



# Policy for Vegetation Management Offsets

28 September 2007

## VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Comments
1.0	20 November 2006	New policy endorsed
2.0	23 August 2007	New version endorsed
2.1	28 September 2007	Amendment to Table 2 and Table 3

## RATIONALE:

The *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA) regulates the clearing of vegetation over all tenures in both rural and urban areas. The VMA states:

The purpose of the Act is to regulate the clearing of vegetation in a way that—

- a) conserves the following:
  - i) Remnant *endangered* regional ecosystems
  - ii) Remnant *of concern* regional ecosystems
  - iii) Remnant *not of concern* regional ecosystems
- 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 matters mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (e); and
- g) reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Significant challenges exist to achieve the State's vegetation management objectives whilst recognising other goals of government that include accommodating population growth, maintaining the quality of life for existing and future communities and providing infrastructure.

Vegetation offsets can assist in balancing these interests in some circumstances, as they provide a mechanism for particular development to proceed while ensuring long-term conservation of remnant regional ecosystems.

The VMA codes set out performance requirements that development applications for clearing native vegetation must meet.

A vegetation management offset (offset) is a legal arrangement or agreement that, over time, guarantees to maintain the extent, structure and function of—

- a) regional ecosystems;
- b) essential habitat; and
- c) vegetation associated with—
  - i) watercourses;
  - ii) natural wetlands; and
  - iii) natural significant wetlands.

An offset is a means of meeting relevant performance requirements of an applicable code under the VMA.

An offset may be proposed by an applicant as a solution to meet a number of performance requirements. This policy sets criteria and provides guidance for what would constitute an acceptable offset under the VMA applicable code.

Offsets are not a suitable option where the impacts of development have an irreversible effect on biodiversity.

## **PURPOSE/SCOPE:**

This policy applies to an offset proposed to meet a performance requirement in an applicable *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA) code.

This policy is to be used by Vegetation Management Officers and other relevant officers when assessing a development application.

## **Definitions**

Words underlined in the text of the Policy are defined in the glossary of terms. Where any term is already defined in the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA) or an applicable VMA code, this policy does not redefine the term.

## **POLICY:**

An offset may be proposed as a solution to meet a performance requirement where the performance requirement requires that a development “maintain the current extent” of certain vegetation or habitat.

“Maintain the current extent” is defined in the Regional Vegetation Management Codes as—

- a) not clearing;
- b) ensuring the regional ecosystem structure and function are maintained; or
- c) providing an offset in accordance with the current policy for vegetation management offsets administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Water.

An offset must meet criteria 1 to 7 described below. Tables 1 and 2 provide guidelines to assist in achieving the criteria. Table 1 provides guidelines for determining ecological equivalence. Table 2 provides offset option guidelines. Table 3 lists endangered and of concern regional ecosystems that have a critically low remnant coverage. To ensure accurate representation of regional ecosystems in Table 3, the Director-Vegetation Management can amend at any time the list of regional ecosystems in Table 3.

Where a project will result in a demonstrated high level of community benefit at a local, regional or state level and identifying the offset would unreasonably delay the project, the offset must at least meet criteria 6 before development approval is granted.

## **Offset Criteria**

### **1. Limitations on offset vegetation**

The proposed offset must not be:

- a) mapped as remnant vegetation, unless:
  - i) the area has a valid clearing approval that would result in the area being cleared; or
  - ii) it is reasonably foreseeable that the remnant vegetation will fall below the criteria for remnant vegetation and appear as white on a regional ecosystem map through an identified and immediate threatening process; and
- b) vegetation that is required to be retained under conditions of a development approval; and
- c) a category 1 area, category 2 area, category 3 area, or category 4 area on a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation; and
- d) an area on which vegetation is protected by another instrument of State Government unless 1.a)i) or 1.a)ii) apply. However, where an offset is required under another Act or policy of the State, the same offset can be used to satisfy multiple requirements providing the requirements of this policy are met.

