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## EPBC Reform: Latest Update & What's Next for Queensland Producers

### Dear Members,

The implementation of the EPBC reforms is now underway, and AgForce is working for you, with you and on your behalf to protect the viability of Queensland agriculture.

AgForce is strongly opposed to the escalating administrative and financial burden currently being placed on producers through the way these reforms are being implemented.

Current Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) guidance requiring routine agricultural activities to undergo self-assessment, and in some cases full EPBC referral, is not proportionate, not practical and not reflective of how agriculture operates.

We are actively and firmly lobbying state and federal governments to push back on these settings and to secure a positive list of routine agricultural activities that should not require EPBC self-assessment or referral. This is essential to ensure producers can continue to undertake normal land stewardship, drought response and fire preparedness without unnecessary delay, cost or compliance risk.

Member support is critical to achieving this outcome. Clear, consistent and respectful engagement from producers significantly strengthens AgForce's position in ongoing discussions with government.

### What producers need to know right now

Based on current implementation guidance from DCCEEW:

- **All new farm infrastructure** (e.g. fencing, laneways, water points, yards) is currently expected to undergo an EPBC self-assessment, regardless of scale or location.
- **Self-assessment does not automatically mean referral**, but it requires producers to assess and document potential impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).
- Activities that resemble land clearing may trigger referral, depending on method and context:
  - o Lopping or pruning mulga (or other species) for fodder may be self-assessable.
  - o Chaining or pushing mulga trees may be considered higher risk and may require referral, particularly where habitat features (e.g. hollows) are present.
  - o Establishing new firebreaks may require self-assessment through grassland and may require referral through wooded areas.
- **EPBC referral and assessment fees** apply to businesses with annual turnover above \$10 million.
  - o Smaller enterprises ( $\leq$ \$10 million turnover) and individual landholders are exempt from most Commonwealth fees, though administrative and time burdens still apply.

AgForce has prepared practical case studies to demonstrate how these requirements are affecting routine agricultural activities in real-world scenarios.

- 👉 **View AgForce EPBC case studies:**
  - [Self-Assessment Case Study- Fencing](#)
  - [Referral Case Study- Fodder harvesting](#)

## AgForce is empowering members to be heard

To support coordinated and effective advocacy, AgForce has developed ready-to-use templates and guidance to help members engage constructively and respectfully with:

- their [local MP](#) (first priority)
- Option to cc in [Minister Watt](#) and [Minister Collins](#).

These resources are designed to:

- reduce the burden on individual producers,
- ensure messaging is consistent and grounded in real impacts, and
- reinforce AgForce's direct engagement with Ministers and senior officials.

- 👉 **Access a "step by step guide" and advocacy resources [HERE](#)**

Download letter templates below:

- [Self Assessment](#)
- [Referral for fodder harvesting](#)
- [Fire and flood resilience](#)

Respectful engagement is essential to ensure AgForce can continue constructive discussions with Minister Watt and progress workable solutions for agriculture.

The EPBC reform affects many different aspects of agriculture. We are also advocating for the retention of PMAVs and Queensland Vegetation and Planning laws. However, as per the timeline below, these will be major aspects of the State Commonwealth Bilateral negotiations that will be commencing in February. Accordingly, AgForce is working to systematically improve the implementation and interpretation of the federal legislation. Please join the Member webinar for more information on this.

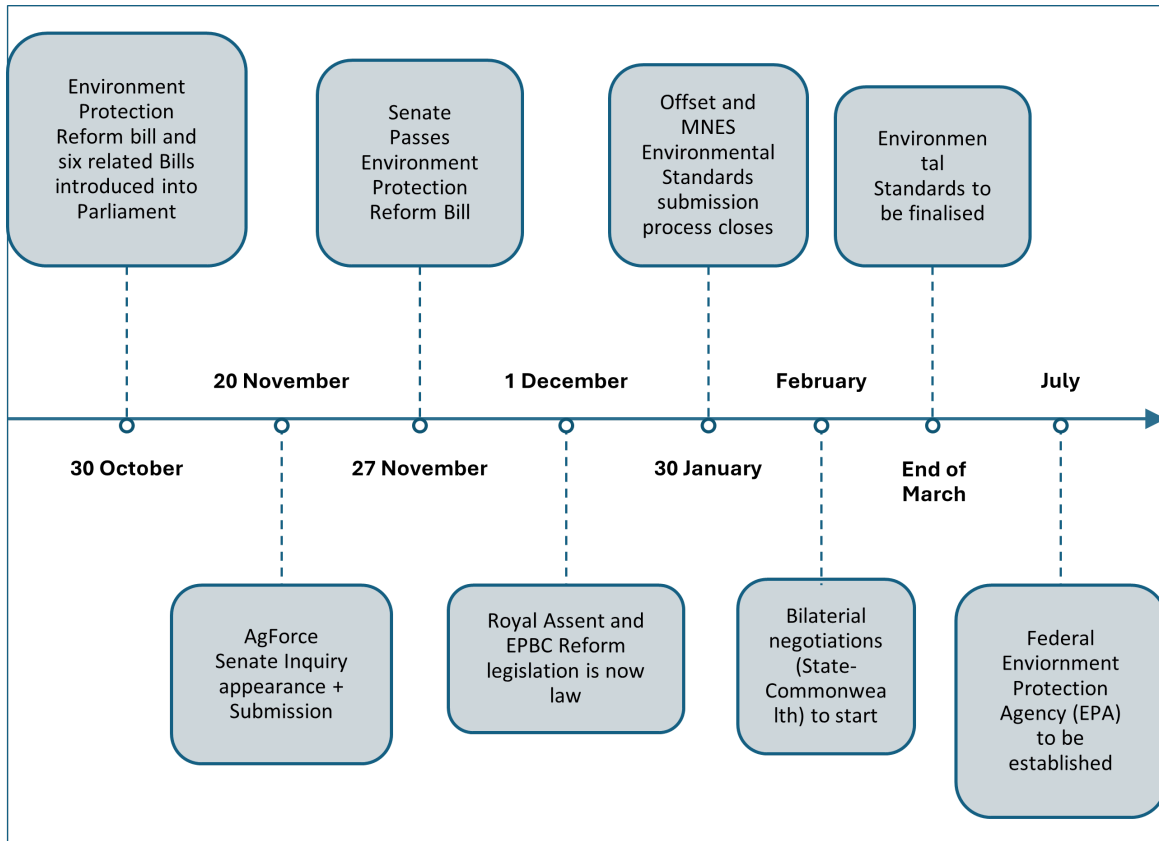
## For context: MNES and EPBC enforcement

