

Dashboard Impact Analysis (IA) – National Environmental Standard for Data and Information

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

The policy problem and proposed approach

Proposed approach

The proposed approach is a legally enforceable National Environmental Standard for Data and Information (D&I Standard) under section 514YD of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The D&I Standard sets out an Objective, Outcomes and Principles. The Objective is to ensure that prescribed decisions made under the EPBC Act are based on appropriate data and information and to extend the availability of credible data and information assets for use in such decisions. Ministerial decision-making will be more transparent as the minister must now be satisfied that a proposal is consistent with all relevant National Environmental Standards.

The D&I Standard aims to improve consistency of decision-making and regulatory under the EPBC Act. This should expedite assessments and reduce the need for further information requests, which have led to delays and further administrative costs for actions under the EPBC Act.

If made, consistency with the D&I Standard would be assessed by the decision-maker in relation to:

- Decisions to approve the taking of an action, including conditions, and decisions to approve actions in accordance with an endorsed policy, plan or program, as well as variations to such approvals
- Decisions in relation to accrediting a management or authorisation framework or NOPSEMA management or authorisation framework
- Making or varying a bioregional plan or bioregional guidance plan.

Policy problem

The 2020 Independent Review of the EPBC Act Final Report (Samuel Review) identified the need for a consistent and interoperable approach to data and information management to support robust, transparent and timely decisions. The Samuel Review recommended a National Environmental Standard to address long-standing issues of fragmented, inconsistent, and incomplete environmental data and information by clarifying requirements for its collection, management and provision to improve quality and transparency. Without a Standard, the potential for inconsistency of data and information used for EPBC Act approvals both at the Commonwealth and state and territory levels will be high and the underlying evidence base will continue to be fragmented and incomplete.

Summary of impacts and methodology

The Department prepared an Addendum to the Samuel Review on 30 October 2025. The Addendum focuses on the streamlined assessment pathway (reducing statutory timeframes from 70 to 50 days) and related reform measures – including the making of National Environmental Standards, rulings, defining unacceptable impacts, and requiring a ‘net gain’ for any residual significant impacts. These related reforms aim to improve environmental outcomes and reduce delays commonly caused by further information requests.

The Addendum estimates the impact of the streamlined assessment pathway (SAP, low scenario) and SAP and related reforms (medium and high scenario), as reproduced below in Table 1.

The Addendum estimates that under medium and low scenarios, requests for information would be reduced and avoided (respectively). Benefits were a reduced timeframe for assessments and approvals – at either 140 or 288 days.

Table 1. Estimated positive impact from reductions to delay costs from the introduction of the streamlined assessment pathway and related reform measures per relevant population per annum.

Change in Costs (\$million)	Business	Community organisations	Individuals	Total change in Costs
Low (20 days)*	\$441	\$4	\$0	\$445
Medium (140 days)	\$3019	\$25	\$0	\$3045
High (288 days)	\$6878	\$36	\$1	\$6914

Note* = baseline SAP case from the Addendum

This analysis adopts a contributory portion of the medium scenario as the expect impact of the D&I Standard to expedite approvals. The medium and high estimates in Table 1 include the streamlined assessment pathway and other reform measures so cannot be attributed solely to the D&I Standard. The D&I Standard is expected to contribute to the medium scenario savings through greater clarity regarding upfront environmental requirements and supporting information.

Option	Benefits	Other costs	Net impact	Regulatory burden
Proposed: D&I Standard	A contributory portion of the overall \$3,045,000,000 p/a in reduced delay costs for the further information pathway. Improved environmental outcomes; greater certainty; more consistent decisions.	Compliance, evidence and transition costs.	These have not been quantified, but costs are expected to be ameliorated by the benefits in more efficient assessment pathways.	A contributory portion of the overall minimum \$3,045,000,000 p/a in reduced regulatory burden.

