

Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner (REAP) scheme | Frequently asked questions

About the scheme

What is the REAP scheme?

The REAP scheme provides a framework for registering suitably skilled, qualified and experienced practitioners to make quality assurance declarations for environmental impact statements (EISs) for State significant projects.

What is a REAP

A registered environmental assessment practitioner, or REAP, is a suitably qualified, experienced and skilled environmental assessment practitioner who has been registered or certified under an accredited REAP scheme.

What is the role of a REAP?

From 1 July 2022, every EIS submitted to the department will need to be accompanied by a declaration made by a REAP.

This declaration includes statements relating to the compliance, completeness, accuracy and legibility of the EIS.

In order to be able to make this declaration, a REAP should also ideally oversee or be involved in the development of the entire EIS document.

Who runs the REAP Scheme?

The department is responsible for the overall REAP scheme framework, including the accreditation, review and oversight of professional schemes for environmental assessment practitioners.

Once a professional scheme has been accredited by the department, it is the responsibility of the scheme provider to register or certify practitioners as REAPs.

What schemes are available to practitioners wishing to become a REAP?

Two professional schemes have been accredited as REAP schemes.

These schemes are operated by:

- [Certified Environmental Practitioner \(CEnvP\)](#)
- [Planning Institute of Australia \(PIA\)](#)

Practitioners wishing to become a REAP should get in contact with these organisations for more information on the certification/registration process.

I am an environmental assessment practitioner. How do I become a REAP?

Practitioners will need to apply to be a REAP through an organisation that administers an accredited REAP scheme.

Practitioners will need to demonstrate that they are suitably skilled, qualified and experienced to undertake environmental assessment in NSW. The specific requirements may differ depending on the individual scheme. Prospective REAPs should refer to the relevant REAP scheme providers for more information.

When can I become a REAP?

Practitioners can apply to become a REAP immediately.

Will technical specialists or consultants providing input into an EIS need to be a REAP?

Only the person making the declaration needs to be a REAP. Technical specialists that are providing specific technical input into a broader EIS do not need to be REAPs.

REAP declarations

When will the REAP declaration requirements commence?

The declaration requirements will commence on 1 July 2022.

Will there be any transitional arrangements?

There will be a transitional period, between 1 July 2022 and 31 December 2022, where EISs for State significant projects can be submitted without a REAP declaration if Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) were last notified before 1 July 2022.

After 31 December 2022, all EISs, regardless of when the SEARs were last notified, must include the relevant REAP declaration.

Where can I find the REAP declaration requirements?

Details of the declaration requirements can be found in the [Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner Guidelines](#).

A pro forma declaration that can be inserted into an EIS can be found in [Preparing an EIS \(Section 5 of the State Significant Development Guidelines\)](#) and in [Preparing an EIS \(Section 5 of the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines\)](#). The declaration includes matters relating to the compliance, completeness, accuracy and legibility of an EIS.

What projects do the declaration requirements apply to?

For SSD and SSI projects, a declaration by a REAP will need to be provided with each EIS. These declarations will need to address the matters set out in the Environmental Planning & Assessment (EP&A) Regulation and in the Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner Guidelines.

For EISs accompanying projects that are not SSD or SSI, a declaration will need to be provided addressing the matters set out in the EP&A Regulation. These declarations will need to be made by the person that prepared the EIS but need not be made by a REAP. The additional matters set out in the Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner Guidelines will also not apply to these EISs.

Are there any changes to the process of submitting the EIS?

Yes. Where an EIS requires a declaration from a REAP, the Planning Portal will require a valid REAP registration number to be entered to allow the department to verify the declaration.

Does the REAP declaration replace the department's role in assessing the EIS?

No. The requirement for the REAP to make this EIS declaration does not remove any of the department's existing responsibilities relating to reviewing and assessing an EIS or a project.

The department will also continue to carry out standard checks of the EIS, including reviewing the declaration, before putting the EIS on public exhibition.

Can the department reject an EIS or seek further information, even though it includes a declaration by a REAP?

