



Guidelines for Section 516A reporting – *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

Why

This guidance document has been developed by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) to assist other Commonwealth agencies meet their statutory annual reporting requirements under Section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act). The guidelines are not mandatory, but rather provide some simple tools which agencies can apply when undertaking their reporting.

Who

The following Commonwealth organisations are required to produce an ecologically sustainable development and environment report as part of their Annual Report:

- a) A Department of State, and any other Agency (as defined in the *Public Service Act 1999*)
- b) A Commonwealth authority (defined in the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*)
- c) A Commonwealth company (as defined in the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*)
- d) Any other Commonwealth agency that is established by or under a law of the Commonwealth and is required by law to give an Annual Report to the responsible Minister.

What

Commonwealth agencies will need to report against two core criteria. The first is how agencies accord with and contribute to ecologically sustainable development (ESD). The second is to report the environmental performance of agencies, that is the impact their activities have on the natural environment, how these are mitigated and how they will be further mitigated.

Ecologically Sustainable Development

The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, endorsed by all Australian jurisdictions in 1992, defines the goal of ESD as: 'development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.'

The following ESD principles are outlined in Section 3A of the EPBC Act:

- a) Decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations (the 'integration principle').
- b) If there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation (the 'precautionary principle').
- c) The principle of inter-generational equity – that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations (the 'intergenerational principle').
- d) The conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration in decision-making (the 'biodiversity principle').
- e) Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms should be promoted (the 'valuation principle').

All agencies will need to report how they are in accord with and contributing to ESD. This at its simplest will involve agencies explaining how they ensured that their activities¹ were undertaken in an environmentally sustainable way. Agencies should also report how they are embedding the above ESD principles into their activities and furthering them on an on-going basis.

A suggested reporting template for ESD is provided below. Qualitative descriptions are acceptable (especially where there is no quantitative data). How activities are broken up and discussed is at the discretion of the reporting agencies.

Environmental performance

Commonwealth agencies must also report on their environmental performance. This includes the effect the agency's activities had on the environment² (i.e. the impact of activities on the environment), the measures taken to minimise those effects (i.e. mitigation) and the methods for reviewing and increasing the effectiveness of those measures (i.e. ongoing improvement).

To assist agencies, DEWHA has developed a number of indicators based on three environmental themes: (1) energy efficiency; (2) waste; and (3) water. A suggested reporting template and indicators are provided below. However, reporting agencies are not limited to this template or these indicators.

Many Commonwealth organisations lease their building and therefore do not get water bills. In order to report on water use, Commonwealth organisations will need to seek the data from their building owners/ landlords.

¹ Section 516A(7) of the EPBC Act defines activities as: (a) developing and implementing policies, plans, programs, and legislation; and (b) the operations of the organisation

² EPBC Act defines the 'environment' to mean: (a) ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; (b) natural and physical resources; (c) the qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas; (d) heritage values of places (including places on the Register of the National Estate kept under the Australian Heritage Council Act 2003); and (e) the social, economic and cultural aspects of the things mentioned above.

ESD REPORTING TEMPLATE

Activity	How it accords with the principles of ESD	How it furthers or advances ESD principles
<i>Specific activities to implement ESD e.g. project management</i>	<i>e.g. project planning includes an assessment of the ongoing impact on the natural environment (incorporated into the project planning template)</i>	<i>e.g. environmental risk assessments will be incorporated into project planning</i>

ESD

Descriptive text outlining the organisation's approach to implementing ESD principles (may include [but is not limited to] a broad overview of the approach taken, reflecting activities reported above, as well as any additional initiatives).

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REPORTING TEMPLATE

Theme	Steps taken to reduce effect	Measures to review and improve reducing the effect
Energy efficiency	<i>Steps taken to reduce energy consumption</i>	<i>Steps taken to ensure ongoing effectiveness of those reductions in energy consumption</i>
	<i>e.g. target % of electricity from renewable (green) sources</i>	<i>e.g. was there a review? What was the outcome? Where there any recommendations? Was there an assessment of how much electricity was sourced from renewable (green) sources?</i>
Waste	<i>Steps taken to reduce waste production</i>	<i>Steps taken to ensure ongoing effectiveness of those reductions in waste production</i>
	<i>e.g. introduced 'x' number of recycling stations</i>	<i>e.g. was there a review? What was the outcome? Where there any recommendations? Was there an assessment of how much waste was collected at the recycling stations?</i>
Water	<i>Steps taken to reduce water consumption</i>	<i>Steps taken to ensure ongoing effectiveness of those reductions in water consumption</i>
	<i>e.g. introduction of grey water capture and re-use</i>	<i>e.g. was there a review? What was the outcome? Where there any recommendations? Was there an assessment of how much grey water was collected and what it was used for?</i>

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

Descriptive text outlining the organisation's overall environmental performance (may include [but is not limited to] a broad overview of environmental performance as well as any additional performance measures).

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TEMPLATE

Theme	Performance measure	Indicator(s)	2009-10	2010-11
Energy efficiency	Total consumption of energy – this includes all energy consumed when undertaking the functions of the agency, such as energy consumed for office buildings and transportation	Amount of electricity purchased/consumed (\$/kWh) Amount of gas purchases/consumed (\$/MJ) Amount of other fuels purchased/consumed (\$/kWh/MJ/L) Air travel distances (km)		
	Total consumption of green energy – this includes the purchase of energy from sustainable sources	Amount of green energy purchased/consumed (\$/kWh) during the reporting period		
	Greenhouse gas emissions	Amount of greenhouse gases produced (tonnes) ³		
	Relative energy uses – this includes the green energy use relative to non-renewable energy use and energy use per employee	Amount of green energy purchased/consumed divided by the amount of electricity/gas/other fuels purchased/consumed Amount of total energy purchased/consumed (\$/kWh) per employee		
Waste	Total waste production – this includes all waste (i.e. unwanted byproducts) produced when undertaking the functions of the agency	Amount of waste produced (tonnes)		
	Un-recyclable waste production – this includes all wastes that are not re-used or recycled	Amount of waste going to landfills (tonnes)		
	Recyclable waste production (excluding office paper)	Amount of waste going to recycling facilities (tonnes)		
	Paper waste production	Amount of waste paper going to recycling facilities (tonnes) Amount of paper sourced from recyclable sources (tonnes) Percentage of paper sourced from recyclable sources (percent)		
	Use of renewable/ recyclable products	Amount of products sourced from renewable/recyclable sources (tonnes)		
	Relative waste production	Amount of the total waste (tonnes) per employee		
Water	Total consumption of water – this includes all water consumed when undertaking the functions of agency	Amount of water purchased/consumed (\$/L) ⁴		
	Grey water capture and use – this includes all waste water capture and re-use/recycling	Amount of grey water captured (L) Amount of grey water recycled (L) Amount of grey water re-used (L)		
	Rainwater capture and use – this includes all rain water captured and used onsite	Amount of rainwater captured (L) Amount of captured rainwater used (L)		
	Relative consumption/use of water – this includes the use of water per employee	Amount of total water use (L) per employee		

³ Can be found on many electricity bills

⁴ If your organisation leases its building(s) you will need to seek this information from the building owner(s)

INDICATORS

Descriptive text – how is your organisation improving against these criteria (water use, energy use and waste)