

Policy for vegetation management offsets

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Version history

Version	Date	Comment
1	20/11/2006	New Policy published.
1.1	09/01/2007	Policy added to Policy Register.
2.0	23/08/2007	New Policy Published.
2.1	28/09/2007	Correction of minor errors.
2.2	23/05/2008	Policy added to Policy Register.
2.3	08/10/2008	Correction made to Metadata - policy publicly available
2.4	21/10/2009	Offsets policy updated to reflect the VMOLA 2009.

Purpose

The Policy for Vegetation Management Offsets—Version 2 (Offsets Policy) sets the requirements for an offset as a condition of a development approval that the chief executive considers is necessary or desirable for achieving the purpose of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA).

The chief executive must comply with this Offsets Policy when imposing an offset as a condition of a development approval.

Rationale

The VMA regulates the clearing of vegetation over all tenures in a way that:

- a. conserves remnant vegetation that is—
 - i. an endangered regional ecosystem; or
 - ii. an of concern regional ecosystem; or
 - iii. a least concern regional ecosystem; and
- b. conserves vegetation in declared areas; and
- c. ensures the clearing does not cause land degradation; and
- d. prevents the loss of biodiversity; and
- e. maintains ecological processes; and
- f. manages the environmental effects of the clearing to achieve the matter mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (e); and
- g. reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

The Offsets Policy was made by the chief executive on 21 October 2009 in accordance with provisions set out in the VMA.

Policy

Regional Vegetation Management Codes and Material Change of Use / Reconfiguration of a Lot Policies (concurrency agency policies) under the VMA set out performance requirements that development applications for clearing native vegetation must meet.

An offset may be proposed by an applicant for particular development activities as a solution to meet specific performance requirements (PRs) that require a development to maintain the current extent of a particular regional ecosystem.

However, this may only occur where the applicant has first demonstrated to the chief executive that the development has first avoided and mitigated the impacts of the development on vegetation prior to proposing an offset. This is consistent with:

1. Section 22A(2)(d) under the VMA for a vegetation clearing application which is for a relevant purpose for establishing a necessary fence, firebreak, road or vehicular track, or for constructing necessary built infrastructure, and the clearing for the relevant infrastructure can not reasonably be avoided or minimised; and
2. maintaining the current extent of a particular regional ecosystem by —
 - i. not clearing the regional ecosystem; or
 - ii. if subparagraph (i) is not reasonably practicable, ensuring the structure and function of the regional ecosystem is maintained; or
 - iii. if subparagraphs (i) and (ii) are not reasonably practicable, imposing an offset as a condition of the development approval; and
 - iv. the applicant proposes an offset to satisfy the required outcome.

Where a development does not meet all the performance requirements in the regional vegetation management codes or concurrence agency policies, irrespective whether an offset has been proposed, the development will not be approved.

How to Use This Policy

All offsets must meet vegetation offset criteria 1 to 6, and 10. Vegetation offset criteria 7 applies only to offsets proposed under the concurrence agency policies, Table F - 2. Criteria 7, in addition to vegetation offset criteria 1 to 6 and 10, must be met. Criteria 8 and 9 are elective criteria that may be considered, where applicable.

Vegetation Offset Criteria

1. Offset limitations
2. Values and regional ecosystems
3. Obtain ecological equivalence
4. Legally secure the offset area
5. Offset area implementation and management
6. Minimum information requirements
7. Offset requirements to satisfy concurrency agency policies, criteria table F
8. Offset obligation transfer
9. Advance offsets
10. When an offset ceases to have effect

Table 1 lists endangered and of concern regional ecosystems that have a critically limited remnant coverage. Tables 2 is a guidelines to assist in determining criteria 3, Obtain ecological equivalence.

Vegetation Offset Criteria

Criteria 1 – Offset limitations

A proposed offset area:

- a. must be land-based, that is, an offset area must not be a financial contribution;
- b. may be used to satisfy multiple offset requirements, where an offset is required under another Act or policy of Federal, State or local government for the one development application, providing the requirements of this Policy are met; and
- c. may be located on land owned by the applicant or by a third party.

The proposed offset area must not:

- a. be vegetation shown as remnant vegetation on a regional ecosystem or remnant map,
 - i. unless the area has a valid clearing approval under the VMA issued by the chief executive that would result in the area being cleared; or
 - ii. the area is identified as an advance offset approved under this Offsets Policy and protected by a legally binding mechanism;
- b. be vegetation that is required to be retained by an approval issued under any Act administered by the Federal, State or local government; or
- c. be on land the subject of an offset arrangement administered by the Federal, State or local government; or
- d. be a category A, B or C area on a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV); or
- e. be land on which the vegetation is protected by an instrument of State Government, unless the area has a valid clearing approval under the VMA issued by the chief executive that would result in the area being cleared; or
- f. be regulated regrowth that is a restricted area (essential regrowth habitat, stream protection zones, within wetland protection areas, on slopes greater than 12%) under the regrowth vegetation code.

