Act to apply to unconventional gas projects (The Senate 2026, p. 15).

Effective regulation and measures to reduce regulatory costs

In some cases, regulations can have an adverse impact on productive economic activity without delivering net economic benefits (including positive environmental outcomes). Regulations can also have unintended consequences for environmental harm.

Poorly designed regulation can ‘prevent businesses from growing, investing, adopting new technologies and competing, while not significantly reducing the harms it seeks to prevent’ (PC 2025a, p. 34).

¹ The EPBC Act (s. 522A) requires an independent review of its operations at least every ten years.

Via the previous independent reviews, stakeholders have consistently raised concerns on the duplicative nature of national and state environmental approval processes, and the delays and costs these processes can impose on project timeframes and budgets (Craik 2018, p. 54; Hawke 2009, p. 68; PC 2025b, pp. 38–40; Samuel 2020, pp. 84–85, 101–102).

One means used to reduce the impact of these delays and costs has been the establishment and use of bilateral agreements (see Box 2).

Box 2 Bilateral agreements under the EPBC Act

The EPBC Act allows the Australian Government and a state government to enter into agreements to support environmental and economic objectives.

The Act provides for two types of bilateral agreement:

- ‘assessment agreements’ provide for an action to be assessed under an accredited state process with the assessment used by the Minister to determine whether to grant approval
- ‘approval agreements’ provide for an action to be assessed and approved under an accredited state process without requiring further approval by the Minister.

The Australian Government has assessment agreements with every state and the Northern Territory. In contrast, no approval agreements exist and the Australian Government remains the decision-maker for approvals (DCCEE 2025a; Samuel 2020, p. 97). If such an agreement was established, the Australian Government would rely on the state decision to achieve an acceptable environmental outcome.

The EPBC Act also allows for the Minister to accredit a state assessment process on an ad hoc basis. According to the Samuel Review, however, this process has been rarely used in Queensland (Samuel 2020, p. 99).

Queensland’s current bilateral agreement on assessment matters provides for a process in which some activities assessed under Queensland’s Environmental Protection Act and SDPWO Act do not require additional assessment under Part 8 of the EPBC Act (Queensland Government & Australian Government 2025, p. 19).² Under this assessment bilateral agreement, the (Australian) Minister retains final approval powers for these activities.

The Australian Government’s 2025 reforms

In October 2025, the Australian Government introduced the Environment Protection Reform Bills to amend the EPBC Act and 11 other Acts, with the stated objectives to deliver:

- stronger environmental protection and restoration
- more efficient and robust project assessments
- greater accountability and transparency in decision making (Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 Explanatory Memorandum, p. 2).

These Bills were passed by the Australian Parliament on 28 November 2025 (Parliament of Australia 2025). Some of the changes under the 2025 reforms include:

- **national environmental standards** – to provide additional and legally enforceable guidance for project proponents to demonstrate compliance with the EPBC Act
- **stronger penalties and enforcement** – the establishment of the National Environmental Protection Agency, higher penalties for serious breaches, expanded audit powers and new environment protection orders

² The bilateral agreement also provides that some actions assessed under the now-repealed *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* and associated regulation do not require further assessment (Queensland Government & Australian Government 2025, p. 19).

- **removal of land clearing exemptions** – for land that has not been cleared for over 15 years and land that is within 50 metres of a watercourse, wetland or drainage line in the Great Barrier Reef catchment
- **assessment pathway changes** – a new fast-track option for certain projects. Some proponents will have access to fewer pathways and some decisions will lapse after five years, with the possibility of limited extension
- **bilateral agreements** – a revised set of requirements and processes have been introduced, including that agreements must be consistent with the national environmental standards, and that the new National Environmental Protection Agency can advise the Minister on whether to enter into, continue with, or suspend an agreement
- **landscape scale assessments** – provisions to facilitate the greater use of bioregional plans to define where projects can proceed or are not allowed, and to provide more flexibility to strategic assessments (that can be used to approve broader classes of actions)
- **environmental offsets** – standards for offsets have been tightened. Offsets are only to be used as a last resort after actions to avoid, mitigate or repair environmental impacts have been undertaken where possible and feasible. Offsets may be delivered directly by proponents or indirectly through restoration contribution charges to a government authority.

The implementation of the 2025 reforms is being delivered in tranches. As such, the potential impact of these reforms on different stakeholder groups and regions is yet to be identified. Figure 3 summarises the implementation of the 2025 reforms.

