

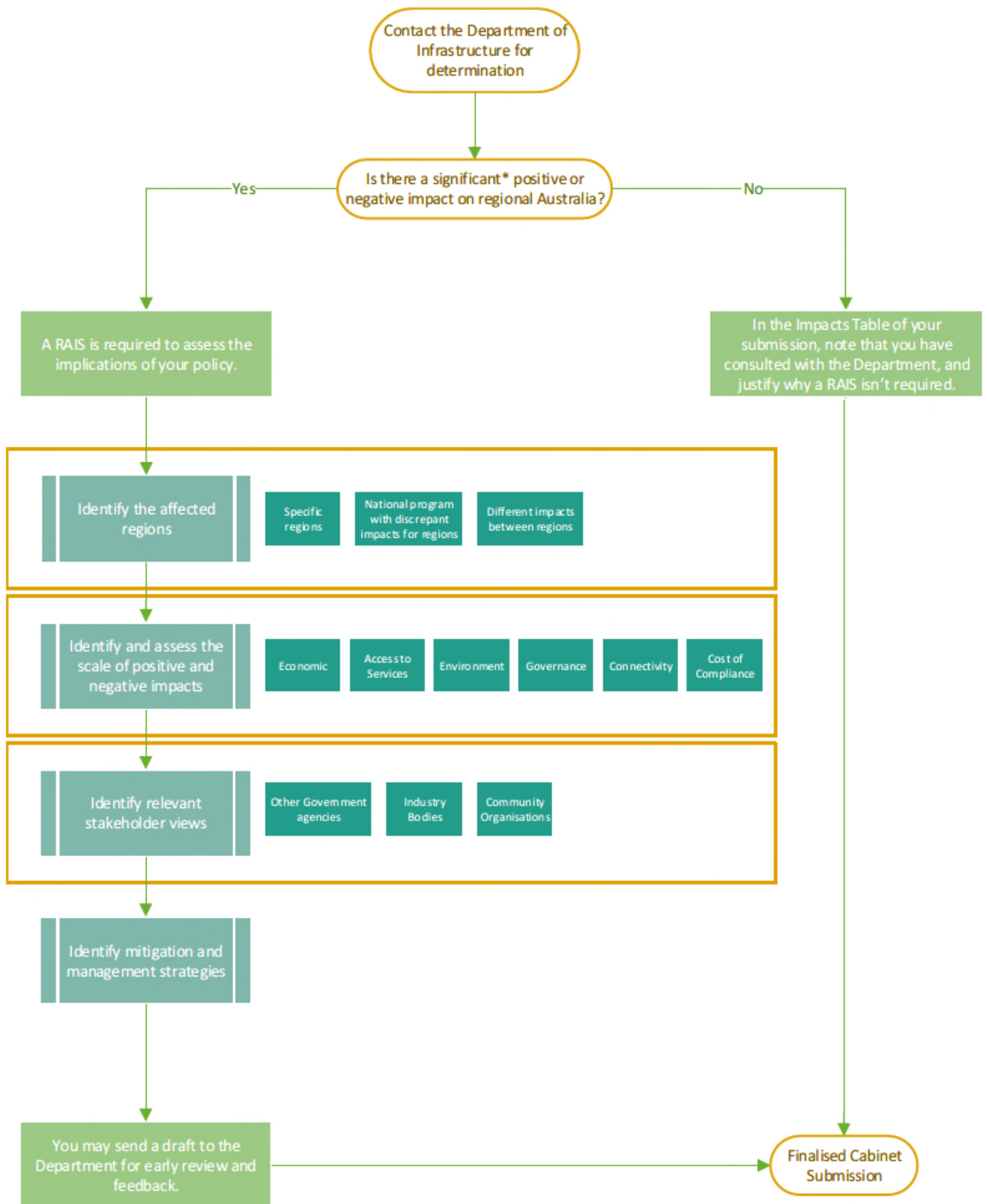


Regional Australia Impact Statements Guidance

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Does my Cabinet Submission/NPP require a RAIS?





The 'Significance' Threshold

Is there a significant* positive or negative impact on regional Australia?

The threshold to trigger a RAIS is when there is a significant positive or negative impact.

Agencies may wish to consider proposed expenditure, the size of the population/geography impacted, the ASL sought, impact on industries and economies, impact on social outcomes, or the subjective perspective of regional Australians, to determine if the policy impact is significant.

Identifying Regions

Specific
regions

National program
with discrepant
impacts for regions

Different impacts
between regions

When looking at the needs of a region, it is important to understand the links and interactions between that region and nearby towns and regional cities. This interconnectedness can have implications for regional development policies and programmes (for example, a service provision centre may be based in a major town centre, but its service footprint may encompass a large area, including isolated communities).

Some proposals may vary from region to region or clearly impact specific locations and industries. Other proposals will apply nationally but may impact regions significantly different to cities.

It is crucial to identify the regions impacted by your proposals. While many agencies use different classifications to define “regional Australia”, the Department prefers the regional classification system used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. With reference to the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard](#) (pages 4-11), regional Australia is those areas outside the greater capital city metropolitan boundaries.