An offset area, where it meets the requirements of this Offsets Policy, may be sourced from the following areas:

- category X areas identified on a PMAV; or
- regulated regrowth vegetation, unless the area is a restricted area under the regrowth vegetation code; or
- other regrowth vegetation that has the necessary functioning regional ecosystem/s.

Criteria 2 - Values and regional ecosystems

The values which may be offset and are applicable to the development will be determined by assessment of the development against the PRs in the relevant regional vegetation management code or concurrency agency policies. Not all regional ecosystems or values listed below need to be offset for a development.

The list, based on the relevant PRs, directs the regional ecosystems that the offset area must contain. In many cases an ecological assessment will be necessary to determine the presence of the pre-clear regional ecosystem including any other environmental values the offset area may contain.

Wetlands (PR2)

An offset area for wetlands must:

- a. be the same broad vegetation group; and
- b. be a wetland regional ecosystem listed in the relevant Regional Vegetation Management Code; or

- c. be a regional ecosystem associated with a natural significant wetland and/or natural wetland that has the same or higher conservation status than the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing.

Watercourses (PR3)

An offset area for watercourses must:

- a. be the same broad vegetation group;
- b. be regional ecosystem that has the same or higher conservation status than the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing; and
- c. be a regional ecosystem associated with a watercourse that has at least the same stream order as the watercourse proposed for clearing.

Connectivity (PR4)

An offset area for connectivity must:

- a. be the same broad vegetation group;
- b. be located within in one of the following ecological corridors:
 - i. a strategic rehabilitation area identified by the State government;
 - ii. an ecological corridor identified by the Federal, State or local government either on its website or in an approved and publically available document; or
 - iii. other endorsed, strategic corridor identified by a recognised organisation or group; and
- c. be adjacent to vegetation shown as remnant vegetation on a regional ecosystem map or remnant map, or a restricted area (essential regrowth habitat, stream protection zones, within wetland protection areas, on slopes greater than 12%) under the regrowth vegetation code.

Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems (PR 7 and PR F-2)

An offset area for endangered and of concern regional ecosystems must:

- a. be the same broad vegetation management group; and
- b. be an endangered or of concern regional ecosystem that has the same or higher, where possible, conservation status as the area proposed for clearing.

Essential habitat (PR 8)

An offset area for essential habitat must:

- a. be the same broad vegetation group; and
- b. include at least 3 essential habitat factors for the protected wildlife that must include any essential habitat factors that are stated as mandatory for the protected wildlife in the essential habitat database; or
- c. be an area utilised by protected wildlife at any stage of its life cycle for which there is recent evidence; and
- d. demonstrate that the direct impacts on the protected wildlife are mitigated by the offset area and surrounding environment.

Where essential habitat is for the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and the clearing site occurs within Southeast Queensland as mapped by the South East Queensland Regional Plan (excluding the Toowoomba Regional Council area), the offset area must:

- a. be located within bushland habitat or an area suitable for rehabilitation, as identified by the Department of Environment and Resource Management on the Koala Habitat Values map; and
- b. be located within the same regional or city council area as the primary clearing site; or

- c. where b. is demonstrated to not be achievable, within an adjacent local government area; and
- d. demonstrate that the direct impacts on the protected wildlife are mitigated by the offset area and surrounding environment.

Threshold regional ecosystem (PR9)

An offset area for threshold regional ecosystems must:

- a. be the same broad vegetation group; and
- b. be a regional ecosystem within the bioregion that is at risk of the remnant extent of the regional ecosystem falling below 30% of its pre-clearing extent, or, having a remnant extent of less than 10 000 hectares listed in the relevant Regional Vegetation Management Code; or
- c. where b. is demonstrated to not be achievable, be a regional ecosystem within the bioregion that has a higher conservation status than the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing.

Critically limited regional ecosystems (Applicable to all PRs and PR F-2)

An offset area for a critically limited regional ecosystem listed in Table 1 must:

- a. be the same broad vegetation group; and
- b. be the same regional ecosystem as the area proposed for clearing if the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing is a regional ecosystem listed in Table 1; or
- c. where b. is demonstrated to not be achievable, be a regional ecosystem that has the same or higher conservation status and contain similar vegetation and habitat values to the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing.

Criteria 3 - Obtain ecological equivalence

The offset area must demonstrate that the proposed clearing site and the proposed offset area are ecologically equivalent. Ecological equivalence includes values associated with the following factors:

- a. Strategic position in landscape
- b. Species diversity
- c. Condition of vegetation
- d. Landscape context attributes - patch size, connectivity, context
- e. Special values

The ecological equivalence factors may not have equal weight in every case. Ecological equivalence is achieved when the ecological equivalence factors achieve equivalence overall, despite one or more factors not achieving equivalence. Table 2 provides additional guidance on the ecological equivalence factors.