### **2. Selection and location of appropriate regional ecosystem**

The proposed offset must:

- a) maintain ecological processes at a subregional level, including interrelationships of natural values, species distributions and movements—by ideally being within the same bioregion and the same subregion as the area proposed to be cleared. However the proposed offset may be within another bioregion if the area proposed for clearing is in

- the following highly vegetated bioregions: the Northwest Highlands, Gulf Plains, Cape York Peninsula, Mitchell Grass Downs, Channel Country or Einasleigh Uplands; and
- b) be geographically close to the area proposed for clearing as is reasonably achievable to ensure that localised environmental effects of the clearing will be mitigated and ecological equivalence achieved; and
  - c) have the same pre-clearing regional ecosystem as the area proposed for clearing if the area proposed for clearing is within a regional ecosystem that is listed in Table 3; and
  - d) have the same pre-clearing regional ecosystem as the area proposed for clearing when offsetting essential habitat; and
  - e) for all other regional ecosystems not listed in Table 3 and not mapped as essential habitat, be a pre-clearing regional ecosystem that has the same or higher conservation status as the area proposed for clearing and should ideally be on the same landzone as the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing.

### **3. Remnant mapping**

The proposed offset must be an area which is large enough to be mapped as remnant vegetation in accordance with the current version of the EPA's "Methodology for Survey and Mapping of Regional Ecosystems and Vegetation Communities in Queensland".

### **4. Obtaining ecological equivalence**

The proposed offset must become ecologically equivalent to the area proposed for clearing.

Ecological equivalence must be demonstrated using all of the following factors:

- a) Location
- b) Strategic position
- c) Area
- d) Comparable vegetation community attributes
- e) Condition of vegetation
- f) Regaining remnant status
- g) Landscape context attributes

Factors may not have equal weight every time. Ecological equivalence is achieved when the ecological equivalence factors achieve equivalence overall, despite one or more factors not achieving equivalence. Table 1 provides guidelines for determining ecological equivalence for each of the factors listed above.

### **5. Ensuring ongoing management**

The proposed offset must include a management plan that specifies how the offset will be managed to ensure it achieves or maintains remnant regional ecosystems status and ecological equivalence.

The management plan must include (but is not limited to):

- a) a map clearly showing the boundary of the proposed offset; and
- b) the proposed management intent and outcomes; and
- c) activities that will be undertaken to achieve the management intent and outcomes; and
- d) restrictions, if any, imposed on the use of the offset area to achieve the management intent and outcomes; and
- e) an analysis of the risks to achieving the management intent and outcomes, actions to minimise the risks and remedial action that will be undertaken if any of the risks occur; and
- f) a monitoring and reporting program.

## 6. Ensuring the offset is legally secured

- a) The offset area and the arrangements for securing the future protection of the offset area must be proposed as part of the development application before a development approval can be issued.
- b) However, where a project will result in a demonstrated high level of community benefit at a local, regional or state level, and identifying the offset would unreasonably delay the project, NRW will accept specified arrangements that guarantee the securing of a suitable offset prior to the development approval being issued. Once the development approval is issued, the applicant must, within twelve months, provide an offset that meets all other criteria of this policy.

Acceptable forms of security to meet 6.a) and 6.b) above are provided in the definition of legally secured.

## 7. Other requirements

The proposed offset:

- a) is not required to be on land owned by the applicant. If the land is not owned by the applicant, the offset must be protected and managed under agreement with the landholder; and
- b) can not be a financial donation or contribution, although a financial contribution may be made to a third party for the management of an approved offset.

