

Environmental Protection Reform Bill 2025

27 November 2025

On 27 November 2025, the Environmental Protection Reform Bill 2025 was passed by the Senate and sent to the House of Representatives for endorsement of the amendments passed in the Senate.

The Reform Bill is the primary component of a package aimed to modernise the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and has been the subject of widespread industry, state government and cross-party consultation over several years. The passage of the package of Bills through the Senate followed a successful negotiation between the Government and The Greens on reforms to the Bills that were previously passed in the House.

The reforms stem from Professor Graeme Samuel AC's 2020 independent review of the EPBC Act, which was presented to then-environment minister and now Opposition Leader Sussan Ley. The reform package is centred around three pillars: stronger environmental protection and restoration, more efficient and robust project approvals, and greater accountability and transparency in environmental decision making.

Key environmental measures in the Government's amended Bill:

- Australia will have a National Environment Protection Agency (EPA) – a strong, independent regulator with a clear focus on ensuring better compliance with and stronger enforcement of Australia's new environmental laws.
- Australia will have National Environmental Standards, to ensure clear, strong guidelines to protect the environment.
- Higher penalties for the most significant breaches of environmental law, as well as environment protection orders for use in urgent circumstances to prevent and respond to major contraventions of the law.
- Removing and sunseting the exemption from the EPBC Act for high-risk land clearing and regional forest agreements, so that they comply with the same rules and standards as other industries.

- Requiring proponents of large emitting projects to disclose their greenhouse gas emissions and their emission reduction plans.
- Maintaining federal approval of “water trigger” coal and gas projects.

**Key measures to speed up decision-making for business and the community:
Stronger Environmental Protection and Restoration**

- A new Streamlined Assessment Pathway, to significantly reduce the timeframe for proponents who provide sufficient information upfront, providing incentive to meet the standards upfront. This will deliver faster decisions, saving businesses time and money.
- New and improved bilateral agreements with states to remove duplication for the assessment and approval of projects.
- Regional planning, to deliver ‘go’ and ‘no go’ zones, delivering greater certainty to business, and future planning at a landscape scale, rather than project-by-project assessment.
- Clarifying definitions of “unacceptable impacts” and “net gain” for the environment and restraining the operation of Environmental Protection Orders.

WA Premier Roger Cook has received assurances from Minister Watt that Western Australia will be the first state to sign a bilateral agreement for assessment and approvals.

Further Information

For more information, please contact Hawker Britton’s Partner’s [John Jarrett](#) on +61 434 384 745 and [Tim Grey-Smith](#) +61 432 226 323.

See the Prime Minister’s Media Release [here](#).

See the Bills Explanatory Memorandum [here](#).

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