A consideration in determining whether ecological equivalence is generally achieved is the degree of risk and uncertainty involved when assessing the proposed clearing site against the quantities and qualities of each factor provided for at the offset area.

Criteria 4 - Ensuring the offset area is legally secured

All offset areas must be legally secured. For an offset area to be legally secured, the vegetation within the offset area must be provided additional protection from clearing, using a legally binding mechanism, and supported by an offset area management plan.

An offset must be legally secured:

- a. by a legally binding mechanism that secures the offset area within four months of the development approval being issued, or
- b. consistent with the timeframes identified in a legally binding agreement.

Legally binding agreement

A legally binding agreement allows a development to proceed prior to an offset area being legally secured. The Department of Environment and Resource Management will only enter into a legally binding agreement with an applicant:

- a. prior to development approval;
- b. where the applicant has demonstrated that the development is for a significant community project,
- c. where the applicant has demonstrated that legally securing the offset area at the time of the development approval would unreasonably delay the project; and
- d. where the vegetation at the clearing site does not include a critically limited regional ecosystem listed in Table 1.

Note, the chief executive may also require, prior to entering into a legally binding agreement, evidence that an offset area which meets the relevant requirements of the Offsets Policy is available within the landscape prior to entering into a legally binding agreement. An example of where this may be required is for those regional ecosystems or values which are not listed in Table 1 however have a restricted distribution.

A legally binding agreement must reflect:

- a. the requirement to legally secure an offset area consistent with the requirements set out in the Policy;
- b. the provision of a legally secured offset area within eighteen months of the development approval being issued, unless otherwise agreed by the chief executive;
- c. the provision of quarterly progress reports on the progress on legally securing an offset area; and
- d. the proponent, project and stage;
- e. a department or company contact;
- f. the lot/s and plan/s of the clearing site; and
- g. the regional ecosystems, essential habitat species, stream order and tenure, in addition to the areas of each which are the subject of clearing where an offset will be provided.

Applicants, other than the State and statutory authorities, must provide financial assurance at the time of entering into a legally binding agreement. Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed financial assurance is comprised of:

- a. the averaged, per hectare land value, based on the unimproved value within the region in which the clearing occurs, calculated based on at least three land parcels generally equivalent with the proposed clearing site, for the number of hectares proposed requiring an offset;
- b. the anticipated administrative costs of locating and securing an offset over a 20 year period,
- c. the anticipated ongoing costs associated with managing, monitoring and reporting on the offset consistent with the requirements of this Policy, over a 20 year period; and
- d. the annual consumer price index increase over the next 20 year period as it relates to the above points, based on the annual consumer price index increase over the last 20 year period or three percent whichever is the greater.

Financial assurance must be provided in the form of an unconditional bank guarantee in an amount equal to the sum of the amounts set out in a. - d. above.

Criteria 5 – Offset area implementation

The offset area proposal presented to the administering authority must include information that identifies how the offset requirements identified in this Offset Policy will be implemented. This information should include:

- a. An offset area management plan which includes (but is not limited to):
 - i. A map (preferably digital) that clearly identifies the proposed offset area with Global Positioning System (GPS) points, including any areas subject to specific management actions;
 - ii. the proposed clearing regional ecosystem/s and essential habitat, and those on the proposed

- offset area;
 - iii. the offset area management objectives and outcomes; and
 - iv. activities that will be undertaken to achieve the management objectives and outcomes; and
 - v. restrictions imposed on the use of the offset area to achieve the management objectives and outcomes; and
 - vi. an analysis of the risks to achieving the management objectives and outcomes, actions to minimise the risks and remedial action that will be undertaken if any of the risks occur;
 - vii. a yearly schedule of management actions, to ensure achievement of the management objectives and outcomes, for the period until the offset area is mapped as remnant regional ecosystem or essential habitat; and
 - viii. a monitoring and reporting program; and
 - ix. the estimated time until the offset management objectives and outcomes will be achieved;
 - x. identification of all registered interests including mortgages, leases, subleases, covenants, profit à prendre, easements and building management statements, that have been registered on title under the *Land Act 1994* or the *Land Title Act 1994*.
- b. the estimated management costs associated with achieving the offset management objectives, actions and outcomes;
 - c. the trust account details for the holding of funds for the ongoing management actions for the offset area;
 - d. details of the dispersal of funds for ongoing management actions based on the yearly schedule of management actions;
 - e. the entity/ies responsible for undertaking the management actions and the skills or expertise of the entity/ies responsible for undertaking the management actions; and
 - f. evidence that the landholder has received legal advice in regards to their obligations under the legally binding mechanism.

