



**ACT**  
Government

Environment, Planning and  
Sustainable Development

## TALKING POINTS ACT Environmental Offsets Policy

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### TALKING POINTS FOR ACT ENVIRONMENTAL OFFSETS POLICY REVIEW

- In the ACT, environmental offsets are established to compensate for unavoidable impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- The current ACT Environmental Offsets Policy (Policy) was developed in 2015 and requires review.
- In April 2022, the Directorate recruited an officer to undertake a review of the current Policy.
- Consultation with relevant internal areas of the Directorate, SLA and Treasury has identified a range of issues and risks in the ACT Environmental Offsets Policy (Policy) and offsets program delivery space.
  - These span governance arrangements, policy gaps, risk exposure, offset site availability, cross-Government communications, funding and resourcing.
- Preliminary work has identified a critical barrier to the Policy and offsets program is the lack of an overarching strategic, coordinated and evidence-based approach to evaluate the effectiveness of existing offsets and inform decision-making for future sites.
- We have initiated the review of the Policy, which will include recommendations to address the issues and risks identified. We anticipate this review of the Policy will be completed by December 2022.
  - Key policy issues to address include offsetting ACT development impacts in NSW, avoidance and mitigation measures, establishing advanced offsets, and third party land management arrangements.
- The work plan through to June 2023 includes development of a long-term plan to implement review recommendations and timeframe for a revised Policy. This will be informed by targeted consultation with industry and conservation experts and relevant Directorates.
- Current resourcing for the review of the Policy will progress works through to June 2023. We are looking for opportunities to continue this work post this date to implement the changes necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the Policy and offsets program.
- The Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* reform process is underway and will have implications for the Policy. While the timing of this reform remains unknown, any known changes will be incorporated into the revised Policy.

## **BACKGROUND/SENSITIVITIES**

- The *Planning and Development Act 2007* (s111(g)) requires that the Minister, every five years, considers whether the Policy needs to be reviewed. It does not set out a timeframe by which a revised Policy is to be developed.
- Current resourcing of 1 x SOG C to June 2023 is insufficient for implementing the review recommendations and developing the revised Policy. Consistent and additional resources are required to embed the structural changes necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the Policy and offsets program and ensure the ACT Government meets its Commonwealth commitments.
- Work is also underway with the ANU to develop an environmental-economic accounting framework to assist in identifying and prioritising future offset sites. The outputs can inform other environment and planning initiatives across EPSDD.

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**Approved by: Bren Burkevics, Executive Group Manager**

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