

Alliance Business Park:  
Generic Offset Management Plan  
for a grassland or grassy woodland  
EPBC Act offset site

Draft Plan

Prepared for Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd

2017

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## Document information

Report to: Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd

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Biosis matter no.:

## Document Information:

Version/date	Internal review by	Date sent to client
Draft version 01	SGM	05/12/17
Final version 01		XX/XX/17

## File name: 25346.NTGVVP.OMP.Draft.04102017

Citation: Biosis 2017. Alliance Business Park: Generic Offset Management Plan for a grassland or grassy woodland EPBC Act offset site. Report for Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd. Author: Steve Mueck, Biosis Pty Ltd, Melbourne. Project No. 25346.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Biosis acknowledges the contribution of the following people and organisations in undertaking this study:

- MAB: Dan Rush, Michael Martin
- Department of Sustainability & Environment for access to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas

The following Biosis staff were involved in this project:

- for mapping

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### Alliance Offset Plan

Planning Permit Number (ID): 716886 (Whittlesea Planning Scheme)

Proponent: Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd

Address:

### Landowner and Permit Holder Statement

#### Permit Holder

Print Name:

Signature:

Date: 2018

#### Landowner of Offset Site(s)

Print Name:

Signature:

Date: / /2018

#### Referral Authority Statement

The native vegetation credits described in this plan provide an offset for the removal of native vegetation specified in this plan to the satisfaction of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Print Name:

Position:

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Date: / /2018

#### Referral Authority Statement

The Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain described in this plan provides an offset for the removal of this Matter of National Environmental Significance specified in this plan to the satisfaction of the Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE).

Print Name:

Position:

Department of the Environment and Energy

Date: / /2018

#### Responsible Authority Approval

This Offset Plan has been approved by City of Whittlesea. This Offset Plan is now endorsed and forms part of Planning Permit No: 716886

Print Name:

Position:

Responsible Authority: City of Whittlesea

Signature:

Date: / /2018

**Date of Commencement:**

No modification variation or amendment of this Offset Plan agreed upon by the parties shall be of any force or effect unless such modification, variation or amendment is in writing and has been executed by all parties.

This plan comes into effect as of \_\_\_\_\_ 2018.

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## Summary

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Biosis Pty. Ltd. was commissioned by Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd to prepare an Offset Management Plan (OMP) for a section of XXX, a pastoral property at XXX Road, Vic in Victoria. The section assessed (covering 7.0 ha) was part of Lot X of Parcel ID within the Parish of XXX (the offset area). The property is currently owned by XXX Pty Ltd.

The 7.0 ha offset area meets the quantity and quality requirements for an offset of Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (NTGVVP) as prescribed by Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and in association with referral 2017/7930.

Specifically this plan addresses the approval under the EPBC Act for the industrial and commercial development at 165 – 195 O'Herns Road, Epping, Victoria as outlined under referral 2017/7930. Under the conditions of approval, Condition X is relevant to the offsets provided. This condition reads as follows:

Copy of the relevant EPBC Act approval condition to be inserted

The conditions provided under this approval and the relevant sections of this plan that address these conditions are outlined in **Table A** below.

This OMP requires that some land use rights are relinquished and that management actions have the primary objective aimed at the conservation and improvement of defined areas of NTGVVP. The management outline in this plan considers key management issues identified for this EPBC Act listed community.

The offset area will be protected by a covenant under the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972*.

This OMP details the management actions to achieve the habitat improvement gains required over the initial ten year period. Gains generated by the protection and management of the offset area are summarised in the table below. These are described in more detail throughout the OMP.

The responsibility of vegetation management works lies with the offset land owner with assistance from Trust for Nature (TfN).

The land owner will report annually over the initial 10 year management period to TfN regarding the progress of management works and will liaise with TfN to develop annual works plans for each coming year.

**Table A:** Condition of approval under Referral 2017/7930 and relevant sections of the plan that address these conditions

Condition	Relevant Section of this OMP
	Section 1.2 and the OMP as a whole
	Section 2.4.1
	Section 2.4.1 and Figure 4
	Section 2.4 and Figure 3 and 4
	Section 3.6 and Table 12
	See below, Sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5
	Section 3.7 and 3.8
	Section 2.2, Table 5 and Appendix 4

A qualified ecologist will be engaged by the land owner to monitor the implementation of the offset management plan and to produce a report on the condition of the offset management site to be provided to the TfN at the end of each period of two years.

As a primary function of the offset area is to provide an offset under the EPBC Act Environmental Offsets Policy for impacts to Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain these monitoring reports will be submitted to TfN and DoEE.

TfN will review ecological monitoring and management work reports and provide feedback to the land owner with regard to their performance of meeting the requirements of the OMP.

The offset site will be permanently protected, and the quality of the site maintained by the land owner in perpetuity, to the standards reached at the end of the 10 year management period covered by this OMP. This OMP will be reviewed by a qualified ecologist at the end of the 10 year management period and updated if/as required.

Funding for achieving the ecological gains outlined in this OMP has been agreed between the land owner and Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd. Resourcing of this management plan will be monitored by TfN and adequate funds must be provided to meet the management objectives outline by this plan. This will include agreed funding for anticipated ongoing management required to maintain the offset site in perpetuity, beyond the initial 10 year management period. Failure to provide adequate resourcing for the implementation of this OMP will be taken as operating outside the approvals defined in association with referral 2017/7930 and could be subject to prosecution.



**Table of management issues and associated actions.**

Management issues	Actions
<b>Ongoing offset security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covenant under the Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972 over X ha.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey and monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological monitoring of vegetation condition by a qualified ecologist (Section 3.7) in years 2, 5 and 10.</li> <li>• Supervision and monitoring of site management by the Trust for Nature (Section 3.7).</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting on the condition of NTGVVP every second (even numbered) year (Section 3.8).</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting on GSM population at commencement (year 0) and then in years 1, 2, 4 and 10 (Section 3.8).</li> <li>• Results of GSM monitoring surveys will be compared to baseline survey data collected during the first monitoring event.</li> </ul>
<b>Grazing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining inter-tussock spaces through prescribed biomass control works predominantly through the use of pulse grazing (Section 3.5.4).</li> <li>• Sheep grazing regime using high numbers of sheep over a short period with the objective of managing total plant biomass. Exclude all domestic stock grazing between October 1st and January 15th (Section 3.5.4).</li> <li>• The permanent removal of existing rights to graze any domestic stock with the exception of sheep. Grazing by cattle, horses, goats etc. will be excluded by the covenant (Section 3.5.4).</li> </ul>
<b>Fire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where practical, undertake ecological burning to reduce biomass and promote species diversity of grassland forbs, as described in this plan and in accordance with required safety procedures and assessment (Section 3.5.4).</li> </ul>
<b>Soil disturbance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control pest animals such as rabbits, hares, cats and foxes to a standard exceeding existing legal requirements (Section 3.5.3).</li> <li>• Restrict site access by maintenance of fencing and gates (Section 3.5.1).</li> </ul>
<b>Exotic plant invasion / Herbicide application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake weed control works to lower the total cover of weeds from the current level (X% cover) to less than Y% comprising &lt; 1% cover for perennial grassy weeds and &lt; 2% cover for broadleaf weeds over a ten year period (Section 3.5.2, Table 4);</li> <li>• Engage a qualified vegetation management contractor with experience in grassland vegetation to use herbicide for weed control where required. Exclude herbicide application outside of these works.</li> <li>• Target the control of existing high threat weeds as well as any future high threat weeds which may colonise the site (Table 4).</li> </ul>
<b>Fertiliser addition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent application of any fertiliser and prevent exotic pasture improvement activities (Section 3.3 and 3.4).</li> </ul>

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Project Background

Biosis Pty Ltd was commissioned by Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd to prepare an Offset Management Plan (OMP) for land to be protected and managed as an external offset for the development of an industrial subdivision at 165 – 195 O'Herns Road, Epping, Victoria (Figure 1).

An ecological assessment of the O'Herns Road site, including a habitat hectare assessment, is documented by Biosis (2017). That report identifies the condition and extent of native vegetation, including areas of Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (NTGVVP) to be both impacted and protected in association with the proposed development (Figure 2). Biosis (2017) was used, in conjunction with the EPBC Act offsets policy, to identify the extent of NTGVVP to be protected outside the project area.

A Planning Permit application has been lodged for the industrial subdivision (716886). Clearing associated with the development of the subdivision is currently being assessed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the City of Whittlesea as part of the development approvals process. The development has also been assessed and approved by the Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) through referral 2017/7930.

The plans submitted to council would result in clearing of 1.608 hectares of native vegetation equivalent to NTGVVP. This impact would also result in the loss of 17 individuals of Matted Flax-lily *Dianella amoena* (Figure 2).