Criteria 6- Minimum information requirements

The following information must be provided either at the time of the development application or prior to development approval:

- a. how the development has been designed and located to minimise the extent of clearing;
- b. details of how the proposed offset area meets the vegetation offset criteria contained in this Policy including the provision of the legally binding mechanism or legally binding agreement, and offset area management plan;
- c. details of other information including, but not limited to:
 - i. zoning and regional land-use category (if available) of the offset area and surrounding area under the local government planning scheme and Regional Plan produced either under the repealed Integrated Planning Act 1997 or Sustainable Planning Act 2009;
 - ii. information, including maps where appropriate, on the current and potential future land-uses, including proposals for major infrastructure, in the general vicinity of the offset area;
 - iii. the ecological values present at the proposed clearing site and offset area, including any notable ecological values in the general vicinity. This information should be supported by ecological studies and maps where appropriate.

Criteria 7 – Offset requirements to address concurrence agency policies, assessment criteria table F

Criteria table F, PR F2 directs that clearing may only occur where it can be demonstrated that the level of conservation and biodiversity outcomes ensured by the development significantly exceeds the extent and value of the area proposed to be cleared consistent with the requirements of the Offsets Policy.

To demonstrate that the conservation and biodiversity outcomes as a result of the completed development

significantly exceed the extent and value of the area proposed to be cleared, the following requirements must be achieved:

- a. provide a land-based offset which meets the Offsets Policy. For the purposes of this criteria, where the clearing site is shown to contain environmental values unique to the site, these values must be addressed in Criteria 3 - Ecological equivalence under 'Special Values';
- b. provide either a land-based or indirect offset, approved by the administering authority, which directly relates to the values of the clearing site which:
 - i. significantly exceeds the extent and values of the area proposed to be cleared, including any environmental values unique to the clearing site;
 - ii. results in long-term, enduring outcomes:
 - i. for land-based offsets, this may include:
 - legally securing an offset area for a considerable period following the offset area being shown as remnant vegetation on a regional ecosystem or remnant map; or
 - gifting the offset area as protected area estate under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, where approved by the chief executive;
 - ii. for indirect offsets, this may include ensuring the outcomes provide ongoing benefits relevant to the values proposed to be cleared.
- c. is finalised within four months of the development approval being issued; and
- d. is legally secured or contractually secured, or both, to the satisfaction of the chief executive.

Unique environmental values

To determine whether the clearing site has unique environmental values, the site must be assessed as to whether it contains:

- a. ecosystems and their constituent parts including people and communities; and
- b. all natural and physical resources; and
- c. those qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas, however large or small, that contribute to their biological diversity and integrity, intrinsic or attributed scientific value or interest, amenity, harmony and sense of community; and
- d. the social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions affecting the matters in paragraphs (a) to (c) or affected by those matters.

Examples may include:

- a feature that is of interest to a sector of the community i.e. aboriginal rock painting or built heritage;
- world heritage status;
- contains a plant or animal valued by the community at a local, regional or State level;
- an area which contributes to the visual amenity valued by the community at a local, regional or State level;
- vegetation or a landscape formation which contributes to an area's sense of place; or
- an area which contributes, either directly or indirectly, to a community's economy through its environmental values e.g. tourism.

Indirect Offsets

An indirect offset, relevant to the values proposed to be cleared, may include:

- funding research or activities which further current knowledge on a particular value or values such as ecological surveys and mapping projects; or
- funding the strategic rehabilitation by a third party on legally secured land; or
- funding the construction of under / overpasses or other such activities which assist the safe movement of fauna; or

- funding interpretive facilities; or
- funding conservation and or biodiversity rehabilitation projects.

The applicant must provide all relevant information, including ecological studies of both the proposed clearing and offset areas, to assist in demonstrating the requirements of this criteria.

Criteria 8 – Offset obligation transfer

An offset obligation transfer involves the transfer of an offset obligation from the applicant of a vegetation clearing application to a third party, subject to the payment of a defined monetary amount.

An offset obligation transfer:

- a. may be made for any development which is for a significant community project where an offset is proposed by an applicant to meet a performance requirement, and legally securing the offset at the time of the development approval would unreasonably delay the project;
- b. must be a legally binding agreement between the chief executive, the applicant, and a third party approved by the chief executive;
- c. must be proposed by the applicant prior to the approval of the development, and signed by all parties involved within four months of the development approval being issued;
- d. may not be entered into where the offset is for a regional ecosystem mentioned in Table 1; and
- e. prior to entering into an offset obligation transfer, the chief executive may also require such evidence as the chief executive considers necessary that an offset area - where it is not for a regional ecosystem mentioned in Table 1 - is available in the landscape based on the proposed clearing values and the requirements of the Offsets Policy. .

The approved third party accepting an offset obligation transfer must:

- a. be registered with the administering authority;
- b. legally secure an offset area within eighteen months, unless otherwise agreed by the chief executive;
- c. ensure the offset area meets the requirements of the Offsets Policy; and
- d. provide quarterly progress reports to the administering authority detailing the progress on legally securing an offset area.

To be an approved third party, an entity must provide documentation to the chief executive in relation to its structure, function and administration, including fund management and legal liability arrangements as to enable the chief executive to conclude that they are capable of fulfilling the obligations in the legally binding agreement. A register of approved third parties will be maintained by the administering authority.

