



# Farming and the national environment law: EPBC Act

**In addition to state and local government regulation the Australia Government *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)* may also apply on your farm.**

The EPBC Act protects matters of National Environmental Significance (NES). The matters protected by the EPBC Act that are most relevant to farmers are:

- threatened species and ecological communities
- migratory species
- wetlands of international importance
- world heritage properties, and
- national heritage places.

## Does the EPBC Act apply to you?

The following questions will help you work out how the EPBC Act applies to your farm and farm activities.

## Are there protected matters on your farm?

By using the Environment Reporting Tool at [www.environment.gov.au/epbc](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc) you can identify if your farm is likely to be home to any matters of NES. The search tool is an indicator only. If the tool shows matters of NES in your locality you may need to get expert advice before commencing any major changes in land use, including clearing.

## Is your activity exempt?

Farm activities that were lawfully happening before the start of the EPBC Act in July 2000 may be exempt from the Act. Further information on these exemptions can be found at [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/exemptions.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/exemptions.html)

## Will your activity have a significant impact?

Only farm activities that are likely to have a significant impact on a protected matter need approval under the EPBC Act. Land use change and intensification are examples of activities that may have significant impacts. Guidelines to help you determine whether an activity will have a significant impact are available at [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/guidelines-policies.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/guidelines-policies.html)

## Certainty

If you think an activity will have a significant impact or you want to be certain, you will need to make a referral. You will be advised within 20 business days if your proposed activity needs approval. A referral form and more information is available at [www.environment.gov.au/epbc](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc)

Please call the Environment Liaison Officer (details below) if you would like assistance.

You may also obtain certainty through an EPBC Act conservation agreement which can include certification that certain activities on your farm do not require approval.

## Compliance

The Act contains significant penalties for non-compliance. The department uses a range of compliance strategies including education, self regulation, infringement notices and in extreme cases, court proceedings.



## Opportunities for assistance

The Australian Government has a number of programs to help farmers, land managers and other groups manage natural resource issues and EPBC Act protected matters such as threatened species and ecological communities.



**For FREE advice on how the EPBC Act applies to your farm contact:**  
**Ross Rowe, Environment Liaison Officer,**  
**National Farmers' Federation**  
**Tel: 1800 704 520**  
**[environment@nff.org.au](mailto:environment@nff.org.au)**

### Photo credits

Solar orchard: NFF  
 Baillon's crane: Andrew Tatnell  
 Tractor: NFF  
 Windmill: Arthur Mostead  
 Lettuces: NFF  
 Dairy cows: Rossy Rowe  
 Ross Rowe: Michelle McAulay



**Australian Government**  
**Department of the Environment,**  
**Water, Heritage and the Arts**



### Websites

[www.environment.gov.au/epbc](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc)  
[www.nff.org.au/policy/nrm.html](http://www.nff.org.au/policy/nrm.html)