

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Strategic assessments

Rock art (C.Zwick)



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What is strategic assessment?

- Strategic assessment is the practice of environmental impact assessment at the planning stage
- It involves [in equal share] planning and environmental impact assessment disciplines
- It cannot be done in isolation of one or the other





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Why strategic assessment?

- Holistic approach to land use conflicts
- Explicitly address ESD principles
- Explicitly account for cumulative impacts
- Build on and take advantage of well understood EIA processes to ensure transparency and accountability





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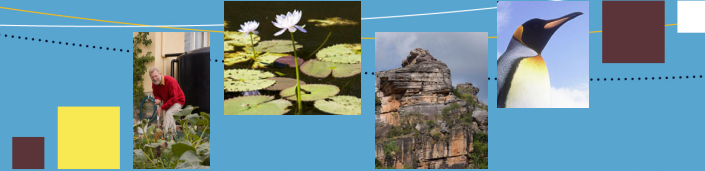
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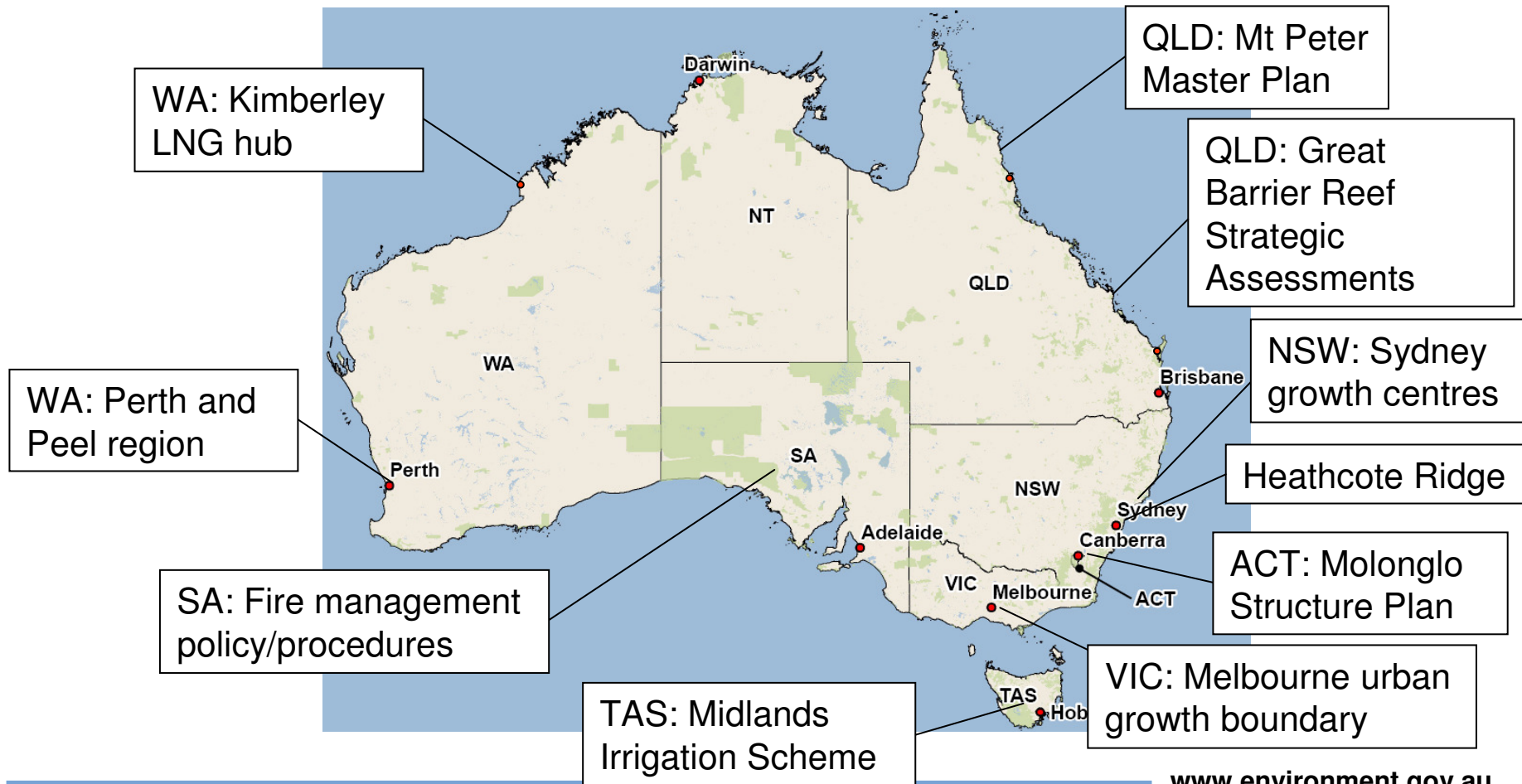
Strategic assessment under EPBC Act

- Minister can undertake a public assessment of a Policy, Plan or Program and approve actions and classes of actions
- PPP sets out commitments to avoid, mitigate and offset impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance
- If approved, individual developments will not need approval under the EPBC Act





Strategic assessments underway





Lessons learned so far....