Figure 3 Implementation of the 2025 reforms

Immediate (1 December 2025)	Tranche 1 (20 February 2026)	Tranche 2 (on 1 July 2026)	Remaining elements
Transitional arrangements	Changes to strategic assessments	Establish the National Environmental Protection Agency	National Environmental Standards available* (from mid-2026)
Power for the Minister to create National Environmental Standards	Changes to exemption provisions and reconsideration decision processes	Enable the appointment of a head of Environment Information Australia	Changes to assessment and approvals implemented (by 1 December 2026)
Tightened rules for some clearing	Wildlife trade approvals last longer		
	Other administrative changes		

Note: *At the time of drafting, exposure drafts had been released for feedback relating to the Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) Standard and Environmental Offsets Standard. The Australian Government is still developing standards for First Nations engagement, community engagement and data and information.

Source: DCCCEW 2026c, 2026a, 2026d, 2026g.

State and territory governments are at various stages of considering the application of the reforms in their jurisdictions.

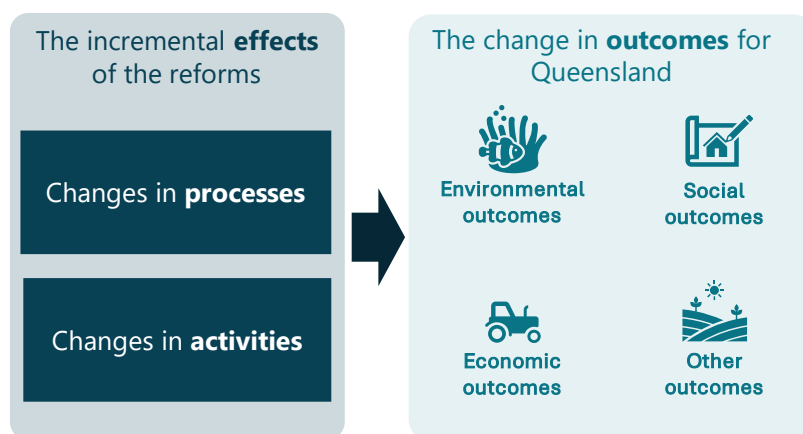
The Commission's approach

The EPBC Act covers a wide range of technical areas and issues. Since its introduction, stakeholders have developed a detailed understanding of the impacts of the EPBC Act along with related regulatory and policy requirements (at all levels of government) that relate to their activities and operations. Furthermore, stakeholders are aware of the current state and local legislative, regulatory and policy obligations directly or indirectly affected by the EPBC Act.

This detailed, practical knowledge will assist the Commission in understanding the impact of the EPBC Act on Queensland, in terms of economic and environmental outcomes. These impacts then need to be revisited considering the 2025 reforms and how they have been implemented (noting several key elements of the reforms will be progressed and implemented over calendar year 2026).

In considering the impact of the 2025 reforms, significant attention will be given to the known and anticipated effects that would not occur but for the reforms (that is, the incremental effects) (Figure 4).

Figure 4 The Commission's analytical approach



Incremental effects can be considered in the context of how:

- the 2025 reforms affect processes (or procedures) and activities to meet EPBC Act requirements
- outcomes will change as a result of the 2025 reforms, such as environmental and economic outcomes.

Understanding these incremental effects will also support the Commission to examine:

- the interaction between Queensland and Australian Government requirements, including where they overlap, conflict, or duplicate requirements
- potential reforms to Queensland Government laws, policies and practices to improve outcomes achieved within Queensland
- whether there are opportunities for the Queensland Government to engage with the Australian Government to improve outcomes in Queensland.

The Commission encourages stakeholders to share their insights on all matters relevant to the terms of reference (see Appendix A), along with information relevant to key areas set out below. In particular, the Commission is seeking quantitative evidence, case studies and descriptive evidence on the incremental impacts of the 2025 reforms and options to improve outcomes.

Environmental outcomes

A key objective of the 2025 reforms is to deliver stronger outcomes in environmental protection and restoration (Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 Explanatory Memorandum, p. 2).

The Commission is seeking information on the likely impact of the 2025 reforms on environmental outcomes in Queensland.

