





Do


Don't


 Ensure that project design avoids and minimises impacts on environmental values to the greatest extent practicable. This will reduce any potential offset requirements for the project.


 Finalise project design prior to understanding the environmental values that are present on the project site.


 Undertake a comprehensive 'likelihood of occurrence' and 'significant impact assessment' for all potential threatened species and vegetation, and include defensible justifications for conclusions made.


 Assume a project doesn't have a significant impact on a species because it has not been recorded on site. Offsets can be imposed even in cases where important habitat is present, but the species has never been recorded.


 Understand early on what your offset requirements are realistically likely to be. This may include a 'strict' application of Commonwealth and State offset policies to figure out what the worst case scenario could be to enable adequate planning.


 Assume that government will make concessions for the project if discretionary powers can be applied. For example, for projects with major project status, don't fall into the trap of assuming that you won't be required to provide offsets for State matters.


 Consider whether staging offset delivery may be advantageous for your project. You should consider – are there natural breaks in your projects development timeline and is there some uncertainty about future project impacts? If yes – then staging offset delivery might be relevant for your project.


 Miss the window of opportunity to allow for staged offsets. This needs to be negotiated prior to project approval so that the conditions of approval can reflect the staged approach. During the assessment process you still need to understand the impacts of the whole project, even if there is some uncertainty about future impacts.


 Ensure that you have a full understanding of the timeframes involved with offset delivery and approval – particularly those that have a statutory basis.


 Forget to incorporate timeframes for offset delivery into the overall project schedule.


 Make sure that your project budget includes a good estimate of the full costs associated with offset establishment and implementation. This will mitigate the risk of budget blow outs and nasty surprises for project feasibility down the track.


 Forget that offsets require ongoing management for the life of the offset, including ongoing pest and weed management, fence and firebreak management, as well as monitoring, compliance reporting and payments to landholders.


 Make sure you have several potential offset options so that you're not caught short in the event your priority offset falls over. Having more than one option can also improve your position during offset negotiations with landholders.


 Put all your eggs in one basket. Project approval processes can take months, if not years, and there are so many reasons why your preferred offset property just might not stack up!


 Develop a well thought out landholder negotiation strategy. This should include developing offset agreement terms and working out how much you're willing to pay a landholder to provide an offset on their land.

 Start landholder negotiations until you're ready to commit to the process, or similarly don't leave it to the last minute. Securing a successful outcome takes a sustained effort to build and maintain relationships over what can often be a long negotiation process.

 Consult early and often with the departmental staff that are determining your offset approval conditions. Make sure you are fully informed about their expectations regarding the assessment and delivery of offsets for the project.

 Wait until the very last minute to present your offset proposal to government. If you do – and the government doesn't sign-off on your offsets – you may find that you haven't left enough time to commence the project according to schedule.

 Engage offset specialists who know what they're doing early on in the project. It will save you money in the long run as you'll avoid costly mistakes and re-work.

 Assume that offset negotiations are just like other negotiations with landholders required as part of project delivery. The delivery and negotiation of offsets is complex and offset brokering is a niche field that very few do well.