Offsets for the proposed development are prescribed by both state (DELWP) and federal (DoEE) regulators. Offsets prescribed from the EPBC Act and the Guidelines cannot be generated concurrently and will therefore be sourced separately.

Offsets proposed under the EPBC Act involve securing an external offset supporting 7.0 ha NTGVVP and X ha of Golden Sun Moth (GSM) habitat.

The external EPBC Act offset is proposed to be sourced from a section of **Lot X of Parcel Identifier** at **To Be Defined** Road, **Town** (Figure 3). An ecological assessment of the proposed external offset area was conducted by **Biosis (2017)**. This report provides the basic ecological information to support this OMP and identified one remnant, largely contiguous patch of NTGVVP/GSM habitat.

Management of the external EPBC Act offset will involve protection and active ecological management of a 7.0 ha of high quality remnant of the Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) Plains Grassland (EVC 132) which also correspond to the EPBC Act listed community NTGVVP (Figure 4).

The overall development of O'Herns Road will be conducted in a number of stages and losses will therefore occur progressively.

The O'Herns Road industrial subdivision is within the Victorian Volcanic Plain (VVP) Bioregion ([www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au)).

## 1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Identify 7.0 ha within Offset Property that is nominated as a Federal offset site, and:
  - Provide an offset plan to the satisfaction of DoEE;
  - To contribute a gain in the protection of habitat for NTGWP in a manner consistent with the EPBC Act Environmental Offsets Policy; and
  - Identify the necessary management actions to protect and improve the quality of native vegetation and fauna habitat within the offset site.

## 2. Part A: Offset Suitability

### 2.1 Clearing Site Details

Landowner of clearing site	Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd
Location and address of clearing site	165 – 195 O’Herns Road, Epping, Victoria
Local Government Area	City of Whittlesea
Catchment Management Authority	Port Phillip and Western Port
Responsible Authority	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Permit applicant	Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd
Planning Permit Number (ID)	716886
Date Approved	/2017

### 2.2 Vegetation Approved for Removal

Vegetation removal has been approved under Permit 716886. Vegetation proposed for removal is described in the biodiversity assessment prepared by Biosis (2017) and provided below in Table 1. A total of 1.608 ha of native vegetation classified as NTGWV have been approved for clearing.

### 2.3 Offset Targets

Vegetation losses and offset requirements were calculated using the spreadsheet provided under the EPBC Act offset policy (DSEWPaC 2012). The offsets prescribed for each area of NTGWV approved for clearing are presented in Appendix 1.

Offsets prescribed under the EPBC Act amount to the protection and management of 7.0 ha of NTGWV. This plan outlines the location of the prescribed offset, the condition of the native vegetation to be protected, the management actions required to be implemented and the condition targets for that vegetation at the end of the ten year management period.

Consistency with the EPBC Act offsets policy is outlined in Table 2.

**Table 1: Summary of proposed losses of patches of NTGVVP at 165 – 195 O’Herns Road**

Habitat Zone ID		3	4		
EVC: Name / Number		Plains Grassland 132	Plains Grassland 132		
Max Score		Score		Total	
Site Condition	Large Old Trees	10	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	
	Canopy Cover	5	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	
	Lack of Weeds	15	7	4	
	Understorey	25	15	15	
	Recruitment	10	10	10	
	Organic Matter	5	5	5	
	Logs	5	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	
	<b>Total Site Score</b>		37	34	
	<b>Standardised Score</b>		50.45	46.36	
Landscape Value	Patch Size	10	1	1	
	Neighbourhood	10	0	0	
	Distance to Core	5	1	1	
	<b>Total Landscape Score</b>		2	2	
<b>HABITAT SCORE</b>	100	52.45	48.36		
<b>Habitat points = #/100</b>	1	0.52	0.48		
<b>Habitat Zone area (ha)</b>		0.755	0.958	1.713	
<b>Habitat Hectares (Hha)</b>		0.393	0.460	0.853	
<b>HZ (ha) Development Zone</b>		0.650	0.958	1.608	
<b>Development Zone (Hha)</b>		0.341	0.460	0.801	

Notes to table: PG = Plains Grassland,

**Table 2: Compliance with EPBC Act Offset Requirements.**

EPBC Act Offset Principles	Current offset Site
<b>Deliver an overall conservation outcome that improves or maintains the viability of the aspect of the environment that is protected by national environment law and affected by the proposed action</b>	The protection of 7.0 ha of NTGVVP at XXX is part of a broader offset package for the protection and management of MNES associated with Alliance Business Park. The protection and ongoing improvement proposed will secure areas this area of NTGVVP in perpetuity and removes or controls the current threatening processes which are active at this location. This management is essential to provide for the long term viability of the MES at this site.
<b>Be built around direct offsets but may include other compensatory measures</b>	Habitat protection and management to improve vegetation condition is a direct offset.
<b>Be in proportion to the level of statutory protection that applies to the protected matter</b>	Entering the offset site data into the Environmental Offset Assessment Guide indicated that the offset package is in proportion to the level of statutory protection that applies (Appendix 1).

EPBC Act Offset Principles	Current offset Site
<p><b>Be of a size and scale proportionate to the residual impacts on the protected matter</b></p>	<p>The NTGVVP offset protects 7.0 ha for an impact on 1.608 ha of this community (i.e. 4.4 times the area of habitat lost).</p>
<p><b>Effectively account for and manage the risks of the offset not succeeding</b></p>	<p>This offset site will be subject to an approved OMP and will be protected by a Covenant under the <i>Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972</i> with TfN. The <b>XX</b> offset will be managed by the land owner under supervision of TfN and subject to audit by an independent ecologist.</p> <p>The legal protection for the site will remove a number of existing permitted uses which, if otherwise remained active, could have a significant negative impact on the NTGVVP present. The protection associated with this OMP will remove rights to apply fertilizer and graze with domestic stock other than sheep while also imposing significantly greater requirements to control environmental weeds.</p> <p>The risk of loss without implementation of the offset is quantified as 50%. This is based on the risk related timeframe and observations of unmanaged grasslands within the bioregion. Similarly a low risk of loss (5%) is attributed to managed grasslands subject to legal protection.</p>
<p><b>Be additional to what is already required, determined by law or planning regulations or agreed to under other schemes or programs (this does not preclude the recognition of state or territory offsets that may be suitable as offsets under the EPBC Act for the same action, see section 7.6)</b></p>	<p>No offsets for NTGVVP are prescribed under any State or Local Government offset prescriptions.</p>
<p><b>Be efficient, effective, timely, transparent, scientifically robust and reasonable</b></p>	<p>The offsets will be actively managed by the landowner under this OMP, under the supervision of TfN and with input from an independent ecologist. The overall offset package protects <b>7.0 ha</b> of habitat for an impact of 1.608 ha (i.e. <b>4.4</b> times the area of habitat lost).</p> <p>The NTGVVP proposed to be cleared occurs on private property which is not actively managed to protect or even maintain the biodiversity values present. These values are expected to decline significantly over the short term (i.e. within 10 years).</p> <p>The proposed external offset is of relatively high quality (i.e. has a habitat score between 0.5 and 0.6). Formal protection of this vegetation would remove potential threats to the ongoing quality of this vegetation which has the potential to decline significantly if existing permitted agricultural</p>

EPBC Act Offset Principles	Current offset Site
	<p>practices are not managed or excluded.</p> <p>The potential decline in the condition of the proposed offset from a starting quality of 5 to a 3 within the risk related time horizon is considered conservative given the potential for the rapid decline in the condition of this vegetation type.</p> <p>The potential increase in quality from a rating of 5 to 6 is considered reasonable given the positive response that grasslands can exhibit to active management with an ecological focus.</p>
<p><b>Have transparent governance arrangements including being able to be readily measured, monitored, audited and enforced.</b></p>	<p>Governance includes supervision by TfN, audit by an independent ecologist and formal reporting to both MAB and DoEE.</p>

## 2.4 Description of the XXX Offset Site

The offset area (7.0 ha) is located at Lot X of Parcel ID, To Be Defined Road, Township. The site is approximately X km northwest of Major Town and approximately XX km direction of the Melbourne central business district (Figure 3). The property is currently zoned Farming Zone and is not covered by any overlays relating to biodiversity or inundation. The land is managed by Name of Owner who also holds broader areas of farmland in this area. The site is currently used for domestic stock grazing.

The offset area assessed is part of a broader, approximately XX ha parcel (Figure 4). This parcel is largely dominated by Plains Grassland (EVC 132) and Plains Grassy Wetland (EVC 125) in relatively uniform condition. All of these EVCs are endangered within the VVP Bioregion. Areas of Plains Grassland and Plains Grassy Wetland also fit the definition criteria of the EPBC Act listed threatened community Natural Temperate Grassland of the VVP. The paddock is fenced to control stock movements between the balance of the property and other adjacent properties.

