



# Preparing an initial advice statement

Guideline

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# Introduction

This guideline explains the purpose and contents of an initial advice statement (IAS). The Coordinator-General uses an IAS to assess whether a project should be declared a 'significant project' under section 26(1) of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (Qld) (SDPWO Act). A project may be declared a 'significant project':

- for which an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required (under section 26(1)(a)), or
- for which an EIS is **not** required (under section 26(1)(b)).<sup>1</sup>

## What is a significant project?

A significant project is typically characterised by one or more of the following:

- complex approval requirements, including local, state and Australian Government involvement
- a high level of capital investment (typically more than \$100 million, although there is no critical value threshold)
- potential effects on infrastructure and/or the environment
- provision of substantial employment opportunities
- strategic significance to a locality, region or the state.

In assessing whether a project should be declared a significant project, the Coordinator-General will consider one or more of the following matters:

- detailed information about the project given by the proponent in an IAS
- relevant planning schemes or policy frameworks, including those of a relevant local government or of the state or the Commonwealth
- the project's potential effect on relevant infrastructure
- the employment opportunities that will be provided by the project
- the potential environmental effects of the project
- the complexity of local, state and Commonwealth requirements
- the level of investment necessary for the proponent to carry out the project
- the strategic significance of the project to the locality, region or the state.

The Coordinator-General's decision to declare a project to be a significant project does not imply Queensland Government endorsement of the project. Rather, it means that the project requires a comprehensive impact assessment process involving whole-of-government coordination.

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<sup>1</sup> For a project to be declared as a 'significant project for which an EIS is **not** required (under section 26(b) of the SDPWO Act), the Coordinator-General must be satisfied that suitable evaluation will occur in accordance with other legislative or regulatory requirements.

# What is an IAS?

Preparing an IAS is the first step in applying to have a project assessed for declaration as a 'significant project' and, therefore, potentially the first step in an EIS process coordinated and overseen by the Coordinator-General. An IAS is a public document prepared by a proponent (or a consultant on behalf of a proponent) that describes the proposed development.

An IAS is a scoping document that provides information to:

- assist the Coordinator-General to make a decision on 'significant project' declaration
- enable stakeholders to determine the nature and level of their interest in the proposal
- assist the Coordinator-General to prepare a draft terms of reference (TOR) for an EIS for the proposed project, if declared.

Generally, an IAS should provide an outline of the project proponent, the proposed development and the potential effects of the project on the existing environment. The IAS may also provide some early indication of possible mitigation measures proposed by the proponent to avoid, minimise, manage or offset any potential adverse impacts of the project, but detailed discussion of such measures should be deferred to the EIS.

In addition, an IAS should identify the expected statutory approvals, for each key project component, that will be required for the proposal to proceed. For example, the IAS should identify whether the proposal includes an action that is likely to:

- require the approval of the Australian Government minister administering the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)
- be an 'environmentally relevant activity' (ERA) under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

# How will an IAS be used?

Information about a project, given by a proponent in an IAS, is one of the matters that the Coordinator-General can consider in deciding whether to declare a proposed project to be a 'significant project'. In practice, the IAS is the key document that contains all the relevant information for the Coordinator-General to consider against the other criteria cited under section 27 of the SDPWO Act.

An IAS is typically the key, or only, reference document on a proposal that is available to advisory agencies and other stakeholders until an EIS has been prepared and publicly released.

# What should an IAS contain?

An IAS should demonstrate that the proponent has a sound knowledge of the nature, scope and potential consequences of the proposal.

## Contents

An IAS should contain:

- a general description of:
  - the proponent
  - the proposal, including:
    - maps depicting the location of key project elements
    - the GIS data requirement in ESRI shapefile format (Datum: GDA94) for the project (to allow the location and area of the project to be shown on a map of Coordinator-General's projects)
  - the existing environment (natural, social and economic) in which the project is to be conducted
  - potential positive and negative impacts of the project
  - any early proposals for environmental management and mitigation measures
  - advisory agency, community and stakeholder consultation undertaken to date or proposed
- an itemised list of the principal statutory approvals required for the project
- if applying for declaration as a significant project for which an EIS is not required (under section 26(1)(b) of the SDPWO Act), reasons why an EIS is not required and/or other mechanisms by which the environmental impacts of the project have been or will be assessed.