**Table 1 – Guidelines for Determining Ecological Equivalence**

Ecological Equivalence Factors	Considerations	Resources
Location	<p>Offset areas that are further away from the area proposed to be cleared share less ecological similarity when compared to offset areas that are close by and within the same subregion.</p> <p>The distance between the offset area and the area proposed for clearing also has an impact on local biodiversity. For example, the further away the offset, the less likely it will mitigate the impact of the clearing on local biodiversity values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Conservation Status of Queensland's Bioregional Ecosystems, Sattler and Williams 1999, EPA.</li> </ul>
Strategic position	<p>An offset that is located in a State or Regional Wildlife Corridor, part of a local government strategic biodiversity corridor or adjacent to the protected area estate or other protected areas would be a highly desirable outcome for conservation of biodiversity.</p> <p>Strategic corridors have also been identified at different geographical scales by State and local governments. The EPA's Biodiversity Planning Assessment's (BPA's) identify Bioregional Wildlife Corridors while individual local government's may have identified ecological corridors significant to their local area which may be identified in planning schemes or conservation strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EPA's biodiversity website: <a href="http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity">http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity</a></li> <li>Local government planning schemes and conservation strategies.</li> </ul>
Area	<p>Size is strongly correlated with the long-term viability of areas of native vegetation. Larger areas are less susceptible to ecological edge effects and are more likely to sustain viable populations of native flora and fauna than smaller areas. Smaller areas may make wildlife more vulnerable to disease, bushfire, pests, changes in climate, and inbreeding.</p> <p>Offsets that build on the viability of an area would provide a more desirable biodiversity outcome.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Native vegetation management in QLD – background science and values, 2000 NRW, Chapter 4.</li> </ul>
Comparable vegetation community attributes	<p>An offset that is a regional ecosystem with similar species composition, structure and forest type to the area proposed to be cleared will minimise the loss of specific vegetation community attributes and hence better ensure ecological equivalence.</p> <p>For example, if an area of remnant rainforest is proposed to be cleared, an offset that is either a non-remnant rainforest or wet sclerophyll open forest regional ecosystem with similar canopy and understorey species, would more likely achieve offset requirements as it has similar ecological values and attributes to those being lost. In contrast, woodland would be inappropriate as the ecological values of the rainforest are unrelated to the values provided by the woodland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Ecosystem Description Database – EPA website: <a href="http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity/regional_ecosystems/">http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity/regional_ecosystems/</a></li> <li>Methodology for Survey and Mapping of Regional Ecosystems and Vegetation Communities in Queensland V.J, Neldner et. al. EPA.</li> </ul>

Ecological Equivalence Factors	Considerations	Resources
<p>Condition of vegetation (site based condition attributes)</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 <i>et al.</i> 2006). The BioCondition field assessment manual produced by the EPA 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"> <li>• Recruitment of woody perennial species</li> <li>• Native plant species richness</li> <li>• Tree canopy cover (%)</li> <li>• Tree canopy height</li> <li>• Shrub layer cover (%)</li> <li>• Native perennial grass cover (%)</li> <li>• Native perennial forb and non-grass cover (%)</li> <li>• Native annual grass, forb and non-grass cover (%)</li> <li>• Large trees</li> <li>• Fallen woody material</li> <li>• Weed cover</li> <li>• Litter cover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BioCondition: A Terrestrial Vegetation Condition Assessment Tool for Biodiversity in Queensland Field Assessment Manual, T.J. Eyre <i>et. al.</i> EPA.</li> <li>• Methodology for the Establishment and Survey of Reference Sites for BioCondition, T.J. Eyre <i>et. al.</i> EPA.</li> </ul>