Criteria 9 – Advance offsets

An advance offset may be established either by an applicant for a specific project or projects, or by a third party for any development which may require offsets at a future date. The advance offset may be used as a whole, or in part to provide an offset to meet one or more offset requirements.

The applicant or entity seeking in-principle approval of an advance offset must provide the administering authority:

- a. the lot/s and plan/s for the project or projects where the clearing is proposed;
- b. the values located on the land where the clearing is to occur and on the proposed advance offset;
- c. extent of clearing proposed;
- d. timeframes associated with the advanced offset; and
- e. information on how the advance offset generally meets the Offsets Policy for the proposed clearing sites and proposed advance offset site/s;
- f. details of the legally binding mechanism proposed by the applicant or entity.

The legally binding mechanism over the advance offset must be finalised within four months of in-principle approval by the chief executive. An advance offset may be revoked by the applicant or entity prior to the area being used to acquit an offset requirement.

However, where an advance offset is used to acquit an offset requirement, the Offsets Policy in place at the time of the lodgement of the development application and the ecological values present at that time on the advance offset is the applicable Offsets Policy and values which will be taken into consideration by the chief executive.

Approval in-principle of an advance offset by the chief executive and registration by the administering authority does not provide any indication that a development application lodged at a future stage will be approved.

Criteria 10 – When an offset ceases to have effect

An offset remains in effect until the offset ends under its terms. For the purposes of an offset area, this will include the offset meeting any requirements that are stipulated within the development approval, or legally binding mechanism and management plan.

To bring an offset area to an end, the landowner must provide the chief executive with evidence that the requirements of the legally binding mechanism and management plan have been achieved. This includes providing evidence that the offset area:

- a. has achieved remnant status; and
- b. is a regional ecosystem; and where applicable,
- c. includes at least 3 essential habitat factors for the protected wildlife that must include any essential habitat factors that are stated as mandatory for the protected wildlife in the essential habitat database; or
- d. is an area in which the protected wildlife, at any stage of its life cycle, is located.

Once the landowner has successfully demonstrated that the requirements of the legally binding mechanism and management plan have been achieved, the chief executive will map the area as remnant vegetation on a regional ecosystem map and as essential habitat on a essential habitat map where applicable. The chief executive will only agree to the removal of the legally binding mechanism once this has occurred.

Table 1. Critically Limited Regional Ecosystems

	Regional Ecosystem description	Status
1.5.2	Mixed eucalypt woodland on sandy plains	Of concern
2.5.4	Cypress (<i>Callitris glaucophylla</i>) woodland on plains on deep sandy soils	Of concern
3.2.29	<i>Pisonia grandis</i> low closed forest. Restricted to a few scattered sand cays	Of concern
3.2.30	<i>Pemphis acidula</i> ± low closed forest. Restricted to coral atolls, shingle cays and sand cays	Of concern
3.2.31	<i>Premna serratifolia</i> closed scrub. Restricted to coral atolls, shingle cays and sand cays	Of concern
3.2.32	<i>Lepturus repens</i> closed herbland. Restricted to sand cays	Of concern

3.3.7	Tall semi-deciduous notophyll/microphyll vine thicket. Occurs on colluvial plains	Of concern
3.3.68	Semi-deciduous notophyll vine forest and thicket on alluvial plains	Of concern
3.3.69	Melaleuca dealbata ± Corymbia clarksoniana tall open forest on alluvial plains	Of concern
3.3.70	Lophostemon suaveolens ± Melaleuca cajuputi subsp. platyphylla ± Pandanus sp. ± Livistona muelleri woodland and open forest. Alluvial plains of northern Torres Strait Islands	Of concern
3.5.32	Asteromyrtus brassii + Syzygium angophoroides + Acmena hemilampra subsp. Hemilampra open forest. Residual sand rises and sheets	Of concern
3.8.5	Semi deciduous and deciduous notophyll vine forest. Basaltic Islands of the Torres Strait	Of concern
3.12.1	Semi-deciduous mesophyll/notophyll vine forest on granite slopes, in the central bioregion	Of concern
3.12.5	Simple evergreen notophyll vine forest. Upper slopes of mountains and ranges in the south	Of concern
3.12.27	Welchiodendron longivalve and Melaleuca viridiflora low woodland on granite ridge crests	Of concern
4.3.22	Springs on recent alluvia and fine-grained sedimentary rock	Endangered
6.3.23	Springs on recent alluvia, ancient alluvia and fine-grained sedimentary rock	Endangered
6.7.18	Springs associated with lateritised sandstone	Of concern
6.12.1	Scattered Acacia aneura around granite boulders	Of concern
7.1.4	Mangrove and vine forest communities of the brackish zone	Of concern
7.2.6	Mosaic of clumps of notophyll vine forest, sclerophyll spp. shrublands and open woodlands, and bare sand blows, on aeolian dunes	Of concern
7.3.2	Grasslands and sedgeland ± Melaleuca spp., of wetlands within volcanic craters, often on peat	Of concern
7.3.30	Complex of fernlands and sedgeland with emergent rainforest pioneering spp., in permanently wet peat swamps of alluvial plains	Endangered
7.3.33	Lakes within volcanic craters, including open water, and narrow shoreline sedge fringes	Of concern
7.3.34	Acacia mangium and/or A. celsa and/or A.	Endangered

