

Community benefit system overview

This factsheet provides an overview of changes made to Queensland's planning framework through the *Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025*.

A community benefit system has been introduced into Queensland's planning framework. The community benefit system provides the ability to identify, avoid, manage, mitigate and counterbalance the direct, indirect, and cumulative social impacts of specific identified land uses.

Prior to these changes there were varied approaches to regulating renewable and non-renewable energy developments across Queensland, resulting in inconsistency in regulation for industry, uncertainty for the community, inadequate consultation with stakeholders and no formal requirement for community benefit sharing.

The community benefit system will apply to development for wind farms, and relevant solar farms being solar farms with an electricity output of 1 megawatt or more. These development types will be required to undertake social impact assessment to identify, consider and address social impacts. The proponent is then required to deliver community benefits commensurate to the scale of the social impact of the development. In practice this means that there is a formal, mandatory process for local government and the community to engage with proponents regarding social impacts and community benefit.

What does the Amendment Act do?

The *Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025* (the Amendment Act) has now commenced to:

- establish a community benefit system under the *Planning Act 2016* (Planning Act) comprised of two core components:
 - social impact assessment (SIA)
 - community benefit agreement (CBA)
- require a proponent to conduct a social impact assessment and enter into a community benefit agreement with the local government (as a minimum) before lodging a development application
- provide for the Planning Regulation 2017 (Planning Regulation) to prescribe the uses subject to the community benefit system
- provide reserve powers to the Chief Executive of the Department administering the Planning Act to:
 - allow a development application to be lodged without a social impact assessment and/or community benefit agreement
 - impose conditions for social impacts
- provides transitional provisions to clarify how the Planning Act and subsequent Planning Regulation amendments will apply to a development application that has been made, but is not decided.

The provisions under the Act also amend the *City of Brisbane Act 2010*, the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Planning and Environment Court Act 2016*.

Why did we need these amendments?

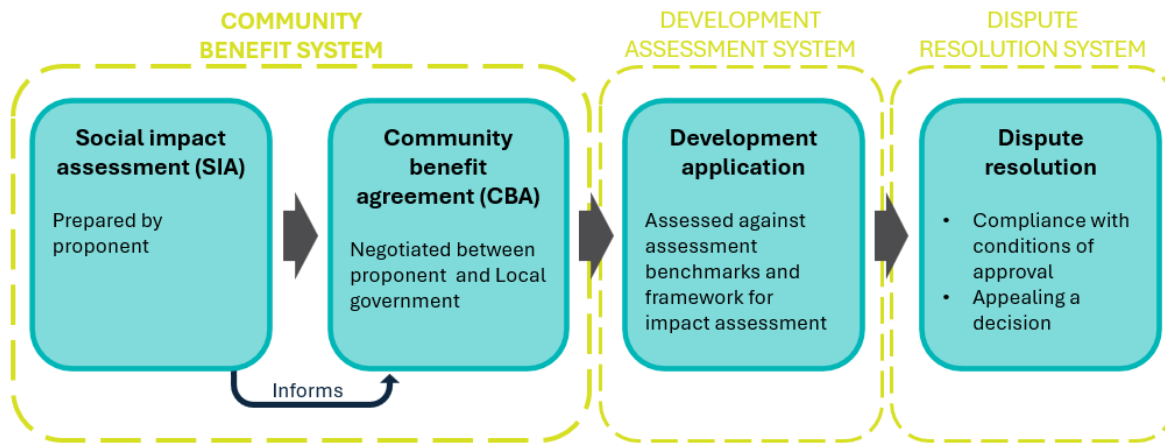
The introduction of the community benefit system requires proponents to engage with the community and local government (as a minimum) in advance of the formal development assessment process. The community benefit system also ensures that local governments, on behalf of the communities they represent, are empowered to make decisions and negotiate outcomes around community benefits prior to development assessment, providing a formal mechanism for positive legacy outcomes for affected local and regional host communities.