The proposed offset area (the area subject to this OMP) location within this parcel (Figure 4). The offset area supports X habitat zones which will be managed to provide the external offsets prescribed for development of the O'Herns Road industrial subdivision (Referral 2017/7930).

A detailed description of the flora and habitat hectare values within the proposed offset area is included in Biosis (2017) which identifies a total of X indigenous and Y introduced plant species. This species list is included in Appendix 2. More indigenous and weed species are likely to be present as seasonal conditions and survey intensity typically prevent the detection of all species present within a defined area.

The study area has never been cultivated or subject to pasture improvement or intensive fertilizer application. However, at present pasture improvement activities and fertiliser application remain existing rights for this land.

### NTGVVP

A description of the NTGVVP present within the proposed offset area is as follows:

#### Description

### 2.4.1 Other Threatened species

The broader XX ha parcel is known to support a number of threatened flora species (Reference) including:

- Genus species Common Name (threat status)

The local distribution of known records or habitat for these species is described in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Extent of habitat for rare or threatened flora species within the Name offset site.

Species	Conservation Status (Victoria)	Notes
X	Rare	High quality habitat associated with areas mapped as Plains Grassy Wetland. Species recorded in or from contiguous habitat within the broader site.
Y	Vulnerable	High quality habitat associated with areas mapped as Plains Grassland. Species recorded in or from contiguous habitat within the broader site.

## 2.5 Gains Available within the Offset Site

The extent and condition of native vegetation within the proposed offset site is described by Biosis (2017).

Describe potential improvements.



## 3. Part B: Offset Implementation – Site Address

### 3.1 Offset Site Details

Landowner of offset site	
Type of offset (onsite, 3rd party)	3rd party
Location and address of offset site	
Area of offset site (ha)	7.0 ha
Offset site number (if applicable)	Not Applicable
Volume	
Folio	
Parish	
Allotment	Lot
Local Government Area	
Responsible Authority	
Bioregion	Victorian Volcanic Plain

### 3.2 Strategy for Offset Site

The offset site is to be secured and managed for the purposes of conservation in perpetuity. This offset area is a smaller component of a larger area of native grassland which will be managed in a sympathetic manner on a voluntary basis. While it is the current land owner's objective to seek more formal agreements to protect the balance of this area of native grassland there is no requirement for such an outcome.

### 3.3 Offset Security and Management Responsibility

Who is liable/responsible for meeting offset requirements?	Land Owner / Alliance Business Park Pty Ltd
Type of security	Covenant under the <i>Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972</i> (7.0 ha)
Date 10-year offset management to commence	__/__/2018
Date 10-year offset management expires	__/__/2028
Date agreement registered on-title	__/__/2018
Offset site management responsibility (i.e. Landowner, Authority Name)	Land Owner
Offset Monitoring Responsibility (i.e. Responsible Authority)	Trust for Nature

An offset site must be protected in perpetuity to qualify as an offset site. The offset area (7.0 ha) will be secured in-perpetuity through a covenant under the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972*.

### 3.4 Ongoing Land-use Commitments

The entire offset site will be managed for an improvement in quality over 10 years. After this period of management, the land will be required to be maintained in the condition achieved as a result of that management, in perpetuity. The deed will specifically state the in-perpetuity land-use commitments across the site are to:

- Retain and manage all native vegetation as directed by this offset management plan;
- Exclude domestic stock except as permitted by this plan;
- Exclude the use of stock food such as hay or grain that is sourced from outside the offset area;
- Eliminate any woody weeds and ensure that the cover of other high threat weeds does not increase beyond levels achieved at Year 10 of management;
- Ensure that pest animals are controlled to the level attained at the completion of Year 10 of management.
- Exclude pasture improvement and fertilizer application;
- Control the accumulation of ground cover biomass through either the controlled grazing of sheep or the controlled application of fire: and
- Maintain a progressive annual works plan which caters to current conditions and prescribes ongoing management with maintenance of the native grassland community as its primary objective.

Implementation of this management plan is the overall responsibility of the land owner (Name). However, direct management responsibility may be delegated to a designated site manager and/or managing ecologist. The land owner is responsible for engaging a qualified ecologist to conduct monitoring (Section 3.7) with reports submitted to TfN, Alliance Business Park (ABP) and DoEE and as appropriate to DELWP. Management actions by the land owner will be overseen by the TfN as part of the legal protection over the site.

The TfN is responsible for:

- Undertaking site inspections at least 4 times over the 10 year management period and provide input into the annual works program.
- Review of ecological monitoring reports including an assessment of targets achieved.

Implementation of the management plan will be monitored by the TfN. TfN will verify that the actions have been carried out appropriately.

Implementation of the plan will begin upon registration of the covenant.

Funding for implementation of this OMP has been agreed between the land owner and TfN. Where appropriate or otherwise agreed, funding will be held by the TfN and paid to the land owner over the 10 year management period as per a land owner agreement. This will include agreed funding for anticipated ongoing management required to maintain the offset site in perpetuity, beyond the initial 10 year management period.

### 3.5 Management Actions

The main threats to this native grassland include the existing permitted uses associated with normal farming practices such as inappropriate grazing regimes, pasture improvement and fertiliser application. Other threats include the expansion of the existing high threat weed populations, weed invasion in general and the accumulation of ground cover biomass. Currently the ground cover biomass is managed through grazing by domestic stock (mainly sheep but there are no current restrictions on what domestic stock may be grazed on

site) and this is proposed to continue as a strictly controlled management practice. In addition, ecological burning guidelines have been developed.

Currently the site is not actively managed for biodiversity values and is utilised for domestic stock grazing.

The prescribed management actions outlined below are intended to achieve a conservation outcome which improves and maintains the viability of the offset site. This will be achieved through active ecological management (maintenance and improvement) and permanent protection of the offset site. Table 6 details these prescribed actions and outlines the relevant timing for implementation. These actions will be applied to the entire offset area identified in Figure 4.

Offsets will be achieved by:

- Maintaining the existing fencing within the broader XX ha parcel, and limiting access to the existing access gates unless otherwise authorised by the TfN as appropriate.
- Weed control through active management;
  - Eliminating all woody environmental weeds
  - Controlling high threat weeds to levels specified in Table 4.
  - Controlling perennial grassy weed cover to less than 1%.
  - Controlling broadleaf weed cover to less than 2%.
- Managing organic litter (must not exceed the EVC benchmark cover of 10%);
- Biomass control through high intensity pulse grazing of domestic stock (sheep only) with grazing excluded from 31st August to 31st January;
- Ecological burning (50% of the offset area may be burnt at least four times within the 10 year management period e.g. years 1, 4, 7 and 10. No area is to be burnt more than once every two years);
- Controlling pest animals, particularly rabbits, hares, foxes and cats; and
- Managing native species understorey diversity and recruitment.

### 3.5.1 Fencing, information and access control

Permanent fencing able to exclude domestic stock already exists around the boundary of the broader XX ha parcel. Additional fencing around the 7.0 ha offset area (Figure 4) is not required as it is proposed that grazing within the entire paddock will be managed in accordance with the prescriptions outlined within this offset management plan. Temporary fencing may be used within the offset area where negligible impacts to native vegetation associated with the placement and removal of that fencing occurs.

Additional permanent fencing is also not recommended for the following reasons: 1) to avoid the need for establishing stock water access points which will displace native vegetation, 2) to avoid funnelling of traffic through access gates and associated disturbance to soil and 3) to discourage trampling of native vegetation by stock along fence boundaries. Instead, sheep will be allowed to graze the offset area as part of the broader existing paddock structure, with limitations described in the following.

Posts marking the boundary of the offset site will be set up to clearly identify the area for monitoring and management purposes. Posts will be located in accordance with advice from a qualified ecologist to ensure impacts to native vegetation are avoided.

Temporary stock fencing will be established and maintained around the boundary of any burnt area within the offset site for at least 6 months post-burn to prevent stock access and damage to regenerating vegetation from grazing.

The offset area remains private property and access or disturbance to the offset site by unauthorised persons is prohibited. The existing access gate and security (locked gates) arrangement is adequate to service the access management requirements of this offset area.

If existing land-use rights are to be fully exercised in the remainder of the XX ha parcel, fencing to exclude stock from the offset site will be required.

No additional signs identifying the property as an offset site are proposed. Explicit signage may inadvertently attract undesirable impacts. However signs identifying the property as a protected area of native vegetation will be considered by the owner.