	polystachya closed forest on alluvial plains	
7.3.37	Complex semi-evergreen notophyll vine forest of uplands on alluvium	Endangered
7.3.38	Complex notophyll vine forest with emergent <i>Agathis robusta</i> , on alluvial fans	Of concern
7.3.42	<i>Eucalyptus grandis</i> open forest to woodland (or vine forest with emergent <i>E. grandis</i>), on alluvium	Of concern
7.3.47	<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i> , <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> and <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> open forest, on poorly drained alluvium	Of concern
7.3.48	<i>Eucalyptus portuensis</i> and <i>E. drepanophylla</i> ± <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> , ± <i>C. citriodora</i> open woodland to open forest, on dry uplands on alluvium	Of concern
7.5.3	<i>Eucalyptus portuensis</i> , <i>Corymbia citriodora</i> and <i>E. drepanophylla</i> woodland to open forest of uplands, on weathered soils of a remnant surface	Of concern
7.8.13	Simple notophyll vine forest of <i>Blepharocarya involucrigera</i> of high rainfall, cloudy uplands on basalt	Of concern
7.8.17	<i>Eucalyptus portuensis</i> and <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> ± <i>C. citriodora</i> woodland to open forest on basalt	Of concern
7.11.2	Notophyll or mesophyll vine forest with <i>Archontophoenix alexandrae</i> or <i>Licuala ramsayi</i> , on metamorphics	Of concern
7.11.36	<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i> , <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> , <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> shrubland with <i>Xanthorrhoea johnsonii</i> on serpentinite foothills with deep red soils	Of concern
7.11.45	<i>Eucalyptus cloeziana</i> open forest on metamorphics	Of concern
7.11.48	<i>Melaleuca viridiflora</i> ± <i>Corymbia clarksoniana</i> ± <i>Eucalyptus platyphylla</i> woodland to open forest, on metamorphics	Of concern
7.12.45	Simple notophyll vine forest dominated by <i>Dryadodaphne</i> sp. (Mt Lewis B.P. Hyland+RFK1496) of wet highlands on granite	Of concern
7.12.47	Notophyll-microphyll semi-evergreen vine forest with <i>Argyrodendron polyandrum</i> emergents, on rhyolite	Of concern
7.12.63	<i>Eucalyptus moluccana</i> woodland, on granite and rhyolite	Of concern
7.12.67	<i>Gleichenia dicarpa</i> , <i>Gahnia sieberiana</i> , <i>Lycopodiella cernua</i> , <i>Lycopodium deuterodensum</i> closed fernland of granite highlands, on Thornton Peak and Mt Bartle Frere	Of concern
7.12.68	Complex notophyll vine forest of cloudy moist to wet highlands on granite	Of concern

8.2.5	Notophyll feather palm vine forest dominated by <i>Archontophoenix cunninghamiana</i> on parabolic dunes	Of concern
8.2.9	<i>Heteropogon triticeus</i> , <i>Imperata cylindrica</i> and <i>Themeda triandra</i> grassland on coastal dunes	Of concern
8.3.11	<i>Melaleuca</i> sp. aff. <i>viridiflora</i> closed forest to woodland in broad drainage areas (wetlands)	Endangered
8.10.1	<i>Acacia julifera</i> subsp. <i>julifera</i> and/or <i>Eucalyptus</i> spp. ± <i>Corymbia</i> spp. ± <i>Allocasuarina luehmannii</i> ± <i>Acacia</i> spp. open-forest to woodland on exposed slopes of islands, on Cretaceous sedimentary rocks	Of concern
8.11.7	<i>Xanthorrhoea latifolia</i> subsp. <i>latifolia</i> and <i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i> shrubland on exposed metamorphic mountain tops	Of concern
9.4.3	<i>Acacia harpophylla</i> and <i>Lysiphillum carronii</i> open woodland on Cainozoic clays	Of concern
9.10.2	Springs and their associated vegetation on quartzose sandstone, limestone, metamorphic rock and granite	Of concern
10.3.30	<i>Casuarina cristata</i> woodland on flood plains	Of concern
10.3.31	Artesian springs emerging on alluvial plains	Of concern
10.4.9	<i>Corymbia terminalis</i> low open woodland on Cainozoic lake beds	Of concern
11.2.4	Lagoons in swales	Of concern
11.8.9	<i>Callitris</i> spp. ± vine thicket on Cainozoic igneous rocks. Hillsides	Of concern
11.8.12	<i>Eucalyptus microcarpa</i> , <i>E. exserta</i> woodland on Cainozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
11.9.6	<i>Acacia melvillei</i> ± <i>A. harpophylla</i> open forest on fine-grained sedimentary rocks	Endangered
12.8.11	<i>Eucalyptus dunnii</i> tall open forest on Cainozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
12.8.12	<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i> tall open forest on Cainozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
12.8.18	Simple notophyll vine forest with <i>Ceratopetalum apetalum</i> on Cainozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
12.8.22	Semi-evergreen vine thicket with <i>Brachychiton australis</i> on Cainozoic igneous rocks. Usually northern half of bioregion	Endangered
12.8.26	<i>Corymbia trachyphloia</i> and <i>Eucalyptus major</i> woodland on igneous rocks	Of concern
12.9-10.9	Shrubland/low woodland on sandstone lithosols	Of concern