Ecological Equivalence Factors	Considerations	Resources
Regaining remnant status	<p>The type, quality and successional stage of regrowth vegetation (i.e. vegetation that is non-remnant) growing in the proposed offset area, and its alignment to the floristic description of the corresponding regional ecosystem will affect its ability to regain remnant status.</p> <p>Offsetting mature good quality regrowth vegetation is preferable to a degraded regrowth offset or an offset involving revegetation. The ecological values of three different types of regrowth vegetation, in the context of regaining remnant status are analysed below.</p> <p><u>Mature good-quality regrowth</u> (most desirable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low and short term management costs, with input focussing on enhancing the regrowth and facilitating its transition to maturity and remnant status.</li> <li>• Highest ecological value for regrowth as it is an intact vegetation community.</li> <li>• Ecological values easy to describe and analyse, allowing for accurate determination of RE (i.e. contains dominant species, in secondary or tertiary succession phases).</li> <li>• Low risk of failure to regain remnant status.</li> </ul> <p><u>Degraded regrowth:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high management costs, with input focussing on removing the threats and fixing the degradation through appropriate management to promote the re-establishment of the RE (dependant upon the type and severity of degradation, for example significant weed infestation).</li> <li>• Difficulty in predicting the success of the management in terms of regaining remnant status.</li> <li>• Higher risk of failure to achieve remnant status.</li> </ul> <p><u>Significant revegetation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High and long term management costs, with input focussed on re-introducing the correct floristic species of the RE and relatively intensive management (at least until regrowth is self-supporting).</li> <li>• Lowest ecological value.</li> <li>• More analysis required to ensure correct RE and landzone and to ensure required ecological values are achieved (i.e. providing specific habitat).</li> <li>• Complex requirement to design revegetation to ensure the correct floristic species aligned to the RE description (including local provenance), planting schedules and vegetation structure.</li> <li>• Higher risk of failure to achieve remnant status</li> </ul> <p>From an on-ground perspective, remnant vegetation—from the VMA—is vegetation, part of which forms the predominant canopy of the vegetation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) covering more than 50% of the undisturbed predominant canopy; and</li> <li>b) averaging more than 70% of the vegetation’s undisturbed height; and</li> <li>c) composed of species characteristic of the vegetation’s undisturbed predominant canopy.</li> </ol> <p>The Methodology for Survey and Mapping of Regional Ecosystems and Vegetation Communities in Queensland, produced by the EPA provides detailed guidance in the regional ecosystem and remnant vegetation mapping process.</p>	Methodology for Survey and Mapping of Regional Ecosystems and Vegetation Communities in Queensland V.J, Neldner et. al. EPA.

Ecological Equivalence Factors	Considerations	Resources
Landscape context attributes – incorporating size of patch, connectivity and context considerations	<p><u>Size of patch</u> 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><u>Connectivity</u> 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> <p><u>Context</u> 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BioCondition: A Terrestrial Vegetation Condition Assessment Tool for Biodiversity in Queensland Field Assessment Manual, T.J. Eyre et. al. EPA.</li> <li>• Methodology for the Establishment and Survey of Reference Sites for BioCondition, T.J. Eyre et. al. EPA.</li> <li>• Native vegetation management in QLD – background science and values, 2000 NRW, Chapter 4.</li> <li>• The EPA's biodiversity website: <a href="http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity">http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity</a></li> <li>• Local government planning schemes and conservation strategies.</li> </ul>

## Table 2 – Offset Option Guidelines

Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered.

<p><b>Regional Vegetation Management Code Performance Requirement</b></p> <p>Note: Reference to regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat in this column is a reference to the regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat proposed to be cleared, to meet the corresponding Performance Requirement in the applicable VMA code.</p>	<p><b>Offset options</b></p> <p>Note: Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered. Where the offset is proposed to meet more than one performance requirement, each applicable offset option must be met. It may be possible for one offset area to address more than one performance requirement.</p>	<p><b>Minimum area of clearing to offset ratio</b></p>
<p>1. Maintain the current extent of endangered or of concern regional ecosystems proposed to be cleared that are listed in Table 3.</p>	<p><b>Option 1.1</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>d) have less than 10% weed cover;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years; and</li> <li>f) not require revegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:2</p>
	<p><b>Option 1.2</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>d) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years;</li> <li>f) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>g) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:2.5</p>
	<p><b>Option 1.3</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>d) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 20 years;</li> <li>f) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>g) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:4</p>

<p><b>Regional Vegetation Management Code Performance Requirement</b></p> <p>Note: Reference to regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat in this column is a reference to the regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat proposed to be cleared, to meet the corresponding Performance Requirement in the applicable VMA code.</p>	<p><b>Offset options</b></p> <p>Note: Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered. Where the offset is proposed to meet more than one performance requirement, each applicable offset option must be met. It may be possible for one offset area to address more than one performance requirement.</p>	<p><b>Minimum area of clearing to offset ratio</b></p>
	<p><b>Option 1.4</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same regional ecosystem as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing; and</li> <li>c) be remnant vegetation of the same or better ecological quality that has a valid clearing approval and therefore would otherwise be cleared.</li> </ul>	<p>1:1</p>
<p>2. Maintain the current extent of endangered regional ecosystems proposed to be cleared that are not listed in Table 3.</p>	<p><b>Option 2.1</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>d) have less than 10% weed cover;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years; and</li> <li>f) not require revegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:1.5</p>
	<p><b>Option 2.2</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>d) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years;</li> <li>f) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>g) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:1.75</p>