Frontloading the requirement for proponents to engage with communities before a development application is made provides certainty to all stakeholders on minimum mandatory requirements under the Queensland planning framework. In summary, the changes facilitate:

- community awareness of proposal subject to the community benefit system prior to development assessment
- consideration of the social impacts of that development on host communities
- a formal mechanism to undertake the social impact assessment process
- a flexible, but certain mechanism to negotiate and ensure delivery of community benefits
- a consistent development assessment approach for wind farm and relevant solar farm development across Queensland.

Process overview for the community benefit system

The figure below represents the new community benefit system and its relationship to the existing development assessment system and the dispute resolution system under the Queensland planning framework.



What are the key changes?

The below section provides an overview of the key details of the legislative amendments under the Amendment Act which are now in effect:

- **Planning Act –**
 - defines what social impact assessment and a community benefit agreement are, and how they will be implemented
 - requires a proponent to conduct a social impact assessment and enter into a community benefit agreement with the local government before lodging a development application
 - requires a social impact assessment and community benefit agreement to be submitted as part of a properly made development application
 - provides for the Planning Regulation to prescribe the uses which require social impact assessment and a community benefit agreement
 - grants the Chief Executive of the Department administering the Planning Act discretionary powers to:
 - allow a development application to be properly made without a social impact assessment and/or community benefit agreement in certain circumstances
 - impose conditions for social impacts
 - provides for a mediation process to support social impact assessment and community benefit agreement processes and negotiations

- provides transitional provisions to clarify how the Act amendments will apply to a development application that has been made, but not decided.
- **Other Acts –**
 - amends the *City of Brisbane Act 2010* and *Local Government Act 2009* to:
 - enable local governments to set fees and recover costs associated with social impact assessment and community benefit agreement, including mediation
 - require local government to keep registers about community benefit agreements and cost recovery
 - amends the *Planning and Environment Court Act 2016* to provide for declaratory proceedings to be made about certain aspects of a social impact assessment and community benefit agreement.

Supporting amendments of the Amendment Act

The Amendment Act has enabled amendments to the following instruments under the Queensland planning framework:

- **Planning Regulation –** key amendments include:
 - the ability to prescribe development requiring social impact assessment
 - a new process for social impact assessment
 - giving effect to a Social Impact Assessment Guideline
 - prescribes a new land use definition for a solar farm
 - updates the land use definition for a wind farm
 - makes solar farm development impact assessable
 - prescribes the State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA) as the assessment manager for relevant solar farms, and for both wind farms and solar farms in a Priority Development Area (PDA)
 - inserts a fee for solar farm development applications assessed by SARA
 - provides for wind and solar farm development applications made, but not decided on commencement
 - gives effect to version 3.3 of the State Development and Assessment Provisions
 - gives effect to version 3 of the Development Assessment Rules
 - provides requirements for the annual reporting of financial contributions made to and spent by a local government in a financial year relating to a community benefit
 - removes the potential for duplicate permissions to be required for wind and solar farm development under the Economic Development Act and Planning Act.

View the [Planning Regulation](#).

- **Development Assessment Rules (DA Rules) –** the amendments give effect to version 3 of the DA Rules. Key amendments include:
 - a process and relevant timeframes for development requiring social impact assessment
 - bespoke public notification requirements for specific prescribed development (relevant solar farms and wind farms) providing for contemporary and practical ways to ensure community awareness, given the scale and size of development sites
 - Inserting a new clause to Schedule 1, *Substantially different development*, to clarify its application to development requiring social impact assessment.

View the [DA Rules](#).

- **State Development Assessment Provisions (SDAP) –** the amendments give effect to SDAP version 3.3. Key amendments include:
 - an amended State code 23: Wind farm development
 - a new State code 26: for Solar farm development.

View a copy of State code 23, State code 26, and the accompanying guidelines are available online at <https://www.planning.qld.gov.au/planning-framework/state-assessment-and-referral-agency/state-development-assessment-provisions-sdap>

- **Social Impact Assessment (SIA) Guideline** – the amendments give effect to a SIA Guideline version 2, which is a new statutory instrument under the Planning Act.

View the [SIA Guideline](#).

Further information

For further information please contact the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning via renewablesplanning@dsdilgp.qld.gov.au.

More information regarding the community benefit system can be found online at: [Community Benefit System](#).