12.9-10.11	Melaleuca irbyana low open forest on sedimentary rocks	Endangered
12.9-10.13	Eucalyptus corynodes woodland on sedimentary rocks	Of concern
13.3.2	Eucalyptus nova-anglica open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
13.3.3	Eucalyptus nobilis open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
13.3.6	Sedgeland on igneous rocks	Of concern
13.3.7	Eucalyptus tereticornis, Angophora floribunda open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
13.9.2	Eucalyptus moluccana open forest on fine-grained sedimentary rocks	Endangered
13.11.2	Eucalyptus laevopinea open forest on metamorphics	Of concern
13.11.7	Low microphyll vine forest on metamorphics	Of concern

Table 2 – Guideline for Determining Ecological Equivalence

Ecological Equivalence Factors	Considerations	Sources of Information
Strategic position	<p>A strategic position may include any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An ecological corridor being: a strategic rehabilitation area identified by the State government; an ecological corridor identified by the Federal, State or local government either on its website or in an approved and publically available document; or other endorsed, strategic corridors identified by a recognised organisation or group. 2. Adjacent to areas identified primarily for a conservation purpose. These areas include, but not limited to: protected area estate under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>; and areas acquired by local government. 3. An area which is a critical fragment within a landscape. A critical fragment may include: small to medium sized patches of vegetation, shown as remnant vegetation on a regional ecosystem or remnant map, within a highly fragmented or largely cleared environment and are important due to the site's: species richness or abundance; importance for altitudinal or latitudinal migrants; culturally significant species; or role as a stepping stone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity: see reference 1 in References section • Regional Plans: see reference 2 in References section • Queensland Government Data Download Service: see reference 3 in References section • Local government planning schemes and conservation strategies
Species diversity	<p>This factor provides information on a site's biodiversity. It provides an indicator of the number of species (species richness)</p>	

	<p>within a community, in addition to the relative abundance of the different types of species (evenness).</p>	
<p>Condition of vegetation</p>	<p>Condition can be described in terms of genetic or species diversity, vegetation community structure, presence and abundance of native fauna, presence and abundance of feral animals, pests and weeds, health of soil and water, long-term viability of the vegetation and ability of the ecosystem to withstand threatening processes.</p> <p>Indicators based on key vegetative structural elements are a reliable and cost effective way to assess biodiversity and hence condition (Eyre et al. 2006). The BioCondition field assessment manual produced by the Department of Environment and Resource Management provides for a range of assessable site-based condition attributes that, in combination, provide a thorough assessment of condition. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of woody perennial species Native plant species richness Tree canopy cover (%) Tree canopy height Shrub layer cover (%) Native perennial grass cover (%) Native perennial forb and non-grass cover (%) Native annual grass, forb and non-grass cover (%) Large trees Fallen woody material Weed cover Litter cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biocondition: see references 1 and 4 in References section • BioCondition: A Terrestrial Vegetation Condition Assessment Tool for Biodiversity in Queensland Field Assessment Manual, T.J. Eyre et. al; and See reference 5 in References section
<p>Landscape context attributes</p> <p>Patch size</p> <p>Connectivity</p> <p>Context</p>	<p><i>Patch size</i></p> <p>Large patches in the landscape are less susceptible to edge effects and are more likely to sustain viable and more varied populations of native flora and fauna than smaller patches.</p> <p><i>Connectivity</i></p> <p>Wildlife corridors are areas of native vegetation (both remnant and non-remnant) that link other native vegetation within an otherwise cleared landscape. Corridors are an important tool to mitigate the impact of habitat loss and fragmentation.</p> <p>In a cleared or highly modified environment, if the offset is linked to other areas of native vegetation, there is a greater enhancement of biodiversity and consequently, greater long term conservation outcomes.</p> <p>Corridors play an important role in both providing habitat and assisting in wildlife movement and genetic flow.</p> <p>Corridors have been identified at different geographical scales by State and local governments. The EPA's BPA's identify Bioregional Wildlife Corridors while individual local government's may identify ecological corridors significant to their local area. These may be identified in planning schemes or conservation strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity: see reference 1 and 4 in References section • Queensland Government Data Download Service: see reference 3 in References section • Native vegetation management in QLD – background science and values, 2000 NRW, Chapter 4 • Local government planning schemes and conservation strategies