OUTCOMES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- What are the actual, expected, or likely impacts of the 2025 reforms on environmental outcomes in Queensland?
 - Which elements of the 2025 reforms have the largest expected or likely impacts?
- Do other market, legislative or regulatory mechanisms exist that support the achievement of these environmental outcomes?
 - Do those mechanisms complement or work against the 2025 reforms?
 - Are those mechanisms more (or less) effective or efficient in delivering beneficial environmental outcomes?

Economic and regulatory impacts

The EPBC Act regulates economic activities that (may) impact MNES. In terms of its regulatory burden, the Samuel Review indicated the EPBC Act:

- was complex and did not meet best practice principles for modern regulation, as regulation was making it difficult, time consuming and expensive for people to understand their legal rights and obligations
- duplicated state regulatory processes, sometimes resulting in additional costs to businesses without corresponding better environmental outcomes (Samuel 2020, pp. 8–9).

Intended in part to address these concerns, the 2025 reforms impose new legislation and regulatory instruments. As a result, there may be changes in the nature, extent or intensity of economic activity allowed under the amended EPBC Act.

The Commission is seeking information on the likely impact of the 2025 reforms on economic outcomes (including regulatory burden) in Queensland.

OUTCOMES FOR THE ECONOMY AND REGULATORY ARRANGEMENTS

- What are the actual, expected, or likely impacts of the 2025 reforms on economic outcomes or business activities in Queensland?
 - Are there activities permitted under the pre-reform EPBC Act that are no longer permissible (or vice versa)?
 - What are the likely costs (or benefits) of those changes?
- How do the reforms affect investment and employment decisions?
- Will the 2025 reforms affect compliance costs for you or your business, due to the amended requirements?
- In what way are these impacts due to:
 - known or anticipated changes to requirements under the EPBC Act (for example, the scope of matters regulated under National Environmental Standards, such as the draft MNES Standard)?
 - changes to processes or procedural requirements under the EPBC Act (for example, the changes to approval processes or the development of bioregional plans)?
 - a change in the clarity, complexity or accessibility of the requirements?
 - other elements of the 2025 reforms (for example, the creation of new statutory entities)?
- Are any actual, expected, or likely impacts likely to be disproportionately experienced by smaller or family-owned businesses, specific industries, or specific regions?

Land management

The 2025 amendments may alter land management practices, including First Nations land management and land clearing.

A key change to the EPBC Act is the removal of exemptions (in section 43B) related to 'high risk' land clearing, such as on land that has not been cleared for at least 15 years or land within 50 metres of a watercourse, wetland, or drainage line in the Great Barrier Reef catchment area.

New bioregional planning provisions, the transition to National Environmental Standards (which will be progressively drafted and implemented), the establishment of the National Environmental Protection Agency, and other changes, could introduce more robust compliance and enforcement practices.

The Commission is seeking information on the likely positive and negative impacts of the 2025 reforms on land and risk management practices in Queensland, including any interactions with existing Queensland legislation or approvals (such as under the *Vegetation Management Act 2009* (Qld) and *Planning Act 2016* (Qld)).

OUTCOMES FOR LAND MANAGEMENT

- What actual, expected, or likely impacts may the 2025 reforms have on land management practices?
- Will the 2025 reforms impact the management of or preparations for:
 - natural disasters (for example, bushfires or floods)?
 - weed and pest control, as well as broader biosecurity concerns?
 - other land management or stewardship practices (such as conservation activities)?
- How do requirements under the EPBC Act interact with Queensland Government land management requirements and legislation? Have the 2025 reforms affected those interactions?
- Are there any actual, expected, or likely unintended consequences for community safety, infrastructure resilience, or operational risk resulting from the design and implementation of the 2025 reforms?
- What actual, expected, or likely impacts will the 2025 reforms have on:
 - protection of places of First Nations heritage?
 - First Nations economic development?
 - incorporation of First Nations knowledge and viewpoints to land management activities?

Environmental offsets

The EPBC Act has allowed for environmental offsets to be included in conditions of approval since 2000 (The Senate 2014, p. 7). However, their application has evolved over time (Department of the Environment 2014, p. 2).

The 2025 reforms introduced changes associated with governance and compliance frameworks. They also introduced new options to utilise offsets, including through market mechanisms and making restoration contribution payments to meet offset obligations.

The Commission is seeking information on the impact of these changes.