### Actions

- Maintain existing fencing to control access by domestic stock to the broader XX ha parcel and repair promptly if damage occurs.
- Temporarily fence any burnt area immediately prior to burning or immediately after wildfire, to exclude all domestic stock from grazing the burnt area for a minimum of 6 months.
- Establish posts to mark the boundary of the offset site for management and monitoring purposes under supervision from a qualified ecologist.
- Control access and any passive use to minimise impacts on native vegetation.
- Provide access for management vehicles into the offset site, using the existing access gates. No additional vehicle access is to be established.

### 3.5.2 Weed control

Weed control works are required to achieve biodiversity gains for an offset under the EPBC Act and DoEE requires a habitat improvement for both NTGVP and GSM habitat. Targets below therefore identify a reduction in the cover of perennial weeds.

Annual grassy weeds are prominent and typically the total weed cover (annuals and perennials) is about 40%. The annual weeds, which are mainly grasses such as *Fescue Vulpia spp.*, *Soft Brome Bromus hordeaceus* and *Hair Grass Aira spp.*, which not considered a significant threat in this environment, will be managed using grazing in an attempt to reduce their prominence. However, it is unlikely that any direct active management would have any impact on these species and no targets are proposed to for such species other than to prevent them increasing their current cover.

All high threat weeds are to be controlled to minimise or reduce their occurrence and ensure no further spread of weeds. The total cover of perennial grassy and broad-leaf weeds on site will be reduced from the current level of 10% to no more than 2%. This includes specific targets for high threat species identified in Table 4, perennial grassy weeds will be reduced to less than 1% total cover and broadleaf weeds will be reduced to less than 2% of the cover by the end of the ten year management period.

The emphasis for weed control is the prevention of weed seed production with the goal being the reduction in the total weed cover with specific targets for high threat species on site. Weed control works will be timed appropriately in accordance with Tables 4, 5 & 6.

Weed levels will be monitored and management methods adapted over time in response to changing conditions. New and emerging high threat weeds will be monitored and controlled (to less than 1% cover) if found. Any other significant environmental weeds identified during the ongoing site monitoring will also be controlled. If other high threat weeds, such as *Serrated Tussock Nassella trichotoma*, are found to occur in

surrounding areas owned by the offset land owner, it would be prudent and cost effective to eliminate such species from nearby areas to reduce any potential invasion into the offset area. The offset owner will contact the land owner of any public land (i.e. council managed road reserves adjacent to the offset site) where high threat weeds occur within the vicinity of the offset area, with the aim to have these weeds controlled.

**Table 4: High threat weeds for priority control (Biosis 2017).**

Scientific Name	Common Name	% cover for the current assessment	Control Proposed	Desired Outcome <sup>^</sup>
<b><i>Agrostis capillaris</i></b>	Brown-top Bent	<1%	Burn standing dead material. New growth controlled crash grazing by sheep to prevent seed set and herbicide application	<1% cover
<b><i>Avena spp.</i></b>	Oats	2%	Controlled pulse grazing by sheep to prevent seed set. Spot spraying appropriate herbicide to prevent seeding.	<1% cover
<b><i>Lolium spp.</i></b>	Rye-grass	2–5%	Controlled pulse grazing by sheep to prevent seed set. Spot spraying appropriate herbicide to prevent seeding.	<1% cover
<b><i>Phalaris aquatica</i></b>	Toowoomba Canary-grass	1%	Spot spraying appropriate herbicide (early spring).	<1% cover
<b><i>Rumex spp.</i></b>	Dock	1%	Spot spraying appropriate herbicide (early spring).	<1% cover
<b><i>Cirsium, Silybum, Carduus and Sonchus spp.</i></b>	Thistles	1–5%	Spot Spraying appropriate herbicide (prevent flowering).	<1% cover

<sup>^</sup> Desired outcome after 10 years of ecological management

Woody weeds are known from the offset area and the broader XX ha parcel. However these are only present at a very low cover. If any woody weeds are observed during site management or monitoring activities, these need to be controlled and eliminated promptly (before fruiting and seed set). The cover of woody weeds will be maintained at <1% in perpetuity.

Spot spraying with appropriate herbicide is the main method for reducing weed cover. Spot spraying will be undertaken regularly, particularly in spring and early summer, with a focus on killing weed plants prior to seed set. Biomass control is also considered as an effective method for controlling and reducing weed levels. Biomass control at the site will include controlled sheep grazing and ecological burning. Spot spraying will be completed in a manner which minimises non-target damage. Spot spraying will not occur during high wind days or in close proximity to threatened flora without protective measures in place (i.e. physical shielding).

Burning is particularly effective at reducing weed cover, especially for species that are difficult to control such as Brown-top Bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Burning and/or grazing will allow greater access and efficiency for weed control and increased natural regeneration of indigenous plant species (Sections 3.5.4 and 3.5.5 below). Periodic burning that is followed by spot spraying will be important for weed species that are difficult to control (such as Brown-top Bent) until they are replaced by native species.

Target species are likely to change over time in response to seasonal conditions, the result of pulse grazing or the conduct of any controlled burns (e.g. likely flush of broad-leaf weeds to be treated post-burn). Weed cover and species will therefore be monitored and management adapted in response to achieve desired outcomes

outlined in this management plan. The Moyne Shire Council/TfN will be consulted and approve the control techniques for any new or emerging weeds identified within the offset area.

The offset area is not in close proximity to any named waterway although a number of seasonal wetlands occur within this parcel and its surrounds. While there may be localised surface water flows during high rainfall events, any wetland within the site is ephemeral and no specific runoff risk is identified for the application of herbicides to this area.

Modify as required to be relevant for the offset site

### Actions

- Periodic spot spraying of weeds with appropriate herbicide will be undertaken, particularly through spring and early summer.
- Target weeds will be controlled in a timely manner and before seed set; this requires regular monitoring and treatment.
- Ensure the absence of high threat woody environmental weeds within the offset area through monitoring and if high threat woody environmental weeds are found to occur, control and eliminate promptly. Preferably control nearby infestations to prevent the spread of these species.
- Control works will ensure that the total cover of perennial weeds will be reduced to no more than 2%. Specific targets include: a reduction of high threat weeds in accordance with Table 4; perennial grassy weeds will be reduced to less than 1% total cover; and broadleaf weeds reduced to no more than 2% cover.
- Monitoring will be undertaken to demonstrate the effectiveness of weed control works and the results are to be used to adapt future control works and targets.
- Any populations of new and emerging high threat weeds will be treated promptly and eliminated to <1% cover. This will be done in consultation with TfN.
- Any other significant environmental weeds identified during the ongoing site monitoring will also be controlled in consultation with TfN.
- During weed control, natural regeneration of indigenous flora will be protected from off-target damage.
- Biomass management will be undertaken as per Sections 3.5.4 below.

### 3.5.3 Pest Animals

Modify as required to be relevant for the offset site

The control of vermin including rabbits and other pest herbivores beyond the legal duty of care is a requirement of this OMP. Therefore pest animal control works are required within the offset site.

Grazing by European Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and European Hares *Lepus europeus* is evident and is likely to have a significant impact within the offset site. However, no active rabbit warrens were noted within the offset site.

Currently rabbits and hares are controlled by shooting and this appears to be effective at this point in time. If this changes, baiting can be considered as an option for control of these pests.

Control within the offset site would effectively be achieved through a reasonable level of works to eliminate any active warrens in the local area (i.e. land within the owners control and within 500 m of the offset site). Control will in part be achieved through the removal and destruction of the shelter provided by any shrubby weeds within the broader area managed by the same landowner. The landowner will therefore control all shrubby environmental weeds on their land within 500 m of the offset site. Control of rabbits will be

undertaken in accordance with current guidelines provided by the relevant Victorian Government Department.

Ripping of rabbit warrens within the offset site is not permitted. If any warrens develop within the offset site they will be treated by low impact measures such as fumigation or implosion.

Other problem pest animals may include cats and foxes although the general lack of shelter and harbour for these species reduces the likelihood that any animals are resident in the local area. Control techniques such as poisoning are therefore likely to be ineffective. The landowner will select from the range of control techniques available and apply the most effective in the local conditions.

### **Actions**

- Control and seek to locally eliminate European Hares, European Rabbits, cats and foxes and using appropriate control techniques including shooting, poison baits or similar methods, without soil disturbance.
- At a minimum spotlight shooting over a minimum period of three hours targeting all pest animals will occur over the entire site once every three months. This will be conducted by the landowner or a professional shooter employed by the landowner;
- Fumigate rabbit warrens within three weeks of detection. Fumigation works will be conducted by a suitably qualified operator.

