



What are the key changes to cost recovery for environmental assessments under the EPBC Act?

On 5 September 2016, the Australian Government released a revised Cost Recovery Implementation Statement. This statement provides information on how the Department implements cost recovery for environmental assessments under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Changes to cost recovery arrangements include reduced fees for referral, assessment and post approval activities.

The revised arrangements commenced on 1 October 2016, following the making of Regulations by the Governor-General.

Cost recovery

The Australian Government undertakes environmental assessments to provide for the protection of matters of national environmental significance. Cost recovery for environmental assessments under the EPBC Act commenced on 1 October 2014.

The revised Cost Recovery Implementation Statement reflects changes made by the Australian Government following a review of cost recovery. This review included consideration of efficiencies to departmental processes resulting in reduced fees for a number of activities.

Key changes include:

- reductions in base and set fees for referral, assessment, post approval and contingent activities
- fees for additional contingent activities
- updates to complexity fees and methods for determining complexity
- updates to the proportions of base and complexity fees to be paid at each fee stage
- updates to the definitions of some assessment stages and for contingent fees for additional information requests

- improvements to administrative processes
- transitional arrangements for projects currently under assessment to move onto the new fee structures.

Transitional arrangements

There are transitional arrangements for cost-recovered referrals and assessments under the EPBC Act.

The Department has contacted applicants affected by these changes to inform them of transitional arrangements.

New fees will apply to all cost recovered activities, including upcoming stages of existing assessments that commence from 1 October 2016. Applicants with an active assessment will be provided with an updated fee schedule outlining fees for the remaining stages of their assessment under the new fee arrangements. An active assessment is a project where a fee schedule has been provided and one or more cost recovery stages are yet to be paid. The revised fees will be payable at the relevant stages of the assessment.

In the majority of cases, total project fees will reduce under the new arrangements. In the few circumstances where total remaining fees increase under the new arrangements, the Department will accept payment of total remaining fees consistent with existing fee schedules.

Future changes

Further changes to cost recovery arrangements are planned for 2017, to account for ongoing streamlining of departmental processes. The Department intends to consult on these changes.

More information

The 2016 Cost Recovery Implementation Statement is available on the Department's website:

www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/cost-recovery-cris

For more information about cost recovery for environmental assessments under the EPBC Act, please visit:

www.environment.gov.au/epbc/cost-recovery

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