- Engage early and engage often
- Involve planning agencies
- Landscape scale/risk based approach
- Outcomes based and process driven (rather than data/information driven)
- Auditing/reporting/adaptive management processes critical to delivering outcomes over longer term





What are the ingredients for success?

- Timing
- Imperative
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Honesty
- Expectations
- Outcome Focus
- Management





Regional Sustainability Plans

- *Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities: A sustainable population strategy for Australia*
- Objective: Ensure future changes in Australia's population are compatible with the sustainability of our economy, communities and the environment
- Economic prosperity, liveable communities and environmental sustainability – are the foundations of the nation's wellbeing
- Complex interactions between these elements





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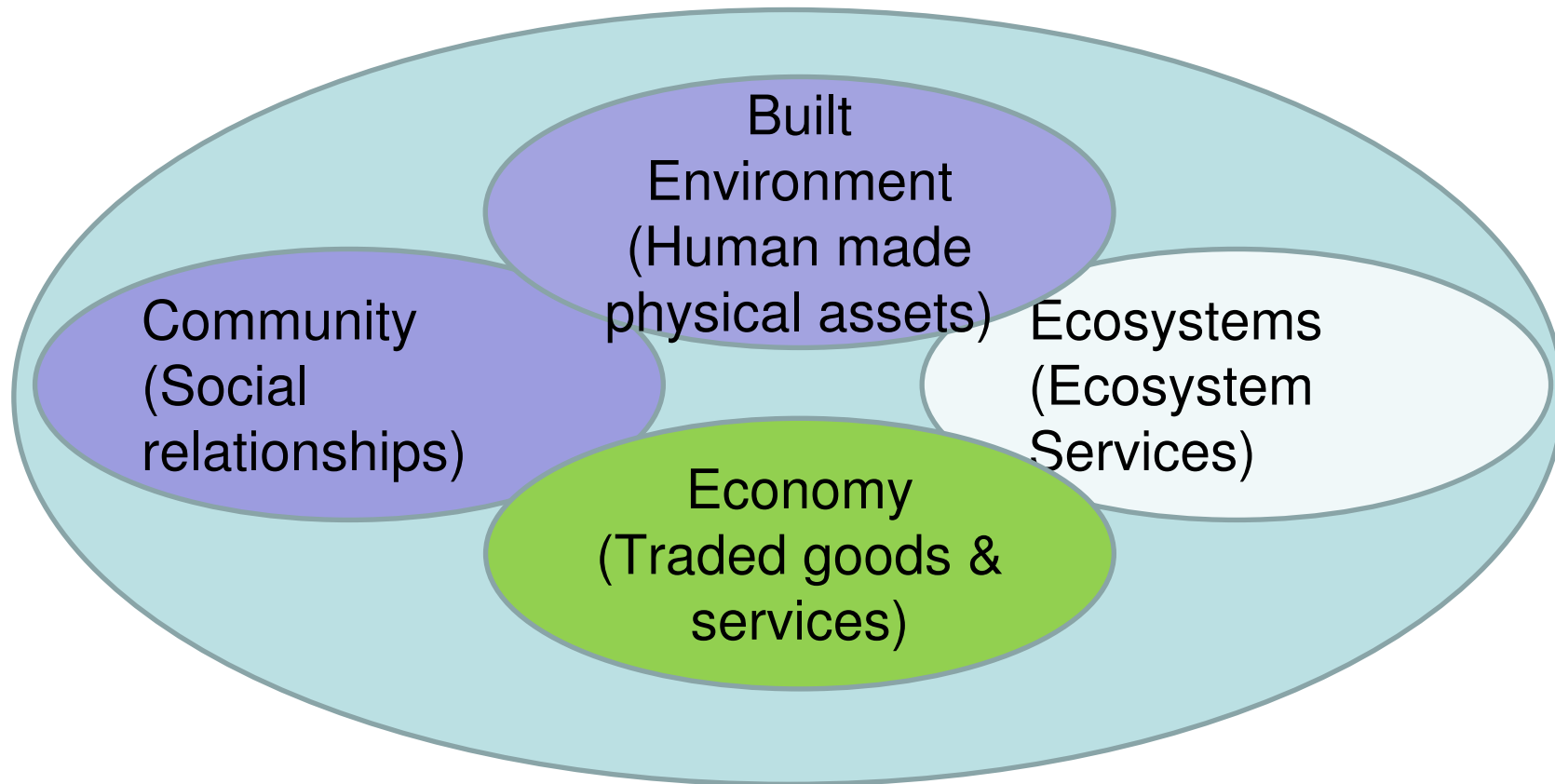
Sustainable population strategy implementation

- A package of four measures funded through the 2011-12 Budget to support a sustainable population in Australia
- One measure: Sustainable Regional Development program – supports sustainability planning in regions experiencing high growth, through strategic assessments under national environmental law (budget \$29.2M)
- Up to seven regional and coastal growth areas across Australia within 4 years (2011 – 2015)
 - Regional sustainability plans
 - EPBC Act strategic assessments





Framework: Socio-ecological system (SES)