<b>Regional Vegetation Management Code Performance Requirement</b>  Note: Reference to regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat in this column is a reference to the regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat proposed to be cleared, to meet the corresponding Performance Requirement in the applicable VMA code.	<b>Offset options</b>  Note: Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered. Where the offset is proposed to meet more than one performance requirement, each applicable offset option must be met. It may be possible for one offset area to address more than one performance requirement.	<b>Minimum area of clearing to offset ratio</b>
	<b>Option 2.3</b> The proposed offset must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>d) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 20 years;</li> <li>f) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>g) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	1:3
	<b>Option 2.4</b> The proposed offset must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same regional ecosystem as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing; and</li> <li>c) be remnant vegetation of the same or better ecological quality that has a valid clearing approval and therefore would otherwise be cleared.</li> </ul>	1:1
	<b>Option 2.5</b> The proposed offset must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be an endangered <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u>;</li> <li>b) be on the same land zone as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be in the same <u>subregion</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>d) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>e) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>f) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years;</li> <li>g) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>h) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	1:2

<p><b>Regional Vegetation Management Code Performance Requirement</b></p> <p>Note: Reference to regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat in this column is a reference to the regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat proposed to be cleared, to meet the corresponding Performance Requirement in the applicable VMA code.</p>	<p><b>Offset options</b></p> <p>Note: Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered. Where the offset is proposed to meet more than one performance requirement, each applicable offset option must be met. It may be possible for one offset area to address more than one performance requirement.</p>	<p><b>Minimum area of clearing to offset ratio</b></p>
	<p><b>Option 2.6</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be an endangered <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> that contains similar species and habitat values to the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) demonstrate ecological equivalence or better will be provided than the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be within the same <u>bioregion</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>d) provide strategic biodiversity protection that enhances the viability and extent of endangered remnant vegetation;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years; and</li> <li>f) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area.</li> </ul>	<p>Net benefit (Minimum 1:2.5)</p>
<p>3. Maintain the current extent of of concern regional ecosystems proposed to be cleared that are not listed in Table 3.</p>	<p><b>Option 3.1</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>h) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>i) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>j) have less than 10% weed cover;</li> <li>k) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years; and</li> <li>l) not require revegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:1.5</p>
	<p><b>Option 3.2</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>i) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>j) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>k) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>l) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years;</li> <li>m) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>n) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:1.75</p>

<p><b>Regional Vegetation Management Code Performance Requirement</b></p> <p>Note: Reference to regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat in this column is a reference to the regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat proposed to be cleared, to meet the corresponding Performance Requirement in the applicable VMA code.</p>	<p><b>Offset options</b></p> <p>Note: Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered. Where the offset is proposed to meet more than one performance requirement, each applicable offset option must be met. It may be possible for one offset area to address more than one performance requirement.</p>	<p><b>Minimum area of clearing to offset ratio</b></p>
	<p><b>Option 3.3</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>i) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>j) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>k) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>l) with management, attain remnant status within 20 years;</li> <li>m) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>n) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:3</p>
	<p><b>Option 3.4</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) be the same regional ecosystem as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>e) be within 20 kilometres of the area proposed for clearing; and</li> <li>f) be remnant vegetation of the same or better ecological quality that has a valid clearing approval and therefore would otherwise be cleared.</li> </ul>	<p>1:1</p>
	<p><b>Option 3.5</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be an endangered or of concern <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u>;</li> <li>b) be on the same land zone as area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be in the same <u>subregion</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>d) be non-remnant vegetation;</li> <li>e) have less than 25% weed cover;</li> <li>f) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years;</li> <li>g) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area; and</li> <li>h) provide connectivity or a buffer to other remnant vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p>1:2</p>