You may choose to identify your regions by the classification system used by the ABS. This includes Local Government Areas, SA2, SA4 and other geographic classifications. You can use maps to demonstrate the relevant regions.

“Regional” includes the external territories of Christmas Island, Cocos Keeling Islands, Norfolk Island.

You may wish to provide some background information to the affected regions, by providing some contextual data against which the proposal will operate. For example:

- Median age
- Highest level of education
- Labour force participation rate/unemployment level
- Country of birth and main language spoken
- Main occupation
- Median weekly income
- Internet connection at home
- Level of indigenous population

You may also wish to identify any feature or events which the region is experiencing which may further compound impacts. For example, industry decline or transition, emergencies or natural disasters (drought, flood, bushfires).

Assessing Impacts

Economic

Identify the key economic drivers of a region, and whether it will impact regions with similar economic drivers (similar industries such as agriculture or mining) or regions with different economic drivers (diverse industry communities)

You should consider whether your policy will impact on:

- Regions in decline or transition
- Employment rates and types of employment (seasonal, part-time or self-employed)
- Investment and trade
- Population
- Businesses (small-to-medium in particular)
 - Industry, particularly agriculture and the primary industries
 - Access to training and skills opportunities
 - Affordable housing options

Access to Services

Service access includes health and emergency services, education and training, electricity, water and gas (utilities), childcare, justice and community services among other services that can be provided to a community to improve amenity and liveability.

You should consider whether the policy:

- Includes or excludes, or may benefit or disadvantage, certain equity groups: people with disability, elderly, Indigenous people, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQI+ and other disadvantaged, vulnerable or minority groups.
- Allows for travel times and distances to make the service accessibility reasonable and manageable for regionally-located people
- Reduces or fragments service delivery, or increases the accessibility and availability of services
- Recognises the health and safety implications of isolation from emergency services

Environment

You should consider whether your policy:

- Will impact areas of environmental significance such as national parks, wildlife habitats or other natural assets
- Will impact on environmental factors, such as water supply and quality, air quality, soil and vegetation (e.g. dryland salinity), biodiversity
- Impacts on sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage or culturally significant places

Governance

You should consider:

- how your policy interacts with community organisations, businesses and other levels of government
- whether your policy might result in cost shifting to state/local government/territories

Connectivity

Connection infrastructure includes public and private transport, telecommunications (media, phone and internet) and services which help people connect.

You should consider whether the policy:

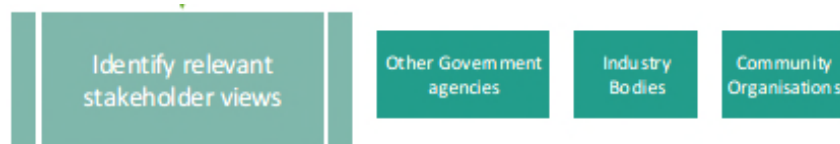
- Positively or negatively affects the availability, quality or cost of accessing connection infrastructure services
- Helps or hinders regional peoples' movements
- Allows people to engage in consultation or feedback or access and receive information

Cost of Compliance

You should consider the impacts on affected entities to comply with new processes or requirements:

- New or changes to regulatory or other requirements may make it difficult for regional communities to comply with the policy, or to participate in the benefit from the policy intent
- Whether there is an impact from the devolution of power and service provision and whether those with devolved powers have the information and resources available to them to undertake adequate service delivery
- Disparity in costs and standards for compliance between regional and metropolitan areas

Stakeholder Engagement



Stakeholder engagement should be considered as part of your RAIS.

Include in your RAIS whether you sought advice from, or consulted with, relevant regional stakeholders and adjust your policy throughout implementation. Identify how any stakeholder feedback has been addressed or reflected in the proposal, or how the proposal responds to stakeholder concerns/issues.

If it is too early in the policy design stage, or stakeholder engagement has not yet taken place, indicate whether any stakeholder engagement will occur to feed into the proposal.

Mitigation and Management Strategies



Mitigation actions are crucial to ensuring that the policy impacts are articulated succinctly and accurately for those that will be affected, and ensures that management of those impacts will enable successful regional coverage and uptake.

Outline how any negative impacts will be mitigated and managed throughout the policy design and implementation phase. This might include developing a communications plan, ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders or provision of information to communities.



Frequently Asked Questions

Background and process

What is a Regional Australia Impact Statement?

Regional Australia Impact Statements (RAIS) form part of the Cabinet submission process, and provides Cabinet Ministers with a summary of how a proposal will impact regional communities, economies, and stakeholders to ensure these implications are taken into account in Government decision-making.

Why should regional impacts be measured?

Policy proposals are often developed with a view to enhancing outcomes for the majority of a target population. The economic, social and environmental diversity of regions is likely to lead to policy proposals having different impacts in the various regions of Australia.