Midlands Irrigation Scheme Strategic Assessment Tasmania



- On farm monitoring of ecological impacts and compliance
- Landscape scale monitoring to determine status and health of matters of national environmental significance



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- Targets economic and population growth pressure areas
- Commonwealth is an active partner in plan development (with LGAs / States/ NRM boards / industry)
 - Provides \$ for plan creation and capacity building
 - Provides \$ for data (social, economic, environmental)
- Includes EPBC Act strategic assessment...while guiding sustainable development in the region





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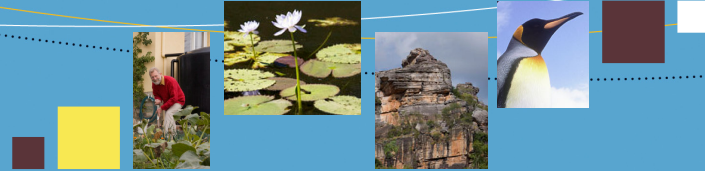
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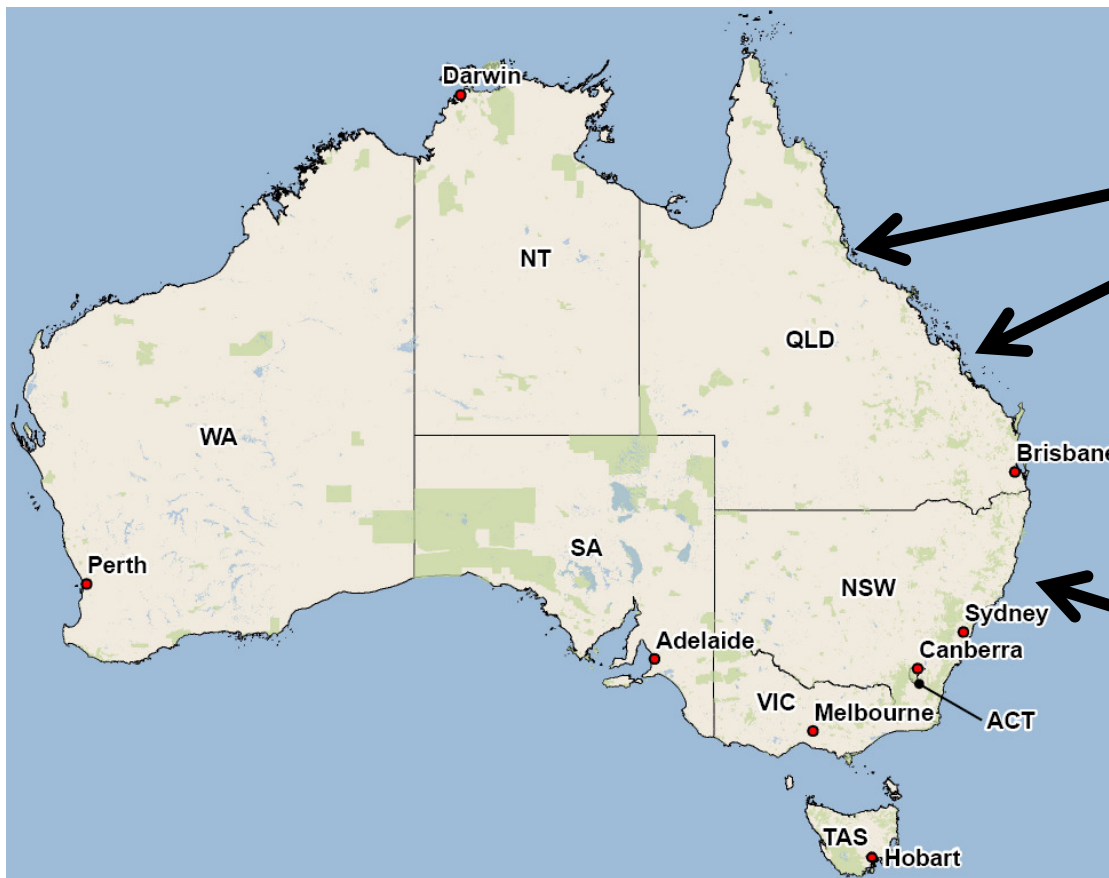
How do we do this?

- We map MNES (our assets), describe their values, and identify development standards to protect those values
- State and local government partners draft 'Regional Sustainability Plans' (or reflect Commonwealth priorities into their existing planning framework) to reflect our standards & fit their needs
- Strategic assessments of the plans deliver more regulatory and planning certainty
- Developers may proceed (without referral) when they meet pre-approved requirements (under the Part 10 approval)





Where will the first regional sustainability plans be?



Central
Queensland
Coastal
Areas

Lower
Hunter,
NSW



Australian Government response to the Hawke Review

- Recommendation 6 .. *Extend the role of strategic assessments and [bio regional plans] so that they are used more often*
- **Agreed in substance** ... Agrees to increase the use of strategic approaches to achieve environmental objectives, support sustainable development, help maintain ecosystem services and deliver business certainty.
- Integrated planning and assessment support the maintenance of ecosystem services and facilitate conservation outcomes across the landscape.