#### **3.5.4 Biomass / Organic Litter control**

Biomass management is essential to maintain indigenous flora and fauna values throughout the offset site. Biomass management is also required to maintain inter-tussock spaces and prevent excessive competition to grassland forbs. Where there is a sustained build up in ground cover biomass over any one year, resulting in a reduction of inter grass tussock space to an average of less than 30%, biomass will need to be actively reduced. Judgements on the cover of inter-tussock space and the build-up of groundcover biomass will be made by the landowner in consultation with the TfN. The independent ecological monitoring will also assess the effectiveness of the biomass control techniques applied and the need for any adjustments to the management regime to provide the prescribe outcome.

Controlled grazing will be applied to reduce biomass and maintain an open tussock-grass structure for this grassland, and where appropriate, ecological burning will also be utilised.

#### **Use of grazing for ecological management**

Currently the offset site is subject to unrestricted grazing by sheep. Given the diversity of native species found within the uncultivated native grasslands of this site, this method of disturbance regime (grazing by domestic stock) is seen as a reliable and conservative action to maintain and improve the ecological values associated with the area. While grazing by domestic stock will continue to be used at this site as a method of biomass reduction, it will be undertaken in a controlled manner following a grazing management plan. Biomass accumulation control at this site will therefore be consistent with the standards for management of ecological grazing provided by DSE (2009).

In this context pulse grazing (i.e. using high numbers of sheep over short periods) in the offset area to maintain an open tussock grassland structure is seen as a precautionary management method to maintain the species richness of these native grasslands. Grazing of domestic stock will be restricted to the use of sheep. Grazing by other domestic stock including but not restricted to cattle, goats and horses is to be excluded from the offset site by this plan.



The timing of grazing will be strictly controlled to allow native species to grow and set seed over the spring to mid-summer period (DSE 2009). Stock will be excluded from the end of August to the end of January annually, in perpetuity. Table 6 provides targets to be met for ongoing management of grazing within the offset area. The landowner will keep records of the number of sheep and duration of grazing within the offset area. This data will be provided to the TfN on an annual basis. This data and the resultant impact on biomass will provide the basis for an on-going grazing strategy to be approved by the TfN.

**Table 5. Requirements and limit of grazing activities within the offset area.**

Period where grazing by domestic stock is not permitted	31 <sup>st</sup> August to 31 <sup>st</sup> January annually in perpetuity
Pulse grazing cycles required	3 (minimum)
Grazing required prior to exclusion period	15 <sup>th</sup> July to 31 <sup>st</sup> July
Minimum rest from grazing between pulse grazing	2 weeks
Maximum continuous pulse grazing	4 weeks
Biomass management thresholds	Total vegetation cover of no greater than 70%
Target inter-tussock space	Minimum 30% of total site cover

Grazing will occur over a short duration and exceed the standard stocking rate to prevent selective grazing and allow for periods of grazing exclusion. The maximum length of continuous grazing is 4 weeks with at least 2 weeks rest between cycles. Biomass management objectives are that inter-tussock space will be maintained to at least 30% and the total vegetation cover will not fall below 50%. At least 3 pulse grazing cycles will occur within the grazing period, one of which will occur immediately prior to the exclusion period.

The only exception to requirements specified for pulse grazing (Table 10) is if an ecological burn is planned during or following the pulse grazing period. In this instance a fire management plan produced by a qualified contractor will inform when grazing will be removed to allow for a build up in biomass to establish a burn.

Sheep used for pulse grazing will be shorn within the previous 1-2 months to reduce likelihood of weed seed introductions. Stock transfer into the offset site will be timed to minimise the potential for weed seed transport via mud (i.e. stock movements into the offset site will be excluded within two days of rainfall). The XX ha parcel will need to be monitored during wet periods to prevent excessive soil disturbance in areas of Plains Grassy Wetland. Following any high rainfall events, stock will be removed immediately.

### Use of fire for ecological management

Burning within the offset area will be undertaken only with due consideration to relevant health and safety issues, in consultation with the Country Fire Authority and in line with a fire management plan completed by a suitably qualified consultant. Any approved fire plan will also be provided to DoEE at least three weeks prior to any burning event identified within that plan. The following provides guidelines for use of burning only in an ecological sense. The land owner is responsible for ensuring the requirements of this OMP can be carried out only if compliant with all other government planning requirements and permits.

While grazing by domestic stock will be the typical manner in which ground cover biomass will be regulated, the controlled application of fire is an efficient and cost-effective alternative technique for reducing biomass in grassy ecosystems such as those that occur within the offset site. Importantly, burning (c.f. grazing or slashing) allows greater access and efficiency for weed control and increased natural regeneration of



indigenous plant species. While burning may enhance germination of indigenous species, it can also be expected to promote certain exotic species and as such post-burning weed-control will be vital in maintaining remnant vegetation. However stimulating the soil stored weed seed bank is seen as positive as this allows this seed bank to be exhausted through active management.

The controlled application of fire will be used for biomass reduction in all or parts of the offset site. Selected areas of grassland may be burnt to tackle particular weed issues or to assist in the lowering of soil nitrogen and phosphorous which would also assist in weed control works. However no area is to be burnt more frequently than every two years and no more than 50% of the offset site will be burnt in any one year. The application of a mosaic burning regime is also considered advantageous and therefore any individual burn will not cover a contiguous area of more than 10% of the offset site (i.e. there may be separate burns in any one year covering a total of about 4 ha but any one burn will cover a maximum of 1 ha and be separated from other burnt areas by at least 20 m of unburnt grassland).

The landowner will prepare maps identifying the fire history of the offset area to ensure compliance with the area restrictions identified above.

The extent, intensity and timing of burns must take into account the presence of threatened species, in particular Golden Sun Moth. Fire may kill individuals of this species during the warmer months of the year when they are active above the soil surface. Timing of burns should only be undertaken outside the Golden Sun Moth flight season (generally November to January).

Any ecological burns will be conducted during benign (low wind and mild temperature) weather conditions and may be patchy (i.e. not result in the uniform burning of all areas). Patchy burns are a desirable outcome.

### **Actions**

- Develop a grazing plan consistent with Table 6 for the offset area, including timing and intensity;
- Exclude grazing during wet periods where ground disturbance would occur;
- Engage a qualified contractor to produce a fire management plan which allows for an ecological burning regime described in the following dot point. Provide any approved burn plan to DoEE at least three weeks prior to any burning event identified within that plan.
- Undertake ecological burning over approximately 40-50% of the offset area at least four times during the 10 year management period. For example at year 1, 4, 7 and 10 or in smaller areas more frequently as required by the fire management plan. Rotate areas burnt so that no area is burnt more frequently than every two years, burn areas in a small scale patchwork with any individual burnt area covering no more than two ha. Note that the use of fire is not a compulsory component of this plan and may also be used at a much reduced scale if considered appropriate (i.e. localised burning of small areas for weed or biomass control);
- When planning burns, liaise with any relevant regulator regarding appropriate planning and permits in a timely manner;
- Plan and conduct ecological burning within different seasons to promote regeneration of a variety of species. However ensure burns consider the ecological needs of any threatened species which may be present (e.g. Golden Sun Moth).

### **3.5.5 Understorey Diversity and Recruitment**

The major threats to understorey diversity in these grasslands are over-grazing by domestic stock and other introduced herbivores, competition from introduced plant species and the accumulation of biomass over a prolonged period (greater than a year). These areas of Plains Grassland and Plains Grassy Wetland retain

between 50 and 90% of the expected number of understorey life-forms for this EVC, and are generally not considered deficient in terms of the species diversity of the life-forms that are present. Missing or deficient elements are typically the large herbs and this is largely a function of the growth stage of the plants present. Enrichment planting is therefore not currently necessary although this will be reviewed by the independent ecologist monitoring the site after five years of active ecological management.

Controlled grazing by domestic stock and the control of rabbits and hares are required to maintain understorey diversity and encourage recruitment of threatened species. Fire or other forms of biomass reduction would also be required to facilitate regeneration, remove the dead biomass associated with weed control works and maintain inter-tussock spacing. The use of fire could be implemented at a number of scales. Within this larger grassland patch it would take the form of a managed patch burn covering up to 10 hectares or in smaller patches localised burning covering up to half a hectare or even tens of square metres using a hand held weed burner. Biomass control works will also reduce the potential for uncontrolled wildfire to impact this site.

Active management will seek to significantly reduce the cover of all exotic species with specific targets for high threat species given in Table 4.

### **Actions**

- Active weed management to be undertaken as outlined in Section 3.5.2
- Biomass will be managed to enhance recruitment – see Sections 3.5.4 above.

### **3.5.6 Supplementary Planting and Revegetation**

There is currently no need to do any supplementary planting or revegetation within the offset site. There is a high diversity of understorey species in this area and improvement will mainly be achieved through weed control. This decision will be reviewed by the independent ecologist after five years of active management.