Regional Australia accounts for just under a third of the total population and makes a key contribution to our national economy. However, outcomes in health, employment and education are generally poorer in regional Australia than in metropolitan areas, and people living in regional Australia also report greater difficulty in accessing services. Geographic distance, small markets and economies of scale all contribute to these poorer outcomes for regional Australia. Ensuring the continued wellbeing of our regional communities and economies is therefore central to maintaining national living standards.

What role does the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications have with regard to RAIS?

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development provides advice and assistance to portfolios completing RAIS as part of the policy development and Cabinet submission process. Information about RAIS, including Guidelines and resources, are on the Department's website.

The Department is able to assist with determining whether a RAIS is required, and to work collaboratively with agencies to develop a RAIS. Consultation should occur as early as possible in the policy development process. Agencies should call 6274 7778 or email rais@infrastructure.gov.au to get in touch with the RAIS advice team.

It is preferred that the RAIS be included alongside the submission prior to Exposure Draft so that other agencies have the opportunity to review and comment.

How do I send the draft RAIS to the team for review and feedback?

The draft RAIS can be sent via email to rais@infrastructure.gov.au. The Infrastructure network is an integrated protected network, and therefore does not require 'protected' or 'secure' to be added in the email address. Draft RAIS can also be sent via CabNet+.

Senders must send from a protected or secure network if they do not have an integrated network. Emails must also be marked as 'Protected: Cabinet'.



RAIS requirements for various submissions

The NPP is for a national program. Is a RAIS still required?

In some cases, yes. If regions across Australia are impacted, or there are discrepant impacts for regions outside of metropolitan areas affected by a national program, a RAIS will be required.

The NPP is requesting an extension of an existing program. Is a RAIS still required?

Yes – it is important to show the impacts of an update or extension to a program, drawing on previous rounds or implementation of that program as an evidence base for its impacts even where the fundamental operation of the program hasn't changed. It is critical where an extension or update or a program had radically shifted in its remit that a RAIS be drafted to account for new impacts. Where a RAIS has not been for previous rounds or iterations of a program, a RAIS should be completed to identify ongoing impacts and provide accountability.

The proposal is part of an omnibus/PBS/is one of many measures in a submission. Is a RAIS required and how should it be structured?

If multiple NPPs in a submission require a RAIS, they can be consolidated into one RAIS, rather than one for each relevant NPP. It is advised to outline common impacts across the relevant NPPs upfront, to cohesively address these issues and avoid duplication. Agencies should then consider outlining the distinct impacts of each proposal and structured by separating each measure for ease of reading.

The NPP is new expenditure/the NPP is using offsets. Is a RAIS required?

For all NPPs, regardless of the source of funding, a RAIS should be undertaken if there are significant positive or negative regional impacts.

What if the proposal is too early in the process to identify impacts?

If the proposal is early in the policy cycle, a RAIS may not be required. Some proposals may be seeking to establish principles to guide a future program, or to undertake research to understand the policy context and make recommendations. It is critical to note any anticipated impacts, or note that any identified impacts will be managed through the design and implementation phases. A RAIS is intended to be a living document.

A RAIS is required/not required? How should this be signalled?

If a RAIS is required, in the Impacts Table at section 4.1 of the Cabinet submission, state that you have consulted with the Department and determined that your submission requires a RAIS. Advise that a RAIS has been undertaken to outline the regional impacts and is located at Attachment [X].

If a RAIS is not required, in the Impacts Table at section 4.1 of the Cabinet submission, state that you have consulted with the Department and determined that your submission does not require a RAIS. This statement should be accompanied by a justification as to why the RAIS is not required. This will satisfy the consultation requirements and advise decision-makers and other agencies of your consideration during the drafting phase.



Structure/form

Is there a template?

Yes – please refer to our website for a simple template that can be used for your submission.

However, drafting agencies are best placed to know the content of the submission, and determine the relevant impacts for a RAIS. Prescriptive templates do not suit all agencies' proposals, so where the draft template does not suit the nature or content of the submission (such as an omnibus or PBS), alterations can be made by agencies.

What should a RAIS look like?

We refer you to the best-practice examples in the supplementary document which can be circulated to agencies on request. This is not displayed on our website as it is Sensitive: Cabinet material and must be distributed on protected networks.

How long does the RAIS have to be?

The Department recommends **at least** one page for a considered and thorough analysis.

Where does the RAIS sit in the Cabinet submission?

The RAIS is an attachment to the Cabinet submission, and typically sits immediately after the Regulatory Impact Statement.

Should agencies include an evidence base in the RAIS?

Obtaining quantitative data to reach empirical conclusions about your proposal's likely regional impacts will strengthen your RAIS and assist decision makers to understand possible outcomes of your proposal.

The Department recommends the sources identified on its website to assist with substantiating claims in a RAIS. These sources can be found [here](#). Additional evidence from reliable and impartial sources is also recommended.

In addition, an element of qualitative judgement will be involved in completing a RAIS.

Is there a reference number or approval ID?

No, the RAIS does not require a reference number for inclusion in the body of the submission like for the Regulation Impact Statement. In the Impacts Table you may write "Refer to Regional Australia Impact Statement at Attachment [X number]".