ENVIRONMENTAL OFFSETS

- How important are environmental offsets for proponents in meeting their obligations under the EPBC Act?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of current schemes? How could they be improved?
- Will changes be required to make Queensland's offset scheme compliant with the 2025 reforms?

Opportunities to improve outcomes

The terms of reference require the Commission to consider 'how *the same environmental outcomes* can be achieved without additional regulatory burden or through the recognition of environmental stewardship that is being delivered' (emphasis added).

The EPBC Act and associated instruments (such as the National Environmental Standards) and policies are controlled by the Australian Government. However, there may be opportunities to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and improve efficiency, certainty and proportionality in the application of the 2025 reforms in Queensland.

The Commission is seeking information on any opportunities to improve outcomes that better support and inform both Queensland Government policy priorities and ongoing engagement with the Australian Government.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

- What specific processes or policies are expected to hinder landholders, project proponents or governments in Queensland from achieving compliance with the 2025 reforms?
- Are there specific implementation risks associated with the 2025 reforms? If so, what are they?
- What opportunities could streamline or improve environmental regulatory processes at both the state and national level, or reduce duplication, uncertainty, and compliance costs, while maintaining existing environmental standards?
- Could enhancements to accreditations and bilateral agreements (assessment and approval) between Queensland and the Australian Government improve regulatory efficiency? If so, how?
- What policy or regulatory changes would better enable stakeholders to comply with the 2025 reforms while supporting economic and environmental outcomes?
- What other ways could the 2025 reforms be adapted to improve environmental, social, regulatory or economic outcomes in Queensland?

Appendix A – Terms of Reference

QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ACT 2025

Section 38

DIRECTION

1. Direction

Under sections 9(1)(a) and 38 of the *Queensland Productivity Commission Act 2025* (the Act), I direct the Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC) to undertake an inquiry in accordance with the Terms of Reference set out below.

2. Terms of Reference

IMPACT OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT’S 2025 ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION REFORMS ON QUEENSLAND

(a) Context

In November 2025, the Australian Parliament passed a package of legislation amending the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act) and establishing new national environmental institutions, regulatory concepts and approval processes. These reforms represent a substantial expansion and restructuring of Commonwealth environmental regulation, with significant implications for how land use, development and routine activities are regulated across Australia.

The reforms introduce legally binding National Environmental Standards, new and amended assessment pathways, revised rules for unacceptable impacts and environmental offsets, new powers to make rulings on how the law, regulations or subordinate instruments should be applied, changes to land-clearing exemptions, expanded information and disclosure requirements, enhanced compliance and enforcement powers, and new arrangements for Commonwealth–State accreditation and bilateral agreements. Many of these elements are yet to be fully implemented and will rely on subordinate legislation, standards, guidance and administrative practice. Of concern is that the legally binding National Environmental Standards remain under development, with little transparency about their potential impact on Queensland.

It is critical that regulation across all levels of government serves its intended purpose and not act as a handbrake on vital projects that support growth and economic security.

The Queensland Government is leading the nation in taking proactive steps to build sovereign capability and bolster Australia’s energy security by unlocking new oil, gas and coal production, including Australia’s first oil field in 50 years at the Taroom Trough, for future fuel security. However, the reforms specifically exclude resource projects from the Commonwealth’s *National Interest Fast-Track Assessment Pathway*, which removes duplicated approvals already carried out at a State level, bringing projects to production potentially years earlier.

The Queensland Government established the Resources Cabinet Committee with a key focus to boost productivity and investment in new projects by reducing delays and improving approval timeframes, including actions that will reduce process duplication and improve consistency in assessment and administration of applications.

Further, as outlined in the final report of the Queensland Productivity Commission’s inquiry into *Opportunities to Improve Productivity of the Construction Sector*, government environmental regulations and approvals are complex and can be duplicative, with environmental approval often a barrier or a delaying factor in a proposed infrastructure or housing project getting to the development approval stage.

As outlined in *Primary Industries Prosper 2050*, ease of business in Queensland's agriculture sector is also a key priority, with an ambition for more efficient regulatory processes and compliance framework in support of the government's ambitious target to boost the sector's output to \$30 billion by 2030, in addition to the broader 25-year vision. There are serious stakeholder concerns that Queensland will be disproportionately affected by the operation of the EPBC Act reforms due to the scale and diversity of its agricultural, resources, fisheries, forestry and infrastructure sectors, the extent of land subject to environmental regulation, and the ongoing need to manage productive agricultural landscapes due to Queensland's unique bioregions. The reforms also interact directly with Queensland's existing planning, land-use and environmental frameworks and with long-standing federal–state arrangements designed to avoid regulatory duplication.

