

Vegetation Management (Regional Ecosystems) Amendment Regulation 2021

Explanatory notes for SL 2021 No. 121

made under the

Vegetation Management Act 1999

General Outline

Short title

Vegetation Management (Regional Ecosystems) Amendment Regulation 2021.

Authorising law

Sections 22LA, 22LB, 22LC and 72 of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*

Policy objectives and the reasons for them

The *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, was established to regulate the clearing of native vegetation in Queensland.

The objective of the *Vegetation Management (Regional Ecosystems) Amendment Regulation 2021* (the amendment regulation) is to give effect to updated regional ecosystems and corresponding regional ecosystem conservation classes which are declared within the *Vegetation Management Regulation 2012*.

The *Vegetation Management Regulation 2012* supports the implementation of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* by (amongst other things) declaring the classification of regional ecosystems.

The list of declared regional ecosystems and conservation classes in the *Vegetation Management Regulation 2012* has not been updated since 2019.

The Queensland Herbarium maps the regional ecosystems that occur in Queensland. This mapping process results in regular reviews to regional ecosystem descriptions and status and in new versions of the Queensland Herbarium's regional ecosystem map. In March 2021, the Queensland Herbarium finalised version 12 of its regional ecosystem mapping and this map along with the updated list of regional ecosystems and conservation classes, ensures that the vegetation mapping being used under the vegetation management framework represents the best available science.

The *Vegetation Management Regulation 2012* requires amendment to declare an update to the regional ecosystems and conservation classes to align with the best available science to improve the vegetation management mapping.

Achievement of policy objectives

Schedules 1 to 3 of the *Vegetation Management Regulation 2012* will be amended to provide for:

- one regional ecosystem that is changing to a higher conservation class schedule (e.g. from least concern to of concern), and
- 10 regional ecosystems that are changing to a lower conservation class schedule (e.g. from of concern to least concern),
- two new regional ecosystems being added to the schedules, and
- 13 regional ecosystems being removed from the schedules.

These amendments are a legislative requirement of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* when updating regional ecosystem classes to provide a level of regulatory rigour and transparency. As such, this is the most reasonable and appropriate way to achieve the policy objectives to ensure these mechanisms are based on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge and understanding.

Consistency with policy objectives of authorising law

The amendment regulation is consistent with the objectives of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, to regulate the clearing of vegetation in a way that prevents the loss of biodiversity.

The update to the regional ecosystems and corresponding conservation classes will ensure the regulation of vegetation clearing is based on best available science and prevents the loss of biodiversity.

Inconsistency with policy objectives of other legislation

The amendment regulation is not inconsistent with the policy objectives of other legislation.

Benefits and costs of implementation

The benefits of the proposed amendments are to ensure the best available science is being used for the mapping associated with the vegetation management framework.

The cost of implementation involves stakeholders investigating the changes to the status of regional ecosystems in certain areas of the state associated with updated regional ecosystem mapping.

This is likely to increase the number of landholders checking the regulated vegetation mapping on their properties due to the announced changes being sent out via an email alert. This will generate an increase in the number of online vegetation map requests that the government mapping system receives. This is also likely to increase the number of landholder enquires that the Department of Resources VegHub (vegetation enquiry service) receives.

The additional support costs associated with these elements will be funded through the realignment of existing resources.

Consistency with fundamental legislative principles

The amendments are consistent with the fundamental legislative principles.

Consultation

The amendments will have potential impacts to stakeholders due to the changes to regional ecosystem statuses in certain areas of the state associated with updated regional ecosystem mapping.

The potential impacts to stakeholders and their concerns have been managed by the Department of Resources through an email alert to vegetation mapping users who have previously downloaded maps to communicate that there may be changes to vegetation mapping on their property.

Amendments to the regional ecosystem and conservation classes is a scientific update to ensure the best available science is being used for the mapping associated with the vegetation management framework.

The list of regional ecosystems associated with the version 12 mapping was developed from a number of Bioregional Technical Review workshops held by the Queensland Herbarium and comprised of Government and non-Government experts during 2020. The experts categorised the regional ecosystems according to the criteria for endangered, of concern and least concern regional ecosystems specified in the Act.

In accordance with the *Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation* (the guidelines) the Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) was consulted regarding whether further regulatory impact analysis was required.

OBPR advised that the proposed amendments are considered to be machinery in nature and that no further assessment is required under the guidelines.