

# Amendments streamline development assessment for tourism and sport & recreation activities outside the SEQ urban footprint

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## OVERVIEW

The *Planning Amendment Regulation 2025* was made on 28 November 2025. It effects a broad range of amendments to the *Planning Regulation 2017* (Qld) in relation to:

- housing and community infrastructure - rooming accommodation, rural workers' accommodation, community residences, build to rent housing, and relocatable classrooms;
- SEQ regulatory provisions tourism triggers;
- waterway barrier works.

This Insight focuses on the amendments made to the SEQ regulatory provisions tourism triggers to streamline State assessment for tourism and sport and recreation activities within SEQ areas outside the urban footprint.

## REDUCED STATE ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

The development assessment pathway to unlocking tourism and recreation potential **beyond SEQ's urban footprint** has become clearer, with amendments to the *Planning Regulation 2017* (Qld) (PR), effective 28 November 2025. The amendments remove unnecessary regulatory burden at a State level, while continuing to ensure safeguards for SEQ's natural and rural areas and that development is consistent with the *ShapingSEQ* regional plan intent for these areas.

The streamlining amendments remove many items from the list of matters the chief executive (State agency and referral agency (SARA)) must assess an application against. This change results in a more proportionate assessment relative to the anticipated impacts.

The *assessment* amendments apply equally to premises within the SEQ regional landscape and rural production area (**RLRPA**) and SEQ rural living area (**RLA**), and the SEQ northern inter-urban break (**NIUB**) in Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast. The differentiated *assessable development triggers* for a material change of use for a tourist activity or sport and recreation activity for premises wholly or partly in the RLRPA or the RLA in the PR Schedule 10 Part 16 section 24 on the one hand, and on the other for the NIUB in the PR Schedule 10 Part 16B section 27J, have not changed.

### 'Tourist activity' and 'sport and recreation activity' scope

The starting point in navigating the assessable development triggers is to determine if the proposed development is a material change of use (MCU) that falls within the range of captured tourist activity and sport and recreation activity uses.

The defined term **tourist activity** means any of the following—

- (a) *nature-based tourism*; or
- (b) *a resort complex*; or
- (c) *a tourist attraction*; or
- (d) *a tourist park*; or
- (e) *tourist accommodation*, or accommodation for employees, that is ancillary to a use stated in paragraphs (a) to (d); or
- (f) *a commercial use* that is ancillary to a use stated in paragraphs (a) to (d).

**Sport and recreation activity** captures the following—

- (a) *a major sport, recreation and entertainment facility* at which events are carried out mainly outdoors; or
- (b) *a motor sport facility* at which the motor sports are carried out mainly outdoors; or
- (c) *outdoor sport and recreation*; or
- (d) *tourist accommodation*, or accommodation for employees, that is ancillary to a use stated in paragraphs (a) to (c); or
- (e) *a commercial use* that is ancillary to a use stated in paragraphs (a) to (c).



## Exceptions to the assessable development triggers

The section 24 and section 27J assessable development triggers do **not** apply to a *tourist activity* or *sport and recreation activity* MCU if it falls within any of the following exceptions.

### Excluded development

The definition of *excluded development* captures effectively 10 different circumstances. Some of these circumstances are nuanced, including MCU carried out under certain development permits or that is consistent with a variation approval (which turn on when the application or particular referral agency assessments). Similarly, another excluded development circumstances relates to particular rezoning approvals, depending on how the development entitlements are reflected.

For premises in the SEQ RLRPA or RLA, one of the excluded development circumstances is if the premises are in an urban zone under the planning scheme, TLPI, or variation approval.

### Exempt material change of use

The available *exempt material change of use* circumstances are two-fold:

1. It is for one or more of 21 specified uses. Notably, in the context of projects such as a cableway and water-based tourism, these include an *environment facility* (the use of premises for a facility for the appreciation, conservation or interpretation of an area of cultural, environmental or heritage value, but not including accommodation for tourists/travellers) and a *landing*.  
or
2. It is consistent with a current development approval if the application for it was assessed by a referral agency under PR Schedule 10 Part 16 (for premises in the SEQ RLRPA or RLA).

### It is for a tourist activity that is in an SEQ significant tourist activity area

These areas identified in a gazette notice by the Minister. Currently, there is only one declared SEQ significant tourist activity area, on the Sunshine Coast at Beerwah (Australia Zoo) gazetted in December 2023.

