

***Native Vegetation Offsets:
are they a viable option?***

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The points to consider:

- What are biodiversity offsets?
- Examples of various biodiversity offset schemes
- Drawbacks that have been identified with ecology restoration projects that are the key to offset schemes
- Considerations for developing a native vegetation offset scheme.

Biodiversity Offsets: what are they?

“no net loss
of habitat
over time”

Maron, M, et al “Can offsets really compensate for habitat removal? The case of the endangered red-tailed black cockatoo” (2010) 47 *Journal of Applied Ecology* 348, 348

Biodiversity Offsets: what are they?

Market-based schemes

and

Non market-based schemes

Non market-based biodiversity offset schemes:

The “significant environmental benefit” offset in the SA Native Vegetation Act

- an example of an existing native vegetation offset scheme

Market-based biodiversity offset schemes:

Some use existing markets:

- The Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges **BushBid** system
- **BushTender, EcoTender, BushBroker** schemes (Victoria)

Others create “markets”

Market-based biodiversity offset schemes:

- STEP 1:** the creation by a landowner of the “credit” by undertaking actions to restore, protect, enhance native vegetation.
- STEP 2:** the sale of the credits to a central “pool” in return for entering into a binding agreement to continue the activity.
- STEP 3:** the developer who is required to offset a native vegetation loss buys sufficient “credits” from the central “pool”.

Market based biodiversity offset schemes:

eg: **BioBanking Scheme** in NSW

Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (NSW)

Market-based biodiversity offset schemes:

Advantages:

- Greater flexibility
- Turn a “liability” into an “asset”

Dangers and Concerns:

- Is biodiversity something that can/should be traded at all? Compare to carbon emission trading.
- Time lags
- Science of restoration ecology is still a developing area

Policy considerations for biodiversity offset schemes:

- 1) **Red light** and **green light** zoning
- 2) **Cautious science-based policy planning**