Media Release

Queensland Productivity Commission

25 November 2026

QPC releases Interim Report into Impact of the 2025 EPBC Act reforms on Queensland

The Queensland Productivity Commission today released its Interim Report on the Impact of the Australian Government's 2025 reforms to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) on Queensland for public consultation.

In April 2026, the Queensland Treasurer issued a direction to the Commission to undertake an inquiry into the impact of the Australian Government's 2025 environment protection reforms on Queensland.

The Interim Report follows extensive consultation with environmental groups, industry and peak bodies, small and family businesses, academics, landholders and government agencies. The Commission visited nine centres throughout regional Queensland, conducted over 120 stakeholder consultations and hosted five roundtables. The Commission also received 67 initial submissions.

The Commission noted the Inquiry was not about the case for or against environmental regulation, rather the extent to which the Australian Government's 2025 reforms to the EPBC Act are likely to deliver their stated environmental objectives in an effective and efficient way.

The Commission has made 19 interim findings and 12 interim recommendations focused on the 2025 reform areas that materially impact Queensland.

The Commission emphasised that this was a 'point in time' report. As the 2025 reforms are being introduced progressively by the Australian Government, observable evidence on each individual reform is not currently available. The Commission has called for further information to support additional assessment and analysis.

The Interim Report notes the impact of the EPBC Act is wide-reaching. As most activities integral to basic needs interact with it, such as the construction of a house or new electricity generation, getting the regulatory settings right is an imperative for the environment and productivity.

Successive independent reviews by the Australian Government have identified limitations with the EPBC Act; potentially delivering under protection, overregulation and unintended consequences.

For Queensland the regulatory costs have been significant. The Commission found the annual pre-reform costs to Queensland of assessment delays alone to be between $4.9 billion to $7.7 billion. The average assessment time for a project was more than 1,150 days.

The 2025 reforms are being progressively implemented by the Australian Government. While not all elements of the reforms have been implemented, some elements are leading to increased compliance costs and unintended consequences such as poorer environmental and productivity outcomes.

The Commission estimates the additional direct regulatory costs for the agricultural sector, due to the narrowing of the continuing use exemption and approach to implementation, may be $41 million per year. These additional compliance costs will disproportionately impact small businesses and regional communities. More broadly, the changes will also impact agricultural productivity, industry competitiveness and produce unintended environmental outcomes.

The introduction of a streamlined assessment pathway could reduce costs associated with the assessment process, but this will likely be comparatively modest. The new streamlined pathway could benefit industry in Queensland by $4.3 million per year.

The Interim Report found the processes for developing and implementing the reforms did not follow regulatory best practice, creating significant uncertainty for stakeholders. As the Australian Government continues to support stakeholders and implements the 2025 reforms, stakeholder confidence could improve.

The EPBC Act legislative changes have already been made by the Australian Government. However, measures could be taken to reduce regulatory costs, improve administrative efficiency and address investor uncertainty and potential for unintended environmental outcomes.

The Commission has considered where there may be opportunities to reduce the cost of the 2025 reforms on the Queensland community. These measures themselves are not costless and may involve additional costs borne by the state government and stakeholders. Whether these costs can be offset is dependent on a range of factors, including continued support and activities of the Australian Government.

Productivity Commissioner Angela Moody thanked all stakeholders who attended consultations and provided submissions to the Inquiry. Ms Moody said contributors valued the natural environment and wanted to ensure the regulatory settings introduced to protect it were appropriate given the associated risks.

“The Commission invites feedback from stakeholders on its understanding of the current issues and their impact including where there have been changes since the initial Call for Submissions paper in May this year,” Ms Moody said. “This Interim Report also provides an opportunity for a further round of consultation. The Commission looks forward to continuing to work with stakeholders.”

The Commission invites feedback on the Interim Report with submissions due by 14 January 2027. Following stakeholder consultation, the Commission will prepare a Final Report to submit to the Queensland Government by 13 April 2027.

The Interim Report can be downloaded here: Impact of the Australian Government's 2025 Environment Protection Reforms on Queensland - Queensland Productivity Commission

About the Queensland Productivity Commission:

- Provides independent policy advice to the Queensland Government to help lift productivity, drive economic growth and enhance living standards for Queenslanders.
- Operates independently from the Queensland Government — its views, findings and recommendations are based on its own analysis and judgments.
- Has an advisory role. Inquiry reports contribute to the policy development process, but any policy action is ultimately a decision for the Queensland Government.

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