## Style

An IAS is not an in-depth analysis of a proposal and as such the text should be in summary form, avoiding lengthy and overly technical discussion. For example, if referring to the likelihood for local soils to give rise to acid sulfate conditions, it would not be necessary to include a detailed explanation of the acid sulfate soils phenomenon (however, such an explanation may be relevant in an EIS).

Although the style of presentation of the IAS is determined by the proponent, the format and layout should be relatively simple to avoid it becoming a highly technical and expensive publication. The value of the IAS is in the content rather than the style of presentation—a principle that applies to all documents associated with the EIS process. Since the IAS will be available to all stakeholders, including members of the public, the emphasis should be on producing a clear, concise and easy-to-read document that provides sufficient information for the reader to determine their level of interest in the proposal. Using diagrams, photographs and maps can eliminate the need for some text.

The total length of the IAS will vary according to the nature of the proposal and the receiving environment. As a guide, a large and complex proposal can be effectively presented in 30 to 40 pages.

An electronic, read-only copy of the document should also be prepared for publication on the departmental and proponent's project website, in Portable Document Format (PDF).

## Structure

A guide to the generic contents of an IAS is provided as Appendix 1 to this guideline.

The general topics that the IAS should include (depending on the nature, location and scale of the proposal) are shown below.

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
2. The proponent
3. The nature of the proposal
4. The location of key project elements
5. Description of the existing environment
6. Potential impacts of the project
7. Environmental management and impact mitigation
8. Approvals required for the project
9. Costs and benefits summary
10. Community and stakeholder consultation
11. References and data sources
12. Glossary, acronyms and abbreviations

# Applying for significant project declaration

The proponent is required to apply to the Coordinator-General, in writing, for declaration of the proposal as a significant project.

With the letter of application, the proponent is to submit the IAS and a signed and dated 'information declaration acknowledgment' form, which summarises the responsibilities of the Coordinator-General and the proponent during the EIS process.

The proponent is also required to pay the relevant fee up-front before the Coordinator-General can assess the application for significant project declaration.

## How much does it cost to apply?

A guideline on the fee structure and cost recovery provisions is available from: [www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/fees-guideline.html](http://www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/fees-guideline.html)

All fees must be paid prior to the respective stage of the EIS process. The application fee must be paid at the same time as lodging the application for 'significant project' declaration and the IAS. In 2012, that application fee is \$28 097.

All fees are adjusted on 1 January each year by the Brisbane Consumer Price Index and the new table of fees published on the website provided above.

## Checklist

When submitting an IAS the proponent should ensure:

- application letter is signed and dated
- IAS contents are complete and accurate
- itemised list of the principal statutory approvals required for the project is provided
- fee has been paid.

## More information

For more information on 'significant projects', refer to [www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/significant-project-declaration.html](http://www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/significant-project-declaration.html)

## Appendix 1. Guide to generic IAS contents

No.	Section	Additional explanation (where appropriate, relevant and important to the project - use diagrams, photographs, maps, figures, table etc.)
–	<b>Executive summary</b>	Summarise key points including: purpose and scope of the IAS; identity the proponent; nature, scope and location of the proposal; key environmental issues; key approvals; and key reasons for seeking significant project declaration (with respect to section 27 SDPWO Act).
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	
1.1	Background	Summarise the need for the project and the key reasons for seeking significant project declaration.
1.2	Purpose and scope of the IAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support an application to the Coordinator-General to declare a ‘significant project for which an EIS is required’ under the SDPWO Act.</li> <li>• inform preparation of terms of reference for an EIS.</li> <li>• inform stakeholders and the general public.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>The proponent</b>	Describe: relevant history, partnerships, corporate/joint-venture arrangements, relevant project experience, principal consultants, contact details, environmental record of the proponent.
<b>3</b>	<b>The nature of the proposal</b>	
3.1	Scope of the project	Describe the nature, scope and scale of the proposal (e.g. transport infrastructure, port expansion, mine, water supply pipeline, manufacturing facility).
3.2	Land use	Summarise significant existing and intended land use of the project area.
3.3	Project need, justification and alternatives considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project objectives</li> <li>• summarise project feasibility studies</li> <li>• consideration of the objectives and priorities of government policies and strategies</li> <li>• consideration of preferred option, alternatives to the project, including alternative sites, alternative activities, and the ‘do nothing’ option</li> <li>• including summary of key strategic benefits, e.g. employment, regional/state investment, industry development, export potential etc.</li> </ul>
3.4	Components, developments, activities and infrastructure that constitute the project to be declared significant	Key project components/infrastructure that are sought to be declared, developments, infrastructure, activities on/off site.