	<p><i>Context</i> Large areas of native vegetation that are in close proximity to the site, whether connected or not, generally provide the site a greater landscape conservation value compared to small areas nearby.</p>	
<p>Special values</p>	<p>An area with special values may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Centres of endemism – areas where concentrations of taxa are endemic to a bioregion or subregion are found. 2. Wildlife refugia (Morton et al. 1995), for example, islands, mound springs, caves, wetlands, gorges, mountain ranges and topographic isolates, ecological refuges, refuges from exotic animals, and refuges from clearing. The latter may include large areas that are not suitable for clearing because of land suitability/capability. 3. Areas with concentrations of disjunct populations. 4. Areas with concentrations of taxa at the limits of their geographic ranges. 5. Areas with high species richness. 6. Areas with concentrations of relictual populations (ancient and primitive taxa). 7. Areas containing regional ecosystems with distinct variation in species composition associated with geomorphology and other environmental variables. 8. An artificial waterbody or managed /manipulated wetland of ecological significance. 9. Areas with a high density of hollow-bearing trees that provide habitat for animals. 10. Breeding or roosting sites used by a significant number of individuals. 11. Species of conservation significance at either a local, regional, State or Federal level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity: see reference 1 in References section • Local government planning schemes and conservation strategies

Definitions

Glossary of Terms

Note: Where any term is already defined in the VMA or an applicable VMA regional vegetation management code or concurrence agency policy, this Offsets Policy does not redefine the term.

Administering authority

Is the chief executive of the agency administering the VMA.

Bioregions

Are based on broad landscape patterns that reflect the major structural geologies and climate as well as major changes in floristic and faunal assemblages. Bioregions contain a number of subregions. The exact location of the bioregion boundaries are held in digital electronic form by the Department of Environment and Resource Management and are available from Department of Environment and Resource Management service centres.

Broad vegetation groups

Are a higher-level grouping of vegetation units or regional ecosystems. For further information please refer to:

- Queensland Herbarium - Methodology for Survey and Mapping of Regional Ecosystems and Vegetation Communities in Queensland. Version 3.1.
- Australian Government - Australia's Native Vegetation. A Summary of Australia's Major Vegetation Groups, 2007.
<http://www.environment.gov.au/erin/nvis/publications/pubs/major-veg-summary.pdf>
<<http://www.environment.gov.au/erin/nvis/publications/pubs/major-veg-summary.pdf>>

Critically limited regional ecosystems

Have a remnant extent below 5% of their pre-clearing extent and that are less than 500 hectares in total extent, or that have a remnant extent less than 200 hectares, or that are at risk of the remnant extent falling below 200 hectares.

Legally Binding Mechanism

A legally binding mechanism may include:

- Declaration of an area under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*;
- A covenant under the *Land Title Act 1994*, *Land Act 1994* and *Integrated Planning Act 1997*; or
- Dedication as a protected area under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*; or
- Another legally binding mechanism, approved by the Department of Environment and Resource Management, which provides for the protection of the offset vegetation consistent with this Offsets Policy.

Legally Binding Agreement

A legally binding agreement may include:

1. **Deed of Agreement -**
 - entered into between the Department of Environment and Resource Management and an applicant; and
 - signed by a person with suitable authority, for example, chief executive.
2. **Letter of Obligation –**
 - entered into between the Department of Environment and Resource Management and an applicant being the State of Queensland, where the State of Queensland cannot enter into a Deed of Agreement; and
 - signed by a person with suitable authority, for example, chief executive.

Pre-clearing regional ecosystem is—

The regional ecosystem present before clearing. It is determined by using a range of tools including one or more of:

- a digital mapping layer which shows the pre-clear extent of regional ecosystems, available for viewing from Department of Environment and Resource Management service centres;
- geology mapping;
- on-ground ecological assessment of current vegetation coverage (e.g. regrowth);
- remote sensing tools including current and historical aerial photos and satellite imagery.

References

1. <http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/biodiversity/index.html>
<<http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/biodiversity/index.html>>
2. <http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/regional-planning/index.php>
<<http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/regional-planning/index.php>>
3. <http://dds.information.qld.gov.au/dds> <<http://dds.information.qld.gov.au/dds>>
4. http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/plants/queensland_herbarium/conservation_ecology_and_ecological_rese
<http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/plants/queensland_herbarium/conservation_ecology_and_ecological_rese>
5. <http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/register/p02603aa.pdf> <<http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/register/p02603aa.pdf>>

Legislation

Vegetation Management Act 1999

Nature Conservation Act 1992

Integrated Planning Act 1997