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ABOUT THE EPBC ACT

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's key piece of environmental legislation which commenced 16 July 2000.

- [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#) 
- [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000](#) 

The EPBC Act enables the Australian Government to join with the states and territories in providing a truly national scheme of environment and heritage protection and biodiversity conservation. The EPBC Act focuses Australian Government interests on the protection of matters of national environmental significance, with the states and territories having responsibility for matters of state and local significance.

- [Heads of agreement on Commonwealth and State roles and responsibilities for the environment](#)

The Australian Government Department of the Environment (the Department) administers the EPBC Act.

Objectives of the EPBC Act

The objectives of the EPBC Act are to:

- provide for the protection of the environment, especially [matters of national environmental significance](#)
- [conserve Australian biodiversity](#)
- provide a streamlined national environmental [assessment and approvals process](#)
- enhance the protection and management of important natural and [cultural places](#)
- [control the international movement of plants and animals \(wildlife\), wildlife specimens and products made or derived from wildlife](#)
- promote ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources
- recognise the role of Indigenous people in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity
- promote the use of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of biodiversity with the involvement of, and in cooperation with, the owners of the knowledge.

New matter of national environmental significance - water trigger

Amendments to the EPBC Act became law on 22 June 2013, making water resources a matter of national environmental significance, in relation to coal seam gas and large coal mining development.

All EPBC web materials are currently being updated in relation to the new matter of national environmental significance. Any proponent making a referral should consider all matters protected under the Act and seek further information from the department if required.

The nine matters of national environmental significance (MNES) are:

- world heritage properties
- national heritage places
- wetlands of international importance (often called 'Ramsar' wetlands after the international treaty under which such wetlands are listed)
- nationally threatened species and ecological communities
- migratory species
- Commonwealth marine areas
- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- nuclear actions (including uranium mining)
- a water resource, in relation to coal seam gas development and large coal mining development.

See also

- [EPBC Act - fact sheet](#)
- [National environment law - project assessments basics](#)
- [Threatened species and ecological communities](#)
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- [Bushfire management and national environment law - fact sheet](#)

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