## **3.6 Summary of Offset Gains**

The gains associated with the implementation of this Offset Management Plan align with the requirements for defined offset areas as follows:

- The application of permanent legal protection requiring conservation management of the area as guided by this plan (Section 3.3);
- The permanent removal of existing rights to apply fertiliser and conduct exotic pasture improvement activities (Section 3.3 and 3.4);
- The permanent removal of existing rights to graze any domestic stock with the exception of sheep. Grazing by cattle, horses, goats etc. will be excluded by the covenant (Section 3.4);
- Only allowing the pulse grazing of domestic stock within the parameters required by this plan (i.e. grazing exclusion between the end of August and the end of January) (Section 3.5.4);
- Maintaining inter-tussock spaces through prescribed biomass control works predominantly through the use of pulse grazing (Section 3.5.4);
- Using fire to augment pulse grazing by sheep to manage biomass and maintain inter-tussock spaces within the restrictions outlined by this plan and DEWHA (2009) (Section 3.5.4);
- Preventing over-grazing by identifying a minimum vegetation cover (50%) to which pulse grazing is permitted (Section 3.5.4);

- Requiring weed control works to lower the total cover of perennial weeds from the current level (10% cover) to no more than 2% cover with less than 1% cover for perennial grassy weeds and no more than 2% cover for broadleaf weeds over a ten year period (Section 3.5.2, Table 4);
- Targeting the control of existing high threat weeds as well as any future high threat weeds which may colonise the site (Section 3.5.2, Table 4);
- Requiring the control of pest animals such as rabbits, hares and foxes above the existing legal requirements (Section 3.5.3);
- Requiring the permanent maintenance of the reduced weed cover reached after the first ten years of management (Section 3.4);
- Supervision and monitoring of site management by the TfN (Section 3.7).

Additional details on required management actions and relevant timing for implementation is provided in Table 6. This OMP is consistent with the requirements of referral approval condition XX (insert when available).

**Table 6: Management plan actions and timing for offsets on the **Name of** offset site.**

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
0	0.1	-	Establish offset area.	Upon registration of the agreement. This action is a key requirement defining the start of the prescribed management period.	7.0	ha	Land Owner	Agreement under Section 173 of the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1988</i> with the Council covering 7.0 ha.
0	0.2	-	Ensure appropriate fencing is established. Fencing already protects the broader <b>XX</b> ha parcel within which the offset site is located. The offset area allocated to this specific offset management plan does not need to be fenced separately unless existing land-use rights are fully exercised in the remainder of the <b>XX</b> ha parcel.	This action is a key requirement defining the start of the prescribed management period.	-	-	Land Owner	Site isolated from activities excluded by this plan (i.e. construction works, uncontrolled grazing by domestic stock).
0	0.3	-	Establish markers to identify boundary of the offset site to assist with management and monitoring of the area.	This action is a key requirement at the start of the prescribed management period.	-	-	Land Owner in consultation with qualified ecologist	Markers established to identify the boundary of the offset site. Guidance provided by a qualified ecologist to ensure impacts to native vegetation are avoided.

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
0	0.4	-	Where appropriate identify a person/company to control pest plants and animals. In this instance the Trust for Nature (TfN) will provide appropriate supervision for the land owner to conduct the pest plant and animal control works.	Upon registration of the 173 agreement / TfN covenant between land owner and MSC.	-	-	Land Owner	Appropriate personnel appointed to conduct works.
0	0.5	-	Qualified ecologist to undertake baseline monitoring, establish monitoring points and refine management actions based on baseline results.	Oct-Nov monitoring	1	Report	Qualified ecologist	Prepare standard report including photos and confirm agreed performance measures outlined in Section 3.5.
0	0.6	Nil	Conduct baseline monitoring for GSM population as per Section 3.8 and prepare a report on occurrence and abundance.	Oct-Dec	1	Report	Land owner in consultation with TfN	GSM monitoring report provided to TfN, MAB and DoEE.

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
1	1.1	0.1-0.5	Land owner to develop annual works plan in consultation with the TfN based on a site inspection with TfN.	Upon registration of the covenant.	-	-	Land Owner and TfN	Annual works plan prepared and approved for implementation by TfN.
1	1.2	1.1	Maintain fences and gates around broader offset area and markers around offset site in good working order. Remove any rubbish present within the offset site.	Continuous (inspection and management)	-	-	Land Owner	Potential threats (i.e. rabbits, domestic stock, unauthorised entry) excluded.
1	1.3	1.1	Undertake pulse grazing to reduce biomass. A minimum of three pulse grazing cycles are required within the grazing period, and one of these will occur immediately before the exclusion period (unless otherwise advised by the fire management plan). The maximum grazing length at any one time is four weeks with a minimum two week rest period between grazing cycles. Vegetation cover will not be grazed below 50% and inter-tussock space will be maintained to at least 30%.	31 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> July	7.0	ha	Land Owner	Maintain an open tussock grassland with at least 30% cover of inter-tussock space.

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
1	1.4	1.1	Control pest animals (e.g. rabbits, hares, foxes and cats) within the offset and surrounding area (within 500m of offset site where possible).	Feb-Apr, Sep-Nov	-	-	Land Owner in consultation with ecological restoration contractor	No ground disturbance by pest animals within offset site. No active rabbit warrens present within offset site, minimal surface harbour for rabbits and hares present (but excluding natural harbour such as rocks).
1	1.5	1.1	Control all high threat grass / herb weeds before seed set using appropriate methods to ensure a reduction of existing weed levels. Refer to Table 5 for percentage cover of high threat weeds at inception. Eliminate any woody weeds (see Section 3.5.2). Control total cover of weeds, in particular perennial grassy weeds and broadleaf weeds. Monitor for new and emerging weeds and eliminate any found.	July-Nov or as required and detailed in the annual works plan	7.0	ha	Land Owner in consultation with vegetation management contractor	Minimise the occurrence of weeds, with a reduction in total cover of weeds, including high threat weeds, beyond current levels. Target is a total perennial weed cover of no more than 2% with reduced cover of high threat weeds listed in Table 5, <1% perennial grassy weeds and no more than 2% broadleaf weeds by the end of 10 years. Minimum off-target damage. Control new and emerging weeds to < 1% cover across offset site.
1	1.6	1.1	Develop burn plan and undertake ecological burn of the offset site to reduce plant biomass and promote recruitment of native species. Ecological burns to be undertaken over 40-50% of	Sep (or as specified in the burn plan but must not occur during the period	X	ha	Qualified contractor in consultation with CFA and TfN	Medium intensity burn over 40-50% of the 7.0 ha area. Some small areas within burn boundary left unburnt. No area to be burnt at a frequency of more than once every two years.

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
			the offset area at least four times during 10 year management period (e.g. years 1, 4, 7 and 10). Conduct burns in different seasons to promote regeneration of a variety of species.	1 October – 15 January due to potential negative impacts to GSM)				Follow up weed control will be undertaken within the burn area in accordance with section 3.5. Burns must also be undertaken to generate a mosaic pattern of burnt and unburnt areas (See section 3.5.4.)
1	1.7	0.5	Conduct regular site inspections at a frequency to ensure management activities are conducted as required. This will incorporate identification of any new weeds and evaluation of biomass conditions. These inspections will be conducted by the land owner. TfN to participate in site inspections at least four times over offset period.	Site inspections at an appropriate frequency	-	-	Land Owner and TfN	Reporting of management activities as agreed. This can consist of a series of notes of observations made by the land owner during site inspections.
1	1.8	0.5	Qualified ecologist to undertake monitoring, and refine management actions based on results. Identify any new high threat weeds for priority control. Report to regulator as required.	Oct-Nov monitoring  Dec Reporting	1	Report	Qualified ecologist to be engaged by the Land Owner	Prepare standard report including results from photos and agreed performance measures outlined in Section 3.5. Monitoring report provided to TfN, ABP, DELWP & DoEE as appropriate.
1	1.9	0.6	Conduct monitoring for GSM population as per Section 3.8 and prepare a report on occurrence and abundance.	Oct - Dec	1	Report	Land owner in consultation with TfN	GSM Monitoring report provided to TfN, MAB and DoE.



Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
1	1.10	1.7	Prepare annual report based on site inspections conducted throughout the year. Report to be provided to TfN, ABP and DoEE.	Nov	1	Report	Land Owner	Report reviewing the success of management and level of implementation of OMP provided to TfN, DoE, ABP and as appropriate to DELWP.
1	1.11	1.8-1.10	Review and update Annual Works Plan in consultation with TfN.	Dec	1	Report	Land owner in consultation with TfN	Following year's management tailored to current site conditions.

