

State code 9: Great Barrier Reef wetland protection areas

Purpose statement

The purpose of this code is to ensure that development involving **high impact earthworks** in a **wetland protection area**:

1. is located outside of a **wetland**;
2. does not have an unacceptable impact on **wetland environmental values**;
3. is designed and located to avoid impacts or, where the **matters of state environmental significance** cannot be reasonably avoided, impacts are reasonably minimised and mitigated;
4. does not result in a **significant residual impact** on a **matter of state environmental significance** unless the **significant residual impact** is acceptable, and an **offset** is provided.

Using this code

Development within a **wetland** in a **wetland protection area** cannot comply with this code.

The assessment benchmarks for this code comprise:

- a purpose statement which identifies the overall intent of the code;
- performance outcomes which set benchmarks to achieve the purpose statement of the code;
- acceptable outcomes which identify one way to achieve the relevant performance outcome.

Development complies with the code where:

- it complies with the acceptable outcomes for the performance outcome; or
- it complies with all the performance outcomes, where not complying with the acceptable outcomes; or
- development does not meet relevant performance outcome(s) and SARA determines, on balance, that the development complies with the purpose statement.

This code also includes the glossary of terms for definitions relevant to this code and reference documents; including the guideline **State Development Assessment Provisions State Code 9: Great Barrier Reef wetland protection areas**, which provides direction on how to address this code

Performance outcomes and acceptable outcomes

Table 9.1: Development with an acceptable outcome

Performance outcomes	Acceptable outcomes
General	
PO1 Development maintains or improves wetland environmental values and native vegetation within the wetland and the buffer .	AO1.1 The buffer surrounding a wetland has a minimum width of: 1. 200 metres, where the wetland is located outside a prescribed urban area; or 2. 50 metres, where the wetland is located within a prescribed urban area.

Table 9.2: Development with no acceptable outcome

Performance outcomes
General
PO2 Development is not carried out in a wetland in a wetland protection area .
Hydrology
PO3 Development maintains or improves the existing surface and groundwater hydrology in a wetland protection area .
Water quality
PO4 Development does not unacceptably impact the water quality of the wetland in the wetland protection area and in the wetland buffer .
PO5 Development does not use the wetland in the wetland protection area for stormwater treatment.

Performance outcomes
Land degradation
PO6 Development is located and designed to protect the wetland protection area from land degradation .
Fauna management
PO7 Development protects wetland fauna from any impacts associated with noise, light or visual disturbance .
PO8 Development protects the movement of wetland fauna within and through a wetland protection area .
PO9 Development does not introduce pest plants, pest animals or exotic species into a wetland and its buffer .
Matters of state environmental significance
PO10 Development outside the wetland is designed and sited to: 1. avoid impacts on matters of state environmental significance; or 2. minimise and mitigate impacts on matters of state environmental significance after demonstrating avoidance is not reasonably possible; and 3. provide an offset if, after demonstrating all reasonable avoidance, minimisation and mitigation measures are undertaken, the development results in an acceptable significant residual impact on a matter of state environmental significance. Statutory note: For Brisbane core port land, an offset may only be applied to development on land identified as E1 Conservation/Buffer, E2 Open Space or Buffer/Investigation in the Brisbane Port LUP precinct plan.

Reference documents

Department of Environment and Science, [State Development Assessment Provisions Guideline: State code 9: Wetland protection areas](#)

Department of Environment and Heritage Protection 2016, [Environmental offsets framework documents](#)

Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning 2017, [State Planning Policy](#)

Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning 2014, [Significant Residual Impact Guideline](#)

Glossary of terms

Buffer means the transition zone between a **wetland** and any surrounding land use that supports the values and processes of the **wetland** and protects it from external threats.

Exotic species means all non-native and non-endemic flora and fauna, including domestic pets.

High impact earthworks see schedule 24 of the Planning Regulation 2017.

Note: **High impact earthworks** means operational work that:

1. changes the form of land, or involves placing a structure on land, in a way that diverts water to or from a **wetland** in a **wetland protection area**; and
2. involves excavating or filling:
 - a. if the work is carried out in the **wetland** or within 200 metres of the **wetland** – more than 100m³; or
 - b. otherwise – more than 1000m³.

However, **high impact earthworks** does not include operational work that is:

1. excavating to establish underground infrastructure, other than infrastructure for drainage or stormwater flows, if the excavated land is to be restored, as far as practicable, to its original contours after the infrastructure is established; or
2. carried out for the maintenance of dams, fences, helipads, roads, stockyards, vehicular tracks or watering facilities; or
3. carried out for any of the following in relation to government supported transport infrastructure:
 - a. the maintenance, servicing or repair of the infrastructure
 - b. the replacement, rehabilitation, removal or alteration of the infrastructure
 - c. the taking of preventative or remedial action
 - d. the maintenance of systems and services associated with the infrastructure; or
4. carried out:
 - a. in tidal water; or
 - b. for a forest practice; or
 - c. to reinstate earthworks destroyed by floods or landslides; or
 - d. to restore or conserve the ecological processes or hydrological functions of a **wetland protection area**; or
 - e. to laser level land without change to the previously levelled contours or slopes; or
 - f. for government supported transport infrastructure for which the funding and construction arrangements were approved by the state or Commonwealth before 31 October 2011; or
5. carried out under:
 - a. the *Electricity Act 1994*, section 101 or 112A; or

- b. the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990, section 53, 68 or 69; or
- c. a geothermal exploration permit under the *Geothermal Energy Act 2010*; or
- 6. assessable development under schedule 12 [Operational work that is assessable development] if the work is:
 - a. carried out completely or partly in a declared fish habitat area; or
 - b. constructing or raising waterway barrier works.

