

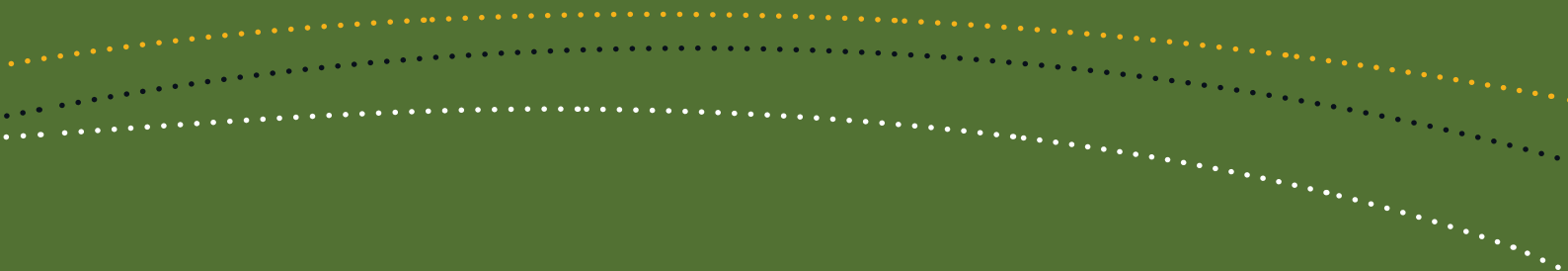


Australian Government

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities**



Environmental Impact Assessment Client Service Charter



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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT CLIENT SERVICE CHARTER

Purpose

This Client Service Charter (the charter) outlines our commitments when undertaking environmental impact assessment (EIA) under the Australian Government's key piece of environmental legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act provides a legal framework to protect and manage matters of national environmental significance.

The charter applies to EIA processes, including post approval monitoring and auditing functions, and other areas that support the EIA process for individual projects referred under the EPBC Act.

What can you expect?

In line with the *DSEWPaC Service Charter 2011–2014*¹, we are committed to:

- ✓ providing a transparent and professional environmental impact assessment process
- ✓ acting honestly, ethically and lawfully

- ✓ responding effectively to the needs of all our clients
- ✓ being accountable for our actions
- ✓ providing clear, accurate and timely information about departmental policy, programs, processes and relevant legislation including providing answers as fully and precisely as possible
- ✓ treating you respectfully and remaining aware of your needs
- ✓ replying to emails and returning phone calls in a timely manner
- ✓ providing you an opportunity to provide feedback on our service.

We realise that our different clients have different needs and we have identified our specific commitments below.

¹ <http://www.environment.gov.au/about/publications/charter.html>



Proponents and consultants

For project proponents and their consultants, we will:

Provide clear guidance for the environmental impact assessment process

- ✓ We will provide you with information about the EIA process including the different assessment approaches and stages within the assessment process and statutory timeframes.
- ✓ We will provide clear, up-front guidance on the information we require you to provide to enable us to assess your project. We will endeavour to request this information once only at the commencement of the relevant stage of the assessment process. However, if the information provided is insufficient to address our request then further information will be required.
- ✓ We will provide you with up to date information about mutual obligations under the EPBC Act.
- ✓ For all referrals, we will allocate a referral contact officer (and other related points of contact, including a supervisor for each referral) and will advise you if this changes. The contact officer will contact you when we receive your referral to provide you with their contact details and discuss the referral process. Should your project need to be assessed under the EPBC Act, an assessment contact officer will follow up monthly to discuss the progress of your assessment.
- ✓ We will make decisions within statutory timeframes. Where there are changes to the anticipated timing for the key steps or decisions in the assessment of your project, we will notify you in advance and provide reasons for the change.
- ✓ We will ensure our decisions are well reasoned, transparent and clearly articulated. Where you have questions or concerns about the reasons for the decision, we invite you to raise these with the contact officer or their supervisor.
- ✓ We will keep you informed about key decisions impacting the assessment of your project.
- ✓ Where your project is determined by us to be a 'major project' (based on criteria such as the size of the project, complexity and extent of potential environmental impact) we will work with you to develop a tailored project service charter. This will include prospective timeframes for different stages in the process and information on the method and frequency of communication (e.g. face to face meetings, joint discussions with state or territory agencies, teleconferences).
- ✓ We will regularly review and improve our guidance documentation to make it clearer and more user friendly.
- ✓ We will work proactively to streamline assessment and approval requirements, such as requests for information and condition setting with states and territories.
- ✓ We will ensure our staff are appropriately trained so that they can provide you with accurate and up to date information.