Alternative: Policy Guidance only	Some transparency benefits	Low implementation cost	Limited net benefit	Expected to reduce benefits as would not sufficiently provide guidance on D&I, Ministerial discretion would remain high. Further information requests anticipated.
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Economic and social impacts

Status quo	Proposed option
People, business and other groups will not be aware of the evidence required to assess the impacts of proposals, leading to requests for further information. Ministerial decision-making would remain inconsistent and not transparent. Multiple requests for additional information would likely continue.	Standards will support the operation of a reformed EPBC Act by clarifying expectations for data and information to support regulated activities and uplifting the quality and consistency of decision-making. By making a Standard to which the Minister must have regard, this will lead to clearer expectations, improved transparency, increased confidence in decisions and better outcomes for protected matters. Benefits are expected across proponents, governments, First Nations stakeholders and communities. Business should see the greatest benefit in reduced regulatory burden and administration costs. The D&I Standard makes best practice data and information usage transparent, allowing for reusability to avoid cost, where practicable and appropriate. Stakeholder views: Stakeholders across sectors are broadly supportive of the D&I Standard's intent and underlying principles.

Regulatory burden

Status quo	Proposed option
Assessment of any existing compliance and/or delay costs: These costs are outlined in the Addendum. Data and information expectations are articulated on a case-by-case basis which lacks transparency leading to potentially inconsistent burdens and outcomes.	By clarifying and explicitly stating expected data and information standards, the D&I Standard may require administrative work to adjust approaches by businesses seeking EPBC Act approvals. These impacts are expected to be offset by reduced uncertainty, fewer information requests and more and consistent efficient assessments. Change in the regulatory burden: The Department has assessed the administrative effort anticipated by the D&I Standard and considers that on balance, the D&I Standard creates greater certainty as to administrative tasks required to obtain approvals under the new provisions of the Act. Consultation feedback across sectors was broadly supportive of the D&I Standard's intent and underlying principles. Stakeholder views: There is broad support for the D&I Standard, but feedback was received regarding the concept of 'reuse', data control and protection and how it handles First Nations Knowledge. Environment groups were also

Status quo	Proposed option
	concerned about the use of an 'other evidence' pathway to meet the D&I Standard, whereas industry is more supportive as it provides more flexibility. The D&I Standard was updated following consultation to clarify the 'other evidence' pathway, and refer explicitly to indigenous knowledge, and enable reuse of data where practicable, subject to consent and confidentiality arrangements. Whilst business stakeholders raised concerns about integrating Standards within existing systems, these costs have been assessed by the Addendum report using a net present methodology that confirms that the longer-term net benefits of the reform measures will be delivered over time. Submissions raised the need for practical guidance, which is outside the scope of this assessment.

Other considerations and implementation

Other options considered were the status quo and non-regulatory. These options would not provide a legally enforceable, consistent framework and provide practical guidance for applicants as to how the legislative requirements will be considered by the Minister. The preferred option will be implemented through standards-making provisions of the reformed EPBC Act supported by guidance, consultation and National EPA assurance processes.

What success looks like

The Standards will provide sufficient clarity whilst retaining flexibility as to how proponents demonstrate that the substantive approval requirements for decision-making are met.

This will lead to more consistent environmental decisions; improved outcomes for protected matters; fewer requests for additional information; increased stakeholder confidence; improved transparency; reduced regulatory uncertainty.

Implementation approach

Implementation will occur through the ongoing tranches of legislative reform supporting the new EPBC arrangements and may include guidance materials to access the benefits of streamlined pathways, National EPA oversight and Environment Information Australia reporting.

Planned evaluation

Formal review is required to commence within 18 months of the making of the Standard and at least every five years thereafter by section 514YJ of the reformed EPBC Act.

Statement of Sufficiency

I confirm that this Dashboard Impact Analysis (IA) prepared for National Environmental Standard for Data and Information meets the requirements set out in the *Australian Government Impact Analysis Framework*.

I confirm that the level of analysis is proportionate to the policy issue being considered.

I note the Dashboard IA provides analysis of the impacts of the proposal using the 7 IA questions and:

- a high-level summary of costs and benefits and an estimate in the change in the regulatory burden, of the policy options under consideration
- high-level analysis of the policy option against the government's key strategic priorities
- a summary of relevant distributional effects and evidence of key stakeholder feedback incorporated into the policy design
- other details required to understand and assess the proposal.

Endorsed by



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