Land degradation means:

- 1. soil erosion; or
- 2. rising water tables; or
- 3. the expression of salinity; or
- 4. stream bank instability; or
- 5. a process that results in declining water quality, including acid sulfate soil disturbance.

Map of Great Barrier Reef wetland protection areas under the Environmental Protection Regulation 2019, schedule 19, part 2.

Map of Queensland wetland environmental values under the Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019, schedule 2.

Matters of state environmental significance see schedule 2 of the Environmental Offsets Regulation 2014.

Note: **Matters of state environmental significance** are **prescribed environmental matters** under the Environmental Offsets Regulation 2014 that require an **offset** when a prescribed activity will have a **significant residual impact** on the matter. A **matter of state environmental significance** is any of the following matters:

- 1. regional ecosystems under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* that:
 - a. are endangered regional ecosystems
 - b. are of concern regional ecosystems
 - c. intersect with a wetland shown on the vegetation management wetlands map
 - d. contain areas of essential habitat shown on the essential habitat map for an animal that is endangered wildlife or vulnerable wildlife or a plant that is endangered wildlife or vulnerable wildlife
 - e. are located within the defined distances stated in the Environmental Offsets Policy 2014 from the defining banks of a relevant watercourse or drainage feature as shown on the vegetation management watercourse and drainage feature map
 - f. are areas of land determined to be required for ecosystem functioning ('connectivity areas')
- 2. wetlands of high ecological significance shown on the map of Queensland wetland environmental values under the Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019
- 3. wetlands and watercourses in high ecological value waters as defined in schedule 2 of the Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019
- 4. designated precincts in strategic environmental areas under the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014
- 5. threatened wildlife (plants and animals) under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and special least concern animals under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006
- 6. protected areas under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, excluding coordinated conservation areas
- 7. highly protected zones of state marine parks under the *Marine Parks Act 2004*
- 8. declared fish habitat areas under the *Fisheries Act 1994*
- 9. waterways that provide for fish passage under the *Fisheries Act 1994* if the construction, installation or modification of waterway barrier works carried out under an authority will limit the passage of fish along the waterway
- 10. marine plants under the *Fisheries Act 1994*; or
- 11. legally secured offset areas.

Offset means environmental offset under the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*.

Note: Environmental **offset** means an activity undertaken to counterbalance a **significant residual impact** of a prescribed activity on a **prescribed environmental matter**, delivered in accordance with the Environmental offsets framework. The **prescribed environmental matters** assessed under the State Development Assessment Provisions are **matters of state environmental significance**.

Prescribed environmental matter see the Environmental Offsets Regulation 2014.

Note: A **prescribed environmental matter** is any species, ecosystem or other similar matter protected under Queensland legislation for which an **offset** may be provided. A **prescribed environmental matter** may be a matter of national, state or local environmental significance, however, assessment criteria in the State Development Assessment Provisions only relate to **matters of state environmental significance**. Each of the **prescribed environmental matters** are listed under the Environmental Offsets Regulation 2014.

Prescribed urban area

Note: **Prescribed urban area** for clearing native **vegetation** means:

- 1. an area identified in a gazette notice by the chief executive as an urban area; or
- 2. if no gazette notice has been published – an area identified as an area intended specifically for urban purposes, including future urban purposes (but not rural residential or future rural residential purposes) on a map in a planning scheme that:
 - a. identifies the areas using cadastral boundaries;
 - b. is used exclusively or primarily to assess development applications.

Significant residual impact see the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*.

Note: **Significant residual impact** is an impact, whether direct or indirect, of a prescribed activity on all or part of a **prescribed environmental matter** that:

1. remains, or will or is likely to remain, (whether temporarily or permanently) despite on-site mitigation measures for the prescribed activity
 2. is, or will or is likely to be, significant.
- Guidance for determining if a prescribed activity will have a **significant residual impact** on a **matter of state environmental significance** is provided in the Significant Residual Impact Guideline, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, 2014.

Vegetation includes all native vegetation, including:

1. **vegetation** as defined under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*; or
2. grass and non-woody herbage; or
3. a plant within a grassland regional ecosystem prescribed under a regulation; or
4. a mangrove.

Visual disturbance means the disturbance of fauna by visual intrusions that could lead to a loss or diminishment of key life cycle functions or changes to usage patterns of a **wetland** by mobile fauna (such as birds). This term include disturbance by people, pets or vehicles.

Note: Loss or diminishment of key life cycle may include, but is not limited to, nest abandonment or modified feeding patterns.

Wetland means an area shown as a wetland on the map of Great Barrier Reef wetland protection areas under the Environmental Protection Regulation 2019, schedule 19, part 2.

Wetland environmental values means **environmental values** for wetlands under section 7 of the Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019. For section 9(b) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*, the qualities of a wetland that support and maintain the following are environmental values:

1. the health and biodiversity of the wetland's ecosystems;
2. the wetland's natural state and biological integrity;
3. the presence of distinct or unique features, plants or animals and their habitats, including threatened wildlife, near threatened wildlife and rare wildlife under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*;
4. the wetland's natural hydrological cycle;
5. the natural interaction of the wetland with other ecosystems, including other wetlands.

Wetland fauna means species that have adapted to living in **wetlands** and are dependent on them for:

1. all of their life cycle; or
2. a major part of their life; or
3. critical stages of their life cycle, such as breeding and larval development.

Wetland protection area means an area shown as a **wetland** protection area on the **map of Great Barrier Reef wetland protection areas** as defined within the Environmental Protection Regulation 2019.