## Scale/intensity trigger thresholds

If the tourist activity or sport and recreation activity MCU does not fall within any of the exceptions, it will be **impact assessable** development, requiring referral to SARA, if any of the following scale/intensity trigger thresholds are met.

### SEQ RLRPA or RLA

The use results in a GFA > **5,000m<sup>2</sup>** on the premises, excluding any part of the premises that is used for tourist accommodation or accommodation for employees; or

The use involves an ancillary commercial or retail activity with a GFA > **250m<sup>2</sup>**; or

The use provides accommodation for more than **300 persons**.

### SEQ NIUB

The use results in a GFA > **2,500m<sup>2</sup>** on the premises, excluding any part of the premises that is used for tourist accommodation or accommodation for employees; or

The use involves an ancillary commercial or retail activity with a GFA > **100m<sup>2</sup>**; or

The use provides accommodation for more than **100 persons**.



### Referral agency assessment by SARA

PR Schedule 10 Parts 16 and 16B set out the matters against which the referral agency must assess a triggered application. As a result of the amendments, there are now only **four matters** for the chief executive's (SARA's) assessment—

There is a community and economic need for the use.	Deleted
The premises will have direct access to transport infrastructure reasonably required for and adequate to service the use, and its provision is practical and economically feasible having regard to the location and characteristics of the premises.	Deleted
The premises will be serviced by infrastructure (eg. water, wastewater disposal, electricity, stormwater) adequate for the use, and its provision is practical and economically feasible having regard to the location and characteristics of the premises.	Deleted
A suitable workforce will be able to be sourced from the surrounding area.	Deleted
The use is compatible with the physical characteristics of the premises.	Deleted
The use is compatible with the use of other premises in the surrounding area.	Deleted
The MCU avoids adversely impacting the regional biodiversity network, regional landscape values or natural economic resource areas stated in the SEQ regional plan or, if the adverse impact can not be avoided, the adverse impact is minimised.	Assessment matter
The MCU avoids an area that involves a risk of serious harm to persons or property from natural events or processes including, for example, bush fires, coastal erosion, flooding or landslides. If the MCU can not avoid such an area, it minimises the risk of serious harm.	Deleted
The MCU does not involve a residential use other than tourist accommodation or accommodation for employees.	Assessment matter
Any commercial, industrial or retail activity carried out as part of the use is ancillary to the use.	Assessment matter
The MCU is consistent with the SEQ regional plan, including the outcomes and strategies, and subregional directions, stated in the plan.	Assessment matter



## KEY PROPOSITIONS

- State assessment for SEQ tourism triggers outside the urban footprint has been narrowed to a more limited range of matters.
- There remains a multitude of State and Commonwealth matters to be considered, in addition to local government planning scheme assessment benchmarks. As impact assessable development, consideration of higher-order planning scheme strategic framework provisions and other relevant matters is enlivened.

The recent PR amendments have sharpened the State's role in assessing MCU applications for tourist and sport/recreational activities. The focus is now on a limited set of issues, removing potential duplication with local government assessment. For proponents, this means less overlap and clearer pathways, although there remains a range of matters at local, State and Commonwealth level to navigate, and which proponents should factor into project feasibility assessments and timelines.

Proponents should be aware that there are also PR assessable development trigger provisions regarding 'combined uses' in the PR Schedule 10 section 27G and section 27R where a MCU is for a tourist activity and/or a sport and recreation activity and other specified uses.

Local government assessment managers remain in charge of assessing MCU applications against local planning instrument assessment benchmarks, but the Planning Regulation's prescription of impact assessment for triggered MCU tourist activity and sport and recreation activity applications enlivens consideration of higher-order strategic framework provisions and other relevant matters, particularly for projects that explore uncharted opportunities in the nature-based tourism sector.

Other State matters triggers will still need to be considered – for example, in relation to development in koala habitat areas in the SEQ region. Matters of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) will need to be addressed, while noting cooperative federalism inroads are expected following the recently introduced reforms at the Commonwealth level.

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## OUR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT TEAM CONTACTS

Based in Australia's tourism capital for +40 years, our Planning & Environment team on the Gold Coast brings deep expertise in working with proponents and all levels of government – local, State and Commonwealth – to navigate assessment, tenure and approval requirements, including under coordinated project and accredited assessment regimes. We have guided SEQ tourism development projects across diverse sectors, including sport and recreation facilities and events, hinterland trails, cableways, marine and dive precincts, eco-cabins, and major tourist attraction, transport and accommodation projects.



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