Yes. Although each EIS will have been checked by a REAP, the department may still reject an EIS in exceptional circumstances where it is considered to be incomplete.

The department may also request amendments or additional information prior to an EIS being placed on public exhibition.

Do REAPs need to verify the accuracy and validity of each technical input?

While the declaration requires the REAP to make statements relating to the accuracy and completeness of the overall EIS, a REAP is not required to verify the entirety of each technical input.

This remains the responsibility of the individual specialists preparing each technical input.

However, the REAP will need to have a good working knowledge of each specialist discipline in order to be able to synthesise, analyse and summarise each technical input, and use them to construct a cohesive EIS that evaluates and justifies the project as a whole.

Engaging a REAP

I am a proponent that wants to prepare an application for a State significant project. Do I need to engage a REAP?

If SEARs are issued in respect of your project on 1 July 2022 or later, you will need to engage a REAP to provide the declaration that accompanies the EIS for the project.

If SEARs were issued in respect of your project prior to 1 July 2022, you will only need to engage a REAP to provide the declaration if you intend to lodge your EIS later than 31 December 2022.

At what stage of my project should I engage a REAP?

It would be beneficial to appoint a REAP during the early stages of a project development so the practitioner can play an ongoing role in the environmental assessment of impacts of the project.

In this way, a REAP will be able to gain an understanding of the development of detailed technical studies, community engagement and the preparation of the relevant EIS.

Early engagement will avoid any unnecessary administrative delays by ensuring the relevant declaration requirements are actively considered from the outset, and that the EIS is produced to a high standard and suitable for public exhibition.

What should I look for when selecting a REAP?

When selecting a REAP the proponent should consider whether the REAP has a good understanding of the relevant legislation, statutory processes and Guidelines, and whether they have worked on similar projects before.

How do I find a REAP?

A list of REAPs is publicly available on the website of the accredited REAP scheme providers:

- [Certified Environmental Practitioner \(CEnvP\)](#)
- [Planning Institute of Australia \(PIA\)](#)

Other matters

How have accredited REAP schemes been evaluated?

Each REAP scheme application was assessed against the REAP scheme criteria by an evaluation panel and the department, before being accredited by the Planning Secretary.

The assessment determined that the professional organisations administering the schemes demonstrate strong corporate governance and robust processes to manage the schemes going forward.

Successful applicants also demonstrated alignment with the department's objectives for the scheme, as well as proving technical expertise in environmental impact assessment as an organisational capability.

Will other schemes become accredited?

The department is focusing on establishing the REAP scheme, ensuring it runs smoothly and works effectively when the declaration requirement commences on 1 July 2022.

There may be an opportunity for other providers to be accredited as needed in the future, particularly if the REAP scheme is expanded to cover other types of development or documentation.

Can I make a complaint against a REAP?

All accredited REAP schemes have established ethical or professional codes of conduct that REAPs will need to adhere to. Should anyone be dissatisfied with the conduct or behaviour of a REAP, they are entitled to lodge a complaint with the organisation that administers the relevant accredited REAP scheme.

The organisation will investigate the complaint in accordance with its complaints policies and procedures and decide whether any disciplinary action is warranted.

Will the REAP Scheme be reviewed?

To ensure each schemes' successful operation and integrity, the department will continue to monitor progress and outcomes of the REAP scheme over time. This will also ensure REAPs and organisations that administer accredited REAP schemes are accountable for their performance over time.

A review will be carried out by the department in the first, third and fifth year after the REAP declaration requirements commence.

This review will look at the performance of REAPs, the number and types of complaints received, the quality and completeness of EISs, the administration of accredited professional schemes and any opportunities for improvement to the operation of the REAP scheme.

Where can I find more information?

Further information about the REAP scheme can be found in the Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner Guidelines and on the NSW Planning Portal.

Further information on commencement dates and transitional arrangements for the broader Rapid Assessment Framework can be found in the [planning circular \(PS 21-005\)](#).

Please contact an accredited REAP scheme provider directly for any questions regarding REAP requirements and accreditation timeframes.