3.5	External infrastructure requirements	Key project components/infrastructure that are ancillary to the declared project, developments, infrastructure, activities on/off site, e.g. power, gas, fuel and water supply; rail, road and port services (air and sea) etc.
3.6	Timeframes for the project	Staging of the commencement and completion of each project stage, including the design, procurement, early works, construction, commissioning, operation and (if relevant) rehabilitation.
3.7	Construction and operational processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including key construction and operational requirements (e.g. access to water supply and disposal, gas, rail, port (air/sea), road network, materials (quarry), waste management, stormwater etc.)</li> <li>• rehabilitation intentions.</li> </ul>
3.8	Workforce requirements during construction and operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including direct construction and operational employment, worker accommodation and transport proposals</li> <li>• the employment opportunities that will be provided by the project.</li> </ul>
3.9	Economic indicators	Including capital cost, revenue, exports, contribution to local/state/national economies, indirect employment generation, synergies with other businesses and/or industries.
3.10	Financing requirements and implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimate the value (Australian dollars) that would be invested in the development and operation of the project, including details of key project stages or components where these will be funded separately</li> <li>• indicate in broad terms the capacity of the proponent to fund the project or other project funding proposals. The proponent's history of financing similar scale developments is relevant.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>The location of key project elements</b>	
4.1	Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address, lot/plan, project area(s), major and secondary urban centres, access, topography and any key natural features in the vicinity of the project.</li> <li>• The GIS data requirement in ESRI shapefile format (Datum: GDA94) for the project (to allow the location and area of the project to be shown on a map of Coordinator-General's projects).</li> </ul>
4.2	Tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise key existing and intended tenures for key land parcels directly impacted by the project area</li> <li>• describe the local government planning scheme and regional plan designations.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Description of the existing environment</b>	
5.1	Natural environment	Describe a brief description of the existing local/regional natural environment of relevance to project.
5.1.1	Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topography, land use, soils and geology—including landscape, visual amenity, subsidence</li> <li>• list any nature conservation reserves (e.g. national parks) or areas protected by international treaties (e.g. RAMSAR wetlands) potentially impacted by the project.</li> </ul>

5.1.2	Water	Describe key water features (surface, ground and marine) potentially impacted by the project. Describe the risk of all project construction and operations locations to impact by flood events. (Mandatory requirement following recommendation 6.2 of the <i>Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry Final Report</i> (16 March 2012)).
5.1.3	Air	List each air shed impacted by the project. Cover air quality, climate and greenhouse gas emissions.
5.1.4	Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrestrial, aquatic, wetlands, marine and coastal processes</li> <li>• protected areas, protected communities, regional ecosystems/endangered ecological communities/wetlands, environmentally sensitive areas etc.</li> </ul>
5.1.5	Flora and fauna	Terrestrial/aquatic/marine/migratory, protected species, pest plants and animals. List the presence of endangered, rare or vulnerable plant and/or animal species on lands directly impacted by the project.
5.2	Social and economic environment	Describe local/regional, urban/rural, residential/commercial/industrial/service character. Refer to <a href="http://www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/social-impact-assessment.html">www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/social-impact-assessment.html</a>
5.2.1	Economic and demographic characterisation	
5.2.2	Accommodation and housing	Address the capacity of existing accommodation to house the project's construction and operational workforces.
5.2.3	Social and recreational services	
5.2.4	Cultural heritage (Indigenous and non-indigenous)	
5.3	Built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe local/regional existing infrastructure and major developments. Identify potential existing conflicts and/or capacity constraints existing or potentially created by the project.</li> <li>• identify other local/regional declared significant projects</li> <li>• identify other relevant local/regional major (non-declared) infrastructure and private sector projects (proposed, or undergoing approval or construction/operation)</li> <li>• explain and demonstrate (with figures where appropriate) any potential conflict between project proposal and existing/proposed major infrastructure and development projects.</li> </ul>
5.3.1	Infrastructure	
5.3.2	Traffic and transport	Describe the key transport networks of relevance to the project, considering both resource inputs and product outputs of the project.

