



Government of South Australia

Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources
Management Board

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Dear sir / madam

Re: EPBC Act – Draft Australian Government Offset Policy

www.epnrm.sa.gov.au

The Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board (EPNRM) is pleased to be able to offer comments on the EPBC – Draft Australian Government Offset Policy discussed below.

EPNRM is supportive of the concept and principles of the draft Environmental Offsets Policy. It is encouraging to see the Australian Government being proactive in considering options for offsets, and looking at the ongoing development of this policy area in the coming years.

EPNRM is particularly supportive of:

- greater flexibility being incorporated into the approach to offsets, as the best outcome is often not the most simple. Flexibility will allow for the development of innovative local solutions.
- offsets not being considered at the referral stage. This allows regions to remain transparent where offsets/developments may concern them locally.
- the statement on page 10 "An improved overall conservation outcome is not achieved by an offset that simply increases the amount of habitat or ecological community that is protected by covenant or other mechanism. Protection must be matched by management of the protected matter that is impacted". Protection provided through conservation agreement/legislation does not automatically invoke active management, and the latter is crucial to ensure an actual environmental benefit to the offset.

EPNRM is concerned that:

- biodiversity banking may result in the centralisation of offset design, thus risks losing the local focus on the area where the impact has occurred, and the potential to add socio-economic benefits to offsets.
- an offset may be approved as a component of a State or territory offset as suggested on Page 17. In most cases these State level offsets are negotiated for a different purpose, thus would rarely provide a targeted benefit to the protected matter identified under the EPBC Act. Even if this dual benefit can be provided, the benefit should be seen as a benefit of both sets of offset and not coupled together.

EPNRM recommends that:

- In the first instance, regional bodies and plans are consulted in the development of an offset to ensure that any offsets are designed for the best on-ground outcome.

This will ensure that offsets are in keeping with regional priorities, particularly where socio-economic benefits are to be provided to value-add to the offset.

- proponents be given prescriptive details of the offset actions required, and guidance in developing an appropriate offset. This would remove ambiguity for developers and provide a greater likelihood that they may look for the best offset options with socio-economic wins, even if these take more effort to develop. A recent local example with Ironclad Mining at Wilcherry Hill showed where this provision would have enabled the company to put more time and effort into engaging the community and regional bodies in developing their approach to long-term development in the area.
- proponents pay a fee to the Department, in conjunction with regional bodies, to develop these offsets to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements as efficiently as possible.
- environmental pest and weed control be used as examples in possible activities for offsets on page 6 and 10.
- offsets take into account ecological timeframes and in many cases look for in-perpetuity benefit.
- areas set aside as an offset are protected from future development. Without this offsets can not be considered as long-term environmental benefits
- indirect offsets only be allowed where knowledge of the species is lacking, and support that only 25% of an offset can be indirect.
- Any biodiversity banking/credits scheme ensures that the credits are ultimately used in the area from which they came. This will ensure that the landscape as well as species impacts from development are taken into account, and provide the best option for local outcomes to accompany impact.

Thankyou for this opportunity to respond to the draft offset policy. If you require further clarification to this response please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Mark Stanley
Interim Deputy Regional Manager NRM
18 / 10 / 11