



Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities

April 2012

WESTERN SYDNEY GROWTH CENTRES – STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT FACT SHEET

The Australian Government, in partnership with the NSW Government, has undertaken a strategic assessment of the *Sydney Growth Centres Program* under national environmental law, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The program was endorsed under the EPBC Act in December 2011 and actions associated with development inside the growth centres, as described by the program report, were approved in February 2012. This paves the way for 30 years of sustainable growth in Western Sydney.

What does the program mean for the people of Western Sydney?

Sydney's population will continue to grow to nearly six million people by 2036. The program will ensure that Western Sydney will have well planned and consolidated development into two growth centres while safeguarding the environment.

The program avoids impacts on high conservation areas within the growth centres and generates a \$530 million Conservation Fund to offset impacts that do occur.

At the same time, the program will free up at least 2500 hectares of land for employment, deliver more than 180,000 homes and drive more than \$7.5 billion in infrastructure investment.

What does the program mean for developers?

Approval of the program means that individual projects associated with the development of the Sydney growth centres, as described in the *Sydney Growth Centres Strategic Assessment Program Report*, do not need any further approval under the EPBC Act, as long as they are in accordance with the endorsed program. (Approval does not apply to actions or classes of actions either on Commonwealth land or which may impact upon Commonwealth land).

The program has streamlined federal and state environmental planning issues into a single assessment process. Outcomes expected from development have been made clear, providing long-term certainty for planners, developers, landholders, industry, government and the community.



What does the program mean for nationally protected matters?

A number of matters protected under national environmental law are found within the growth centres, in particular the critically endangered *Cumberland Plain Woodland and Shale – Gravel Transition Forest* (Cumberland Plain Woodland).

The strategic assessment fully considered potential impacts on these nationally protected matters. It allowed a big-picture approach to be taken to balance environmental protection with development and other needs in Western Sydney.

The program minimises impacts on high biodiversity values and protects these values where possible through reservation and zoning restrictions.

A key issue was Cumberland Plain Woodland which is now only found as scattered remnants over 9% of its pre-European range. The strategic assessment allowed the environmental impacts of all future development in the growth centres, whether large or small, to be considered, as well as the combined impact of all these developments (known as cumulative impacts). If these were handled on a case-by-case basis, many would be too small to require approval for clearing. In addition, an estimated 500 projects would have required individual approvals.

\$530 million Conservation Fund committed to Western Sydney

The program includes a \$530 million commitment by the NSW Government for the Growth Centres Conservation Fund to be invested on the Cumberland Plain in Western Sydney. The program will return the conservation benefits to Western Sydney communities by both setting aside areas for conservation in this region and managing these areas.

Further information about the strategic assessment and the *EPBC Act* is available on the Department of the Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities website, www.environment.gov.au/epbc or by contacting the Department's Community Information Unit, email: ciu@environment.gov.au or freecall 1800 803 772.