5.3.3	Community amenities	Identify key social amenities and service affected or proposed for the project.
5.4	Land use and tenures	Ownership and tenancy of project area parcels.
5.4.1	Key local and regional land uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight significant features, e.g. coastal management district/s, mining/petroleum, protected areas, World Heritage Areas (including adjacent proximity), local government area/s, state development area(s), Commonwealth/defence lands etc.</li> <li>• existing and any relevant historical land use/s.</li> </ul>
5.4.2	Key local and regional land tenures	Including key freehold, leasehold, easements, reserves, mining/petroleum—provide lot/plan, local government planning scheme and regional plan designations of relevance to the project.
5.4.3	Native title	List registered native title claimants over lands impacted by the project and provide the current status of any claims that have not been finalised.
5.5	Planning instruments, government policies	Relevant planning schemes or policy frameworks, including those of a relevant local government or of the State or the Commonwealth.
<b>6</b>	<b>Potential impacts of the project</b>	Outline of key potential environmental impacts during (where applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• construction/commissioning</li> <li>• operation</li> <li>• closure/decommissioning/final rehabilitation.</li> </ul>
6.1	Natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correlated to 4.1 above.</li> </ul>
6.2	Amenity—including noise, air quality, vibration, lighting, urban design and visual aesthetics	Identify potential sensitive receptors and indicate any matters where goals described in relevant State environmental protection policies might be exceeded during the construction and/or operation of the project.
6.3	Social environment—beneficial and adverse potential impacts	See 5.2 above. Refer to <a href="http://www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/social-impact-assessment.html">www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/social-impact-assessment.html</a>
6.4	Economic effects	See 5.2 above, beneficial and adverse potential economic impacts—local, state and national levels.
6.5	Built environment	See 5.3 above, including infrastructure, traffic and transport, community amenities.
6.6	MNES under the EPBC Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment on likelihood of impact of any aspect of the project on matters of national environmental significance and describe the current status of any existing or intended referral of the project to the Australian Government under the EPBC Act.</li> <li>• Refer to <a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/">www.environment.gov.au/</a> for more information on the procedures regarding the EPBC Act.</li> </ul>

<b>7</b>	<b>Environmental management and mitigation measures</b>	Summarise current proposals for key management and mitigation measures.
7.1	Natural environment	Outline key environmental management and mitigation measures during (where applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• construction/commissioning</li> <li>• operation</li> <li>• closure/decommissioning/final rehabilitation</li> </ul> Including vegetation and biodiversity offsets; specify measures for MNES.
7.2	Built environment	Including infrastructure, traffic and transport, community amenities.
7.3	Social impact management plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline key issues for social impact management plan (SIMP)</li> <li>• refer to <a href="http://www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/social-impact-assessment.html">www.deedi.qld.gov.au/cg/social-impact-assessment.html</a></li> </ul>
7.4	Cultural heritage management plan (Indigenous)	Outline key issues.
7.5	Non-Indigenous cultural heritage management	Outline key issues.
7.6	Greenhouse gas management plan	Outline key issues
7.7	Waste management	Including Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) waste hierarchy overburden, geological spoil and tailings management (if applicable).
7.8	Hazard and risk, and health and safety	Outline key issues.
7.9	Environmental management	Summarise health, safety and environmental management systems, e.g. ISO 14001, EP Act and other construction and operational environmental management plans etc.

8	<b>Approvals required for the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Itemise for each key project component all key State, Commonwealth and local government agency approvals.</li> <li>• Tabulate the principal required statutory approvals by classifying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– legislation</li> <li>– administering authority</li> <li>– approval trigger</li> <li>– approval</li> <li>– relevance to the project.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Specify <i>Sustainable Planning Act 2009</i> (SPA) and Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS) and non-SPA/IDAS approvals.</li> <li>• Specify which approvals are intended to be coordinated for the significant project EIS declaration and which will be dealt with outside of the Part 4 process of the SDPWO Act.</li> </ul>
	<i>If applying for declaration as a significant project for which an EIS is <b>not</b> required under section 26(1)(b) of the SDPWO Act:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline the alternative process for environmental assessment and development approval for the proposal</li> <li>• indicate the legislation and agency or decision-maker that will require the assessment.</li> </ul>
9	<b>Costs and benefits summary</b>	
9.1	Local, state and national economies	
9.2	Natural and social environments	
10	<b>Community and stakeholder consultation</b>	Describe consultations undertaken to date and intentions for advisory agency and community consultation and engagement.
11	<b>References and data sources</b>	
12	<b>Glossary, acronyms and abbreviations</b>	