<p><b>Regional Vegetation Management Code Performance Requirement</b></p> <p>Note: Reference to regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat in this column is a reference to the regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat proposed to be cleared, to meet the corresponding Performance Requirement in the applicable VMA code.</p>	<p><b>Offset options</b></p> <p>Note: Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered. Where the offset is proposed to meet more than one performance requirement, each applicable offset option must be met. It may be possible for one offset area to address more than one performance requirement.</p>	<p><b>Minimum area of clearing to offset ratio</b></p>
	<p><b>Option 3.6</b> The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be an endangered or of concern <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> that contains similar species and habitat values to the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) demonstrate ecological equivalence or better will be provided than the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>c) be within the same <u>bioregion</u> as the area proposed for clearing ;</li> <li>d) provide strategic biodiversity protection that enhances the viability and extent of endangered and/or of concern remnant vegetation;</li> <li>e) with management, attain remnant status within 5 years; and</li> <li>f) not require revegetation across more than 10% of the offset area.</li> </ul>	<p>Net benefit (minimum 1:2.5)</p>
<p>4. Maintain the current extent of essential habitat proposed to be cleared</p>	<p>The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be the same <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> as the area proposed for clearing;</li> <li>b) include all of the essential habitat factors— including any mandatory habitat factors— as the area of essential habitat proposed for clearing; and</li> <li>c) demonstrate that the impacts on the species are mitigated by the offset.</li> </ul>	<p>1:1.5 where proposed offset is in the same <u>subregion</u>; or 1:3 in all other locations.</p>
<p>5. Maintain the current extent of assessable vegetation associated with any natural significant wetland and/or natural wetland proposed to be cleared</p>	<p>The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be a wetland <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> listed in the relevant Regional Vegetation Management Code; or</li> <li>b) be a <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> 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.</li> </ul>	<p>1:2 where proposed offset is in the same <u>subregion</u>; or 1:3 in all other locations.</p>
<p>6. Maintain the current extent of assessable vegetation associated with any watercourse proposed to be cleared</p>	<p>The proposed offset must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be a <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> associated with any watercourse that has the same or higher conservation status than the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing; and</li> <li>b) be a <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> associated with a watercourse that has at least the same stream order as the watercourse proposed for clearing.</li> </ul>	<p>1:2 where proposed offset is in the same <u>subregion</u>; or 1:3 in all other locations.</p>

<p><b>Regional Vegetation Management Code Performance Requirement</b></p> <p>Note: Reference to regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat in this column is a reference to the regional ecosystems, assessable vegetation and essential habitat proposed to be cleared, to meet the corresponding Performance Requirement in the applicable VMA code.</p>	<p><b>Offset options</b></p> <p>Note: Other offset proposals that ensure the extent of relevant vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained can be considered. Where the offset is proposed to meet more than one performance requirement, each applicable offset option must be met. It may be possible for one offset area to address more than one performance requirement.</p>	<p><b>Minimum area of clearing to offset ratio</b></p>
<p>7. Maintain the current extent of regional ecosystems proposed to be cleared that are at risk of—</p> <p>a) the remnant extent of the regional ecosystem falling below 30% of its pre-clearing extent; or</p> <p>b) having a remnant extent of less than 10000 hectares;</p> <p>as listed in the equivalent table of the applicable VMA code (e.g. Table 2 in the Southeast QLD Bioregion Regional Vegetation Management Code).</p>	<p>The proposed offset must:</p> <p>a) be a <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> 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</p> <p>b) be a <u>pre-clearing regional ecosystem</u> that has a higher conservation status than the regional ecosystem proposed for clearing.</p>	<p>For option a), 1:2 where proposed offset is in the same <u>subregion</u>; or 1:3 in all other locations.</p> <p>For option b) refer to the relevant ratios for endangered or of concern regional ecosystems in this table.</p>