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
<b>Recurrent Activities</b>								
2-10	X.1	1.2	Maintain fences and gates around broader offset area and markers around offset site in good working order.	Continuous (inspection and management)	-	-	Land Owner	Potential threats (i.e. rabbits, domestic stock, unauthorised entry) excluded.
2-10	X.2	1.3	Undertake pulse grazing to reduce biomass. A minimum of three pulse grazing cycles are required within the grazing period, and one of these will occur immediately before the exclusion period (unless otherwise advised by the fire management plan). The maximum grazing length at any one time is four weeks with a minimum two week rest period between grazing cycles. Vegetation cover will not be grazed below 50% and inter-tussock space will be maintained to at least 30%.	16 <sup>th</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> July	7.0	ha	Land Owner	Maintain an open tussock grassland with at least 30% cover of inter-tussock space.
2-10	X.3	1.4	Control pest animals (e.g. rabbits, hares, foxes and cats) within the offset and surrounding area (within 500m of offset site where possible).	Feb–Apr, Sep–Nov	-	-	Land Owner in consultation with ecological restoration contractor	No ground disturbance by pest animals within offset site. No active rabbit warrens present within offset site, minimal surface harbour for rabbits and hares present (but excluding natural harbour such as rocks).

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
2-10	X.4	1.5	<p>Control all high threat grass / herb weeds before seed set using appropriate methods to ensure a reduction of existing weed levels. Refer to Table 4 for percentage cover of high threat weeds at inception.</p> <p>Eliminate any woody weeds (see Section 3.5.2).</p> <p>Control total cover of weeds, in particular perennial grassy weeds and broadleaf weeds. Monitor for new and emerging weeds and eliminate any found.</p>	July–Nov or as required and detailed in the annual works plan	7.0	ha	Land Owner in consultation with vegetation management contractor	<p>Minimise the occurrence of weeds, with a reduction in total cover of weeds, including high threat weeds, beyond current levels. Target is a total perennial weed cover of no more than 2% with reduced cover of high threat weeds listed in Table 4, &lt;1% perennial grassy weeds and no more than 2% broadleaf weeds by the end of 10 years.</p> <p>Minimum off-target damage.</p> <p>Control new and emerging weeds to &lt; 1% cover across offset site.</p>
2-10	X.5	1.9	<p>Undertake regular site inspections at a frequency to ensure management activities are conducted as required. This will incorporate identification of any new weeds and evaluation of biomass conditions. These inspections will be conducted by the land owner. TfN to participate in site inspections at least four times over offset period.</p>	Site inspections at an appropriate frequency	-	-	Land Owner and TfN	<p>Reporting of management activities as agreed. This can consist of a series of notes of observations made by the land owner during site inspections.</p>

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
2-10	X.6	2.5	Prepare annual report based on site inspections conducted throughout the year. Report to be provided to TfN, ABP and DoEE.	Nov	1	Report	Land Owner	Report reviewing the success of management and level of implementation of OMP provided to MSC, TfN, DoE, AMS and as appropriate to DELWP
2-9	X.7	2.6	Review and update Annual Works Plan in consultation with TfN.	Dec	1	Report	TfN and land owner	Following years management tailored to current site conditions

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
<b>Year Specific Activities</b>								
0, 1, 2, 4, & 10		Nil	Monitor GSM population as per Section 3.8 and prepare a report on occurrence and abundance.	Oct-Dec	1	Report	Land owner in consultation with TfN	GSM Monitoring report provided to TfN, MAB and DoE.
3, 5 & 10	X.8	1.8	Qualified ecologist to undertake monitoring, and refine management actions based on results. Report to regulator as required.	Oct-Nov monitoring Dec Reporting	1	Report	Qualified ecologist to be engaged by the Land Owner	Prepare standard report including results from photos and agreed performance measures outlined in Section 3.5. Monitoring report provided to TfN, DoEE, ABP and as appropriate to DELWP.
4, 7 & 10	4.8, 7.8 & 10.9	1.6	Develop burn plan and undertake ecological burn of the offset site to reduce plant biomass and promote recruitment of native species. Ecological burns to be undertaken over 40-50% of the offset area at least four times during 10 year management period (e.g. years 1, 4, 7 and 10). Conduct burns in different seasons to promote regeneration of a variety of species.	Mar-Apr (or as specified in the burn plan)	25	ha	Qualified contractor in consultation with CFA and TfN	Medium intensity burn over 40-50% of the 7.0 ha area. Some small areas within burn boundary left unburnt. No area to be burnt at a frequency of more than once every two years. Follow up weed control will be undertaken within the burn area in accordance with section 1.5. Burns must also be undertaken to generate a mosaic pattern of burnt and unburnt areas (See section 3.5.4.)

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
10	10.10	10.8	Revise this offset management plan (OMP) in consultation with TfN to identify management actions required to maintain the offset site in perpetuity.	Dec	1	OMP	Qualified ecologist	Updated offset management plan to aid ongoing maintenance of the offset site.
10	10.11	10.9	Identify and allocate resources for ongoing management and continue to implement active ecological management to maintain the offset site.	Dec			Land Manager in consultation with TfN	Ongoing ecological management to maintain and improve the ecological values of the Protection Site in perpetuity.
<b>Beyond Year 10</b>								
Beyond year 10			Maintain fences and gates around broader offset area in good working order.	Continuous (inspection and management)	-	-	Land Owner	Potential threats (i.e. rabbits, domestic stock, unauthorised entry) excluded.
Beyond year 10			Evaluate ground cover biomass and manage using pulse grazing and ecological burning	As required	7.0	ha	Land owner	Maintain an open tussock grassland structure (30% inter-tussock spacing) using fire and pulse grazing, and ensure areas with high levels of dead weeds are subject to biomass reduction.
Beyond year 10			Control pest animals (e.g. rabbits, hares, foxes and cats) within the offset and surrounding area.	Feb – Apr, Sept – Nov	-	-	Land Owner	Absence of evidence of grazing/browsing by pest animals.

Year number	Action No	Required preceding action*	Activity Description	Timing of activity - month(s)	Quantity	Units	Who is responsible for this action?	Standard to be achieved
Beyond year 10			Control all high threat grass / herb weeds before seed set using appropriate methods to ensure existing weed levels, at the minimum, do not increase. Eliminate all woody weeds. Control total cover of weeds, in particular perennial grassy weeds and broadleaf weeds. Monitor for new and emerging weeds and eliminate any found.	July - Nov	7.0	ha	Land Owner	Minimise the occurrence of weeds, with no increase in cover of weeds, including high threat weeds, beyond current levels. Minimum off-target damage. Control new and emerging weeds to < 1% cover across offset site.
Beyond year 10			Undertake monitoring and refine management actions based on results. Identify any new high threat weeds for priority control. Conduct regular site inspections at a frequency to ensure management activities are conducted as required. These inspections will be conducted by the land owner.	Oct-Nov monitoring  Site inspections at an appropriate frequency			Land Owner	Land Owner to undertake monitoring as required and site inspections biannually (at a minimum).

### 3.7 Monitoring and Reporting

Offset sites require a review of the management actions by a qualified ecologist after years 1, 3, 5 and 10 of management. Baseline data will be collected prior to the commencement of management works and data on the selected parameters will be collected during each of the four reviews. The results of these audits will be reported to TfN and DoEE as required. A template for this reporting is provided in Appendix 4 which includes a requirement to assess the implementation of actions defined by Table 6. The collection of baseline data (Table 6 Action 0.5) at the start of the offset management period will also be used to document the progress of the implementation of this OMP. Information from these monitoring events will be used to guide the ongoing site management.

After the 10 year review the offset site will continue to be managed by the land owner in a manner consistent with the objectives of this plan.

More general supervision/monitoring of the grassland will be undertaken by TfN to ensure the grasslands response to management actions produce the desired outcome outlined by this plan. TfN will visit the site a minimum of four times over the 10 year management period (at least the spring of years 1, 3, 6 and 10) and will liaise with the land owner annually regarding the development of an annual works plan.

The progress of management works will be monitored by the land owner on a regular basis (at a minimum once every 2 months). The land owner will provide a management progress report to TfN on an annual basis (or more frequently as required).

#### Actions

- Engage a qualified ecologist to undertake monitoring of management at the commencement of the offset management period (to provide baseline data) and in years 1, 3, 5 and 10. Reports will be provided after years 1, 3, 5 and 10 to TfN and MAB as required and will include a review of past works and future planning.
- A minimum of 20 permanent photo points will be established by the ecologist, marked and accurately located by GPS or similar within the offset site. Photo points will be located to adequately characterise the current vegetation condition, and include a range of weed species. These photo points will be used to monitor the vegetation for at least the 10 year period covered by this plan.
- Within a 5 x 5 m area centred on each photo point the ecologist will assess the percentage total vegetation cover, percentage cover of inter-tussock space, average height of vegetation and cover of native and exotic life-forms will be recorded.
- The results of the current year's management actions in relation to the annual management objectives will be reviewed by 31 December each year in consultation with TfN. This requires regular site inspection to determine the progress of pest plant and animal control works. Short inspections by the land owner to monitor management progress will be completed at least every two months. Input from TfN is also required to approve any potential changes to management activities. This input will occur at least once per annum.
- An annual management review will inform the annual works program. This works program will be prepared by the land owner in consultation with the TfN by the end of December each year. The plan will be implemented by the land owner and will include achievable management objectives consistent with this management plan. The works program for the coming year will also address issues that may not have been anticipated in formulating this original management plan.
- Annual progress reports will be prepared by the land owner.