Stakeholders have also raised concerns that aspects of the reforms will increase regulatory burden, compliance costs, delays and uncertainty for Queensland landholders, project proponents and governments. Issues raised include the application of Commonwealth approval requirements to activities previously managed under Queensland law, the treatment of land management activities, impacts on investment certainty and regional productivity, and the potential transfer of regulatory and administrative responsibilities to Queensland without commensurate funding.

There are also concerns about unintended consequences for land management in Queensland, including constraints on the ability of landholders and governments to manage fire risk, flooding, weeds and pests, stewardship and biodiversity, with flow-on implications for community safety, infrastructure resilience and biosecurity.

Given the scale, complexity and evolving nature of the reforms, an independent inquiry is required to inform the Queensland Government's policy response and future engagement with the Australian Government.

(b) The Inquiry

The Queensland Productivity Commission is to undertake a public inquiry into the impacts of the Australian Government's 2025 reforms to the EPBC Act on Queensland.

The inquiry will examine how the reforms affect Queensland in practice, with a primary focus on regulatory burden, economic impacts, implementation risks and the operation of Commonwealth–State arrangements. The inquiry will assess the extent to which the reforms alter compliance obligations, costs, decision-making processes and responsibilities for landholders, project proponents and Queensland Government agencies.

The inquiry will seek to understand how the same environmental outcomes can be achieved without additional regulatory burden or through the recognition of environmental stewardship that is being delivered.

The inquiry will also consider broader implications for land management, stewardship and environmental markets, community safety, infrastructure and housing delivery, resource sector investment and development and regional economies, particularly where these issues arise because of regulatory design or implementation rather than as a direct policy objective of the reforms.

The purpose of the inquiry is to provide an independent, evidence-based assessment to support Queensland Government decision-making, including identifying risks, unintended consequences and practical options to improve regulatory efficiency, certainty and proportionality to the activities undertaken in Queensland.

(c) Scope

Without limiting the QPC's consideration, the inquiry should examine the following matters.

Regulatory burden and compliance impacts

- How the EPBC Act reforms affect regulatory obligations and pre-approval compliance requirements for landholders, project proponents and governments in Queensland.
- The implications for regulatory burden, including impacts on costs, timeframes, uncertainty and duplication, particularly where they interact with Queensland regulatory and planning frameworks.
- The capacity of different landholder groups to comply with the requirements (noting that the requirements apply to individuals and small businesses, through to corporate and government landholders).

-
- The key risks from potential changes to the National Environmental Standards.

Economic and productivity impacts

- The implications of the reforms for investment, business viability, productivity and economic activity in Queensland.
- The distribution of impacts across different industries, regions and types of proponents, including small and family businesses.
- The implications for major infrastructure and housing delivery and government-led projects.

Land and risk management implications

- The extent to which the reforms affect the ability of landholders and governments to manage land for practical purposes, including fire mitigation, stewardship and biodiversity, flood management, weed and pest control and biosecurity.
- Any unintended consequences for community safety, infrastructure resilience or operational risk arising from regulatory design or implementation.

Intergovernmental and administrative arrangements

- The extent to which Commonwealth–State bilateral agreements, accreditation frameworks and related arrangements provide opportunities to reduce duplication and improve certainty for Queensland in the implementation of the reforms.
- The extent to which the reforms shift regulatory, administrative or financial responsibilities to Queensland, including implications for resourcing and fiscal risk.

Options and recommendations

- Practical options to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and improve efficiency, certainty and proportionality in the application of the reforms in Queensland.
- Opportunities to improve alignment between Commonwealth and Queensland frameworks without undermining Queensland’s regulatory autonomy.
- Recommendations to inform Queensland Government policy priorities and ongoing engagement with the Australian Government.

3. Consultation

Under section 38(2)(c) I direct the QPC to undertake wide public consultation with stakeholders, including members of the public, primary industry and resources businesses, infrastructure providers, industry peak bodies, environmental groups, the Office of the Coordinator General and relevant Queensland government agencies.

4. Reporting

The QPC is to provide an Interim Report for public consultation and provide the Final Report to Government within 12 months of the date of this direction.

References

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