**Table 3: Regional Ecosystems that 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**

Regional Ecosystem description		Status
2.5.4	Cypress ( <i>Callitris glaucophylla</i> ) woodland on plains on deep sandy soils	Of concern
3.2.8	<i>Corymbia nesophila</i> ± <i>C. novoguineensis</i> woodland on old stabilised dunes	Of concern
3.2.28	Evergreen notophyll vine forest on beach ridges on coral atolls, shingle cays and sand cays	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
3.3.4	Evergreen mesophyll vine forest with <i>Archontophoenix</i> spp. On stream banks	Of concern
3.3.7	Tall semi-deciduous notophyll/microphyll vine thicket. Occurs on colluvial plains	Of concern
3.7.1	Semi-deciduous notophyll/microphyll vine thicket on isolated lateritic hillslopes	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
3.12.20	Evergreen notophyll vine forest dominated by <i>Welchiodendron longivalve</i> on headlands	Of concern
3.12.23	<i>Acacia brassii</i> low open forest on acid volcanics on northern ranges and islands	Of concern
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 <i>Acacia aneura</i> 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 ± <i>Melaleuca</i> 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
7.3.35	<i>Acacia mangium</i> and/or <i>A. celsa</i> and/or <i>A. polystachya</i> closed forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
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

Regional Ecosystem description		Status
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
7.12.67	<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
8.2.11	<i>Melaleuca</i> spp. woodland in parallel dune swales (wetlands)	Of concern
8.3.11	<i>Melaleuca</i> sp. aff. <i>viridiflora</i> closed forest to woodland in broad drainage areas (wetlands)	Endangered
8.11.7	<i>Xanthorrhoea latifolia</i> subsp. <i>latifolia</i> and <i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i> shrubland on exposed metamorphic mountain tops	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
12.3.10	<i>Eucalyptus populnea</i> woodland on alluvial plains	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	<i>Melaleuca irbyana</i> low open forest on sedimentary rocks	Endangered
12.9-10.13	<i>Eucalyptus corynodes</i> woodland on sedimentary rocks	Of concern
13.3.2	<i>Eucalyptus nova-anglica</i> open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
13.3.3	<i>Eucalyptus nobilis</i> open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
13.3.6	Sedgeland on igneous rocks	Of concern
13.3.7	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> , <i>Angophora floribunda</i> open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
13.9.2	<i>Eucalyptus moluccana</i> open forest on fine-grained sedimentary rocks	Endangered
13.11.2	<i>Eucalyptus laevopinea</i> open forest on metamorphics	Of concern
13.11.7	Low microphyll vine forest on metamorphics	Of concern

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

**Note:** Where any term is already defined in the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA) or an applicable VMA code, this policy does not redefine the term.

**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 Natural Resources and Water and are available from Department of Natural Resources and Water service centres.

### Criteria for Remnant Vegetation

From an on-ground perspective, remnant vegetation—from the VMA—is vegetation, part of which forms the predominant canopy of the vegetation:

- a. covering more than 50% of the undisturbed predominant canopy; and
- b. averaging more than 70% of the vegetation's undisturbed height; and
- c. composed of species characteristic of the vegetation's undisturbed predominant canopy.

The Methodology for Survey and Mapping of Regional Ecosystems and Vegetation Communities in Queensland (, produced by the EPA provides detailed guidance in the regional ecosystem and remnant vegetation mapping process.

### Demonstrated High Level of Community Benefit:

These projects must be able to demonstrate a high level of benefit to a local, regional or state community in terms of economic, social, cultural, aesthetic or conservation benefits. Such projects may include but are not limited to development that:

- a. serves an essential community need such as a school or essential infrastructure; and/or
- b. significantly improves the community's access to services such as a hospital or significant museum or library.

**Immediate threatening process** is—

a demonstrated threatening process where, if action is not taken to address the threat, the vegetation will no longer be classed as remnant within a period of 6 months.

**Landzone** is—

a simplified geology/substrate-landform classification for Queensland utilised in the regional ecosystem framework.

### Legally Binding Mechanism:

A legally binding mechanism may include:

- a. Dedication as a protected area under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (for example, a voluntary nature refuge or conservation park);
- b. Declaration of an area under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*;
- c. Use of a covenant over offset areas under the *Land Title Act 1994*, *Land Act 1994* and *Integrated Planning Act 1997*; or
- d. Another legally binding mechanism, approved by the Department, which provides for the protection of non-remnant vegetation until mapped remnant status is achieved;

**Legally secured means—**

Either:

1. the offset land is identified and the non-remnant vegetation protected via a legally binding mechanism. The legally binding mechanism must be:
  - (a) finalised (ie. registered, declared or gazetted as appropriate to the mechanism) prior to the development approval being given; and
  - (b) supported by a management plan to ensure the land achieves remnant status within the relevant period of time.