- Appropriate records must be kept for each monitoring event by the land holder, TfN and the nominated ecologist (date, time, location, description of features or actions within each photograph).
- A completed Landowner monitoring and reporting form (required by TfN in years 2, 5, 10 and within three months as requested in writing by TfN after year 10).

### 3.8 Golden Sun Moth Monitoring

As the site is specifically/also an offset site for the conservation of Golden Sun Moth, monitoring during the flight season for this species is considered essential for DoEE to determine the efficacy of the actions taken to protect and offset impacts to this species (see Table 6 for an outline of the management actions required to satisfy Referral condition X). As the species is known to occur at the offset site and active management is expected to improve the condition of this habitat, monitoring the population of GSM five times over the life of the OMP is appropriate. Baseline GSM data should be collected for the offset area during the first flight season either just prior to or just after covenant registration.

A monitoring event includes four GSM surveys within the flight season to document the occurrence and abundance of GSM within the offset site. Surveys are prescribed in years 0, 1, 2, 4 and 10. Surveys will be undertaken during the GSM flight season, which in this region is typically expected to be between October and December each year. As the timing of the flight season varies annually and geographically, surveys need to be initiated from when warm weather is considered likely to stimulate emergence. In this region this is expected to occur anytime from early October onwards. Any observations of GSM during monitoring for vegetation condition and during inspections by the land owner or TfN will also be recorded.

As GSM are known to occur at the offset site no reference sites are required. However, prior to the conduct of surveys at this site, reports of GSM flying around Melbourne are likely to provide a useful indicator to identify the start of the flight season at this site.

Surveys are to be spaced at least one week apart to allow for variations in emergence patterns. Survey will take place when conditions were suitable for male flight (generally >20°C, bright, clear days, full sun, absence of rain and wind other than a light breeze) between 10:00 hrs and 15:00 hrs.

Each survey will examine the entire site systematically using a suitably qualified and competent ecologist/zoologist(s) walking a series of transects running parallel and spaced approximately 50m apart. Tracks will be recorded using a GPS and a waypoint taken for each location where GSM are observed. Each survey is expected to take between approximately one to two hours to complete.

Any obvious changes to the habitat characteristics of the offset area will be recorded during the GSM survey.

### 3.9 Timing

The time frame of the OMP is 10 years from commencement of management works. Ecological improvements including the control of pest plants and animals are required to be achieved over this ten year period. The formal commencement of the 10 year management period must start when the offset area has been legally protected.

Reports prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist will be provided after years 1, 3, 5 and 10 to TfN, ABP and DoEE and also to DELWP as required, and will include a review of past works and future planning.

The land owner will provide a report on the status of management works to the X Shire Council, ABP and DoEE on an annual basis.

Prior to works being undertaken each year the annual works program (based on Table 6) will be reviewed. The person undertaking the works will prepare a detailed works program in consultation with TfN. The works

program for the coming year will also address issues that may not have been anticipated in formulating this original management plan.

This management plan will be periodically reviewed during the 10 year management period and modified if necessary. It is suggested that a review of this plan be incorporated in the reporting requirements for years 1, 3, 5 and 10.

### 3.10 Risk Analysis

While this offset management plan identifies the management responsibilities associated with this offset area, the management of natural systems are subject to seasonal conditions and the response of the natural environment to those conditions. While there is every expectation that the implementation of the management actions outlined in this plan will produce an improved ecological outcome for NTGVVP and GSM habitat present there are risks associated with the implementation of this plan. Where outcomes are not achieved in a timely manner for various reasons outside of the land managers control, the intensity of management actions may need to adapt to such variable outcomes. For example if this part of the State experiences a rabbit plague then the proposed pest animal control measures would not be adequate to achieve the objectives of this OMP (i.e. negligible impact from pest animals).

Table 7 outlines potential risks associated with the management of this environment and potential corrective actions to be implemented if particular thresholds are exceeded.

**Table 7. Risk analysis and proposed corrective responses.**

Risk	Trigger for Corrective Action	Corrective Action
<b>Increasing population of pest animals (i.e. Fox, Cat, Rabbit, Hare)</b>	Increase of 20% in the observed population of a pest animal over two successive control events (applies for an observed population of more than 10 rabbits and 5 foxes, cats or hares. Fluctuations in populations smaller than this are not considered a trigger for corrective actions to be applied)	Increase frequency of control works to achieve a population below nominated thresholds (i.e. less than 10 rabbits and 5 foxes, cats or hares observed per control event).
<b>Increasing abundance of perennial weeds</b>	Any observable increase in the cover of perennial weeds over a 12 month period	Increase frequency of control works
<b>Significant increase in ground cover biomass</b>	Significant (90%) decrease in Golden Sun Moth population between two monitoring events coinciding with greater than expected levels of ground cover vegetation.  More than 70% cover of perennial tussock grasses during summer	Increase the intensity of activities designed to maintain an open grassland environment (i.e. autumn and winter grazing). Conduct an ecological burn.
<b>Management has a negative impact on threatened flora species present</b>	Unexplained decline (more than 10% in any one year) in the population of a threatened species (i.e. drought can explain such a decline and is an event outside management control).	Modify management activities where possible at a broad or local level.

**Decrease in Golden Sun Moth population**

90% decline in population over two monitoring periods (N.B. substantial inter-year population fluctuations appear to be normal for this species. Wet years in particular appear to disadvantage this species).

Where there is no explanation for the decline (i.e. a succession of wet years) then conduct an ecological burn over half of the offset site.

## References

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### Add as required

DEPI 2013. *Permitted clearing of native vegetation - Biodiversity assessment guidelines*. Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Melbourne (September 2013).

DEPI 2014. *Advisory list of rare or threatened plants in Victoria*. Department of Sustainability and Environment, Melbourne.

DSE 2007. *Native Vegetation - Guide for assessment of referred planning permit applications*. Victorian Government, Department of Sustainability and Environment, East Melbourne

DSE 2009. *BushBroker: Standards for management – Ecological grazing: Information Sheet No. 13*. DSE, East Melbourne.

DSEWPac 2012. Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 *Environmental Offsets Policy*. Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities. Australian Government, Canberra.

## Appendices

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## Appendix 1

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### EPBC Act offset calculator output for clearing at O'Herns Road Epping

## Appendix 2

### A2.1 Plant species (X native and X weeds) recorded within Lot X of Parcel ID, Town

#### Rare or threatened species status:

##### Australian status: (EPBC Act)

VU Vulnerable

##### Victorian status: (VBA, 2010)

v vulnerable

r rare

#### Noxious weed status:

RC Regionally controlled species

Status	Total % cover (weeds)	Scientific Name	Common Name
<b>Rare or Threatened Native Species</b>			
<b>Native Species</b>			
<b>Weed Species</b>			

## Appendix 3

### A3.1 DELWP Owner Monitoring and Reporting Form

Landowner of offset site	
Location and address of offset site	1316 Darlington - Nerrin Road, Dundonnell
Offset site number (if applicable)	
Offset plan reference number (if applicable)	
Responsible Authority	
Report #	
Signature	
Date	

Please attach a copy of Management Action Table (Table 6) from this Offset Plan with information on which actions have been completed for year/s of this reporting period.

Describe specific monitoring results from surveys undertaken, survival rates of revegetation works, fencing work, success of weed and pest animal control work, successful management tools (i.e. techniques used to control weed species, protection of new plants, monitoring techniques etc.) and any problems or issues experienced (i.e. new infestation of weed species, storm damage to fencing etc.).

Provide photographs showing evidence of works.

If any agreed management actions or commitments are incomplete or have not been undertaken in the times specified explain the reasons why and what program of action/s will be undertaken to implement the action. If no action is to be undertaken please explain the reason/s and how the targets specified will be met.



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## Figures

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**Figure 1:** Location of the O'Herns Road industrial subdivision, Epping, Victoria.

**Figure 2:** Location of biodiversity values within the O'Herns Road industrial subdivision, Epping.

**Figure 3:** General location of the offset site, Victoria.

**Figure 4:** Location of the offset site within the offset property.