Some producers may be confused around MNES and rightly so. Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), certain environmental values are classified as [Matters of National Environmental Significance \(MNES\)](#). This includes both fauna and flora species. These provisions sit alongside other Commonwealth environmental legislation and have long formed part of the national regulatory framework.

- MNES overlays are not new and referenced in Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation (PMAVs) reports and other state and Commonwealth spatial reports.
- Historically, MNES provisions were rarely enforced in an agricultural context, with regulatory focus directed toward major State based development proposals.
- What has changed is the active enforcement of MNES requirements and the establishment of the Commonwealth Environment Protection Authority (EPA) as the primary enforcement body.
- These enforcement settings are being applied ahead of final National Environmental Standards, operating rules and fit-for-purpose systems, creating an untenable situation for producer we are actively lobbying to be addressed.

AgForce is advocating to ensure MNES implementation reflects the cyclical and

regenerative nature of agriculture, avoids treating farming like mining or urban development, and does not impose disproportionate administrative or financial burden on producers.



### Where to direct activity-specific questions

AgForce cannot provide legal advice or case-by-case determinations. For property-specific questions, members should contact:

- DCCEEW EPBC Hotline: 1800 803 772
- DCCEEW Referral Gateway (voicemail): 1800 423 135
- DCCEEW Website: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/approvals>

If you receive unclear or contradictory advice, please notify AgForce so we can raise systemic issues directly with government.

We look forward to providing more information to on our advocacy and lobbying activities to members in the webinar on Monday and providing further clarity on our current understanding of the EPBC Reform.

AgForce will continue to push back strongly on unworkable implementation, advocate for agriculture-specific solutions, and keep members informed as this process evolves.

### Further links and information

- Updated DCCEEW Information sheet on Agricultural Exemptions to EPBC Assessment: [Updates to agricultural action exemptions under the EPBC Act updates - DCCEEW](#)
- For more information on EPBC Act project assessments: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/epbc-act-reform/more-efficient-robust-epbc-act-project-assessments>
- For more information on EPBC Act Reform: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/epbc-act-reform>
- MNES Search Tool (EPBC Act): <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/protected-matters-search-tool>
- Queensland Vegetation and PMAV Maps: <https://qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au/> and <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/management/vegetation/maps/map-correction>

- [environment/management/vegetation/maps/map\\_connection](#)
- Environment Protections and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999: [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(EPBC Act\) - DCCEEW](#)
- Reef Catchment Mapping (dataset: Great Barrier Reef catchment and river basins): <https://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au/catalogue/>

## Recent AgForce Media Releases

- [Standing Up for Producers Amid EPBC Uncertainty.](#)
- [Before the Ink Dries: AgForce Calls for Watt to Co-Design EPBC Implementation with Queensland Producers.](#)
- [Canberra's Green Deal Could Leave Australia Hungry, Says AgForce.](#)
- [Farmers Can't Be Forgotten in the Rush for Environmental Reform.](#)
- [The Time to Stand Up for Agriculture's Future is Now](#)
- [Queensland Producers Call for Common-Sense Environmental Reforms.](#)

## Recent Industry Updates

- AgForce Webinar with DCCEEW – Please reach out to your [Regional Manager](#) for a copy of the recording
- [Update on Environment Protection Reform Bill](#)
- [Federal Environmental Reforms \(EPBC Act\): Impacts, Timelines and AgForce's Response](#)
- [Have Your Say on the Future of Environmental Regulation.](#)

## Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 and six adjoining bills links

- [AgForce Submission Environment Protection Reform Bill and six related bills](#)
- [APH Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 and six related bills Inquiry Page](#)
- [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Reform Bill 2025 Amendments](#)



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