Communicate

- ✓ Should you wish, we will provide you with the opportunity to engage in a pre-referral discussion about your project to assist you in preparing a quality referral.
- ✓ We will provide guidance to inform you on how to avoid and/or minimise impacts on matters of national environmental significance using clear and plain language in a way that meets your needs.
- ✓ We will provide you with accurate and up to date information available to us where the information is not sensitive or classified.

States and territories

For states and territories we will:

Work cooperatively and communicate clearly

- ✓ We will seek to foster a relationship built on trust and understanding of the state or territory issues and priorities, and seek to streamline implementation of Commonwealth and state or territory conditions as far as practicable.
- ✓ We will provide clear guidance on our expectations and preferences regarding points of engagement in the bilateral process.
- ✓ We will work proactively with you to streamline assessment requirements for proponents under bilateral arrangements.

- ✓ In providing input to scoping/terms of reference documents we will clearly identify requests for information relating to matters of national environmental significance required from the proponent in order to satisfy our legislative and regulatory requirements under the EPBC Act.
- ✓ We will work proactively to facilitate the smooth operation of bilateral agreements and administrative arrangements.

Always look to do things better

- ✓ We will continuously strive to improve the efficient operation of the bilateral agreements.

Members of the public and other stakeholder groups

For all members of the public and other stakeholder groups we will:

Be consultative and informative

- ✓ We will provide you with information on how environmental impact assessments are conducted.
- ✓ We will provide you with the opportunity to comment on projects referred under the EPBC Act during the referral and assessment processes.
- ✓ We will ensure plans, policies and guidelines on matters of national environmental significance are easily attainable through the department's website.
- ✓ We will reply to your correspondence in a timely manner.



Help us to help you

To ensure that we can provide you with an optimum service we also ask that you:

- ✓ treat our staff respectfully
- ✓ provide us with constructive feedback to help us improve our service.

Proponent and consultants

We would appreciate it if you:

- ✓ engage early with the department so that guidance can be provided on avoiding and minimising impacts on matters of national environmental significance at the planning stage of your project
- ✓ ensure your referral is accompanied by all information and documents required at the time of lodgement
- ✓ provide comprehensive, accurate and complete information in accordance with departmental templates/policies/guidelines, clearly addressing impacts, avoidance and mitigation measures on matters of national environmental significance
- ✓ provide the reference number of your referral if you are contacting us regarding a referral you have already lodged
- ✓ when undertaking surveys for matters of environmental significance, do so in accordance with the relevant *EPBC Act Survey Guidelines*
- ✓ give us details of changes in your circumstances as soon as the changes occur.

States and territories

While specific expectations and agreements negotiated between the Commonwealth and individual states and territories relating to EIA are articulated in bilateral agreements, we seek cooperative engagement with you to:

- ✓ work to facilitate a single entry point so that all projects that may require assessment under the EPBC Act are referred to the department
- ✓ work with the department on bilateral assessments including notifying the department at the earliest possibility if the bilateral agreement will, or is likely to, apply to a project requiring assessment under the EPBC Act
- ✓ clearly identify in project scoping documents/terms of reference and assessment reports where matters of national environmental significance are addressed
- ✓ undertake bilateral site visits where requested by proponents/consultants and/or the department
- ✓ consult with us when setting state and territory conditions to ensure that those conditions can adequately address impacts on matters protected under the EPBC Act and Australian Government offset requirements (if applicable), reducing duplication in conditions for proponents
- ✓ negotiate bilateral agreements and administrative arrangements and continuously strive to improve their efficiency.





Members of the public and other stakeholder groups

We would appreciate it if, when providing comment on projects referred under the EPBC Act, you:

- ✓ focus the comments on issues that relate specifically to matters of national environmental significance rather than issues that are more appropriately managed by a state or territory agency
- ✓ quote the reference number of the project and provide comments within specified timeframes.

Client feedback

We are committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of our service. We would value your feedback and suggestions about:

- ✓ experiences you have had in dealing with our staff
- ✓ the Client Service Charter
- ✓ our website or other information products developed by our department
- ✓ how we can improve our services to you
- ✓ your level of satisfaction with the service you have received, particularly if you feel you have not been treated fairly and reasonably by us.

You can provide your feedback by:

- ✓ emailing/calling the project officer (or their supervisor)
- ✓ emailing your comments to EIAclientfeedback@environment.gov.au
- ✓ completing the form at the department's website at: www.environment.gov.au/about/contacts/service-level.html