or

2. the offset land is identified and the non-remnant vegetation is protected via a legally binding agreement between the applicant and a landholder. The legally binding agreement must:
  - a) be signed by the applicant and landholder<sup>1</sup> prior to any development approval being given;
  - b) accompany a signed but not registered, declared or gazetted legally binding mechanism, and management plan; and
  - c) direct the registering, declaration or gazettal of the legally binding mechanism to occur within 4 months of the development approval being given;
  - d) identify all relevant payments made by the applicant relevant to the landholder and the offset property.

or

3. the applicant enters into a legally binding agreement to identify and secure the offset requirement—
  - a) This can only occur:
    - i. between the Department of Natural Resources, the applicant and another party, if relevant; and
    - ii. for development that provides a demonstrated high level of community benefit that must proceed in the public interest; and
    - iii. the identification and securing of an offset would unreasonably delay the project.
  - b) The signed legally binding agreement<sup>2</sup> must:
    - i. be provided prior to the development approval being given;
    - ii. commit to securing an offset consistent with this policy within 12 months via a legally binding mechanism;
    - iii. commit to quarterly reporting on the progress of identifying and securing an offset; and
    - iv. is accompanied by financial surety<sup>3,4</sup> of an appropriate amount for compliance with the agreement

or

4. the applicant provides a letter of obligation committing to identify and secure the offset requirement—
  - a) This can only occur for development:

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<sup>1</sup> The landholder is required to obtain a letter from their solicitor stating that the landholder has received legal advice in regards to their obligations under the legally binding agreement. The letter must accompany the legally binding agreement.

<sup>2</sup> The agreement must be signed by a person with suitable authority, for example, Chief Executive Officer.

<sup>3</sup> The applicant is required to obtain at least one quote for securing and managing the offset. Considerations in developing a quote should include the costs associated with identifying and securing an offset using a legally binding mechanism, the ongoing management costs of the offset property, and any possible administration and legal costs. The quote will be considered in the determination of appropriate financial surety.

<sup>4</sup> Financial security is not required for development undertaken by the State of Queensland and consistent with 3(a) ii and iii.

- i. Undertaken by the State of Queensland;
  - ii. where the State of Queensland cannot enter into a legally binding agreement with itself;
  - iii. which provides a demonstrated high level of community benefit that must proceed in the public interest; and
  - iv. where the identification and securing of an offset would unreasonably delay the project.
- b) The signed letter of obligation<sup>5</sup> must:
  - i. be provided prior to the development approval being given;
  - ii. identify the proponent, project and stage;
  - iii. identify the offset obligation;
  - iv. commit to identifying and securing an offset consistent with this policy within 12 months;
  - v. commit to quarterly progress reports on the identification and securing of the offset;
  - vi. provide a departmental contact.

or

5. the offset land is identified as remnant vegetation which is subject to either a valid clearing approval or an immediate threatening process, and the remnant vegetation is protected in perpetuity via a legally binding mechanism—

- a. The legally binding mechanism must be:
  - i. finalised (ie. registered, declared or gazetted as appropriate to the mechanism) prior to the development approval being given; and
  - ii. supported by a management plan to ensure the appropriate management of the offset area and the maintenance of its remnant status.
- b. For offsets that are subject to a valid clearing approval, they must be supported by documentary evidence that the development approval has been amended to prevent the clearing of the vegetation.

**Pre-clearing regional ecosystem** is—

the regional ecosystem present before clearing. It is determined by using a range of tools including:

- a digital mapping layer which shows the pre-clear extent of regional ecosystems, available for viewing from Department of Natural Resources and Water 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.

**Subregion** means—

an area that is contained within a specific bioregion and that is usually associated with specific geology and geomorphology, finer climatic patterns, ecological processes at a subregional level, interrelationships of natural values, species distributions and movements. The exact location of the subregion boundaries are held in digital electronic form by the Department of Natural Resources and Water, and are available from Department of Natural Resources and Water service centres.

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<sup>5</sup> The agreement must be signed by a person with suitable authority, for example, the Director General or Chief Executive Officer.