



Strategic Assessment of Christmas Island

FACTSHEET

The Australian Government is completing a whole-of-island Strategic Assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) to protect Christmas Island's unique environment and support economic development.

What is a Strategic Assessment?

Development that is likely to have a significant impact on matters protected under national environmental law must be assessed under the EPBC Act. A Strategic Assessment under Part 10 of the EPBC Act provides the opportunity to consider, and potentially approve, a series of new proposals or developments (referred to as 'actions') over a much larger scale and longer timeframe (even if the developer is not currently known).



The Christmas Island Strategic Assessment will produce two documents:

- A **Plan** for future land uses and development opportunities on Christmas Island. The Plan will also set out strategies to manage the potential impacts of development activity on the natural environment.
- A **Report** on the impacts on protected matters from proposed development activities, and the effectiveness of proposed conservation measures.

Why is this Strategic Assessment being conducted?

Christmas Island is a natural wonder and home to rare plants and animals, some of which are not found anywhere else in the world. The significance and ecological value of Christmas Island has been recognised internationally and is provided a high level of protection under the EPBC Act.

The Strategic Assessment will support economic activity on Christmas Island by considering future land uses and development opportunities in an open and transparent manner, providing greater certainty to stakeholders, and ensuring clarity about environmental approval arrangements for up to the next 50 years. At the same time, it will protect the environment, including its unique rainforest, birds and crabs.

A Strategic Assessment offers the potential to deal with cumulative impacts on matters protected by national environmental law and to deliver conservation and planning outcomes on a much larger scale than can be achieved through project-by-project assessments. Once approved, the Strategic Assessment Plan will remove the need for individual assessments under the EPBC Act where proposed projects align with the Plan and are within an approved class of action.

How can I have my say or find out more?

The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities is conducting public consultations on the draft Terms of Reference from 15 February 2019 to 29 March 2019.

There will also be an opportunity for stakeholders to comment on the draft Plan and draft Report once developed.

The Australian Government will work closely with stakeholders during the Strategic Assessment. The Department welcomes submissions from all interested members of the public.



Further information on the Christmas Island Strategic Assessment and details on how to make a submission during the consultation periods are available on the Department's website at www.regional.gov.au/territories/Christmas/strategic-assessment/.

General information about strategic assessments, including the Christmas Island Strategic Assessment, can be found on the Department of the Environment and Energy's website at www.environment.gov.au/protection/assessments/strategic.

Frequently Asked Questions

I live on Christmas Island. What will this mean for me?

The Strategic Assessment will provide opportunities for sustainable development and support economic activity on Christmas Island. It will also protect Christmas Island's environment, including its unique rainforest, birds and crabs.

Members of the public can make a submission during public consultation processes through the Department's website at www.regional.gov.au/territories/Christmas/strategic-assessment/. This page will be regularly updated to reflect progress of the Strategic Assessment.

What area will the Strategic Assessment cover?

The Strategic Assessment will consider all land on Christmas Island in the preparation of the Plan and Report. However, the Strategic Assessment will not approve developments in the Christmas Island National Park, which will continue to require individual approvals under national environment law and meet the requirements of the Christmas Island National Park Management Plan. In addition, the Strategic Assessment will not affect existing approvals made under the EPBC Act.

What will this mean for the environment on Christmas Island?

The Strategic Assessment will consider the environmental impacts of proposed developments in accordance with the requirements of the EPBC Act, including the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Appropriate conservation measures will be part of an endorsed Plan.

What does the EPBC Act protect?

The EPBC Act provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places.

Matters protected under the EPBC Act ('protected matters') are:

- the nine matters of national environmental significance, which are: world heritage properties; national heritage places; wetlands of international importance (often called 'Ramsar' wetlands); nationally threatened species and ecological communities; migratory species protected under international agreements; Commonwealth marine areas; the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park; nuclear actions (including uranium mining); and water resources, in relation to coal seam gas development and large coal mining development;
- the environment, where actions proposed are on, or will affect, Commonwealth land and the environment; and
- the environment, where Australian Government agencies are proposing to take an action.

As Christmas Island is considered Commonwealth land under the EPBC Act, the Strategic Assessment will consider potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance and on the environment.

What types of development are proposed to be included in the Strategic Assessment?

Potential development activities include residential, industrial and commercial development, eco-tourism, mining and agriculture. The Department welcomes views on inclusion of other potential development activities.

I am considering developing land on Christmas Island. What will this mean for me?

The Strategic Assessment will consider and develop a Plan for future land uses in an open and transparent manner, and will provide opportunities for the sustainable development of Christmas Island outside of the Christmas Island National Park. At the same time, it will protect Christmas Island's environment, unique flora and fauna, and world-renowned rainforest, birds and crabs.

A streamlined approval process under the Plan will provide greater certainty to developers, landholders, planners, industry and the community about future investment on Christmas Island. It will also remove the need for individual assessments under the EPBC Act, where proposed projects align with the Plan and are within an approved class of action.

How will the Strategic Assessment impact the Crown land release program?

The Australian Government is progressing the release of Crown land as a priority. The Strategic Assessment will be undertaken in parallel, and will complement the release of Crown land by providing greater certainty about future development opportunities. It will remove the need for an individual assessment under the EPBC Act where a proposed project aligns with the development types and conditions in an approved Strategic Assessment.

Purchasers may wish to commence development following the completion of the Strategic Assessment. Alternatively, the Strategic Assessment will not preclude successful purchasers of Crown land from proceeding with submitting a referral for consideration under the EPBC Act for individual sites. Further information on referring an action under the EPBC Act that is also covered by a strategic assessment process is available on the Department of the Environment and Energy's website at www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/epbc-act-referrals-policy.

What will this mean for tourism on Christmas Island?

The Plan resulting from the Strategic Assessment will consider potential tourism developments outside of the Christmas Island National Park. It will also help support Christmas Island's eco-tourism industry by protecting the environment. Development proposed within the Christmas Island National Park will continue to require individual approvals under national environment law and meet the requirements of the Christmas Island National Park Management Plan.

What will this mean for heritage on Christmas Island?

While there are separate requirements for heritage under the EPBC Act, heritage management will also be considered as part of the Strategic Assessment. The Strategic Assessment will include a description of the heritage values of the Strategic Assessment area and identification of sensitive heritage areas. It will protect important heritage places, and the wider cultural and natural heritage of Christmas Island.

How will the outcomes of public consultation be addressed?

In accordance with the statutory Strategic Assessment Agreement, the Department will provide to the Minister for the Environment a copy of all public comments received and a summary of whether and how the public comments have been taken into account when submitting documents for consideration or endorsement.

The Department will also publish a summary of public views after the end of each consultation period on its website. Names of those who made submissions will not be included in this summary.