1. Policy Statement

Energex is committed to achieving a net environmental gain when implementing environmental offsets for capital projects that result in unavoidable impacts on the environment.

Energex seeks to avoid and minimise environmental impacts as far as practicable through good site selection, intelligent design and best practise environmental management during design, construction and maintenance of Energex infrastructure. Where unavoidable impacts on the environment occur as a result of capital works projects, Energex is committed to achieving a net environmental gain by implementing environmental offsets for capital projects that result in unavoidable impacts on the environment. Offsets are not considered appropriate where the impacts of a development are minor in nature; or could reasonably be avoided or mitigated.

The Energex Environmental Offsets Policy supports the Offsets Policies of the Federal and Queensland Governments, and endeavours to comply with the principles of Environmental Offsets set out in the draft Policy Statement: use of environmental offsets under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (DEWHA 2007) and the Queensland Government Environmental Offsets Policy (QGEOP).

Through Environmental Offsets, Energex will seek to achieve an equivalent or better environmental outcome than that provided by the area subjected to the unavoidable impacts that trigger the requirement for offsets.

As far as practicable, Energex Environmental Offsets will provide:

- environmental values as similar as possible to those being lost. Timely offset provision will minimise the time-lag between the impact and delivery of the offset; and
- additional protection for environmental values at risk, or additional management actions to improve environmental values.

Enquiries regarding Environmental Offsets should be directed to the Corporate Environment Group.

2. Purpose/Rationale

Environmental offsets are broadly understood to mean actions taken by developers to compensate for the adverse impacts of their developments on the environment. Energex aims to avoid detrimental environmental impacts wherever possible and to mitigate and offset where avoidance is not possible.

The Federal Government defines environmental offsets as ‘actions taken outside a development site that compensate for the impacts of that development - including direct, indirect or consequential impacts’. Environmental offsets provide an opportunity for long-term conservation outcomes while providing flexibility for development with adverse environmental impacts.

Environmental offsets are not intended to make proposals with detrimental impacts acceptable. They are intended to provide another tool that can be used during project design, environmental assessment and implementation to achieve the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

A flexible approach will be taken to the design and use of environmental offsets to achieve long-term and certain conservation outcomes which are cost effective (DEWHA 2007).
3. **Scope**

Energex’s obligations under the relevant Government Policies apply to all new infrastructure projects and in some instances, the maintenance and upgrading of existing infrastructure.

For details of applicable environmental offset obligations for a given project or activity, consult the Corporate Environment Group.

Energex Offset projects will be overseen by the Corporate Environment Group to ensure best practise outcomes and compliance with Government offset legislation and policies.

Energex environmental offsets will as far as practicable:

1. Comply with offset requirements under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* when matters of national environmental significance are triggered and conditional approval is granted;
2. Comply with the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014* and associated Regulation and Policies for assessable development when triggered;
3. Meet the intended ‘net environmental gain’ outcome of the ENERGEX Class Approval (protected plants) through employing an offset ratio of 3:1 or equivalent for every native tree removed that has a diameter at breast height of 10 cm or greater.

Energex recognises that offsetting in south east Queensland brings a number of challenges, including a substantial number of Energex infrastructure projects triggering offset requirements, limited availability of offset receiving sites, highly fragmented landscapes, and competing or conflicting land uses affecting potential offset receiving sites. In delivering environmental offsets, Energex will, as far as practicable:

- Ensure environmental offsets are commensurate with the magnitude of the impacts of the project, and ideally deliver outcomes that are ‘like for like’;
- Seek to re-establish, where appropriate, pre-clearing Regional Ecosystems within the same Bioregion, Subregion (Province) and vegetation types as the unavoidable impacts;
- Seek to use provenance seed stock to enhance genetic integrity and survivability of the offset;
- Seek to replace the habitat values of hollow-bearing trees through the installation of nest boxes adjacent to project impacted areas in accordance with the Energex Compensatory Nest Box Calculator;
- Secure the protection of environmental offsets by a legally binding mechanism on land title or equivalent mechanism, unless the offset is a creek or river restoration project;
- Bundle offset requirements to deliver offset packages, in preference to project-by-project offsets;
- Seek to invest in strategic regional-scale environmental outcomes rather than provide small fragmented offsets.

In considering delivery options for environmental offsets, Energex will endeavour to undertake environmental offsetting in conjunction with its strategic environmental offset partners and the community.

Energex will only consider the purchase or acquisition of land for offsetting where no viable alternatives can be identified, or in other exceptional circumstances. In such circumstances, the land purchase or acquisition proposal is to be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer for approval.

Energex will maintain a register of Environmental Offset Projects that identifies the infrastructure Projects that result in unavoidable environmental impacts, and the offset project details. Energex environmental offsets will be monitored, reported to Government and audited as required.
4. **Cost**

Costs for Environmental Offsets shall be incorporated into the Total Out-turn Cost (TOC) budget for each Program of Work as required. Costs will vary project to project depending on offset requirements. Corporate Environment Group will ascertain the type of offsets required for each project.

5. **Enquiries Regarding This Document**

Enquiries regarding this document should be directed to the Corporate Environment Group.

6. **Reference Documents**

- Queensland Government Environmental Offsets Policy