

First party offset guide

How to establish a first party offset site



July 2018

Cover image: *Linum marginale*, DELWP (Ian McCann)

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Introduction

In Victoria, a planning permit is usually required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. Landholders must apply for a planning permit from their local council. If a permit is granted a native vegetation offset must be secured before the native vegetation is removed.

The *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (the Guidelines) are incorporated into all Victorian planning schemes. The Guidelines set out what must be included in an application to remove native vegetation, how an application is assessed, and what can be an offset.

What is an offset?

An offset compensates for the loss in biodiversity value when native vegetation is removed. An offset is delivered by protecting and managing native vegetation at an offset site. This protection and management improves the security and condition of the native vegetation, resulting in 'gain'. This gain is used to meet the offset requirements when native vegetation is removed.

Types of offsets

There are two types of offsets:

- A **species offset** is required when the removal of native vegetation has a significant impact on habitat for a rare or threatened species.
- A **general offset** is required when the removal of native vegetation does not have a significant impact on habitat for a rare or threatened species.

Offset sites are described as either first or third party. Table 1 gives a quick comparison of first party and third party offset sites.

This guide explains how a landowner can establish an offset site on their own property to meet their own offset requirements – this is called a first party offset.

If you want to establish a third party offset site and trade credits through the Native Vegetation Credit Register (NVCR) visit the DELWP website for more information.

Table 1. A quick comparison of first party and third party offset sites

	First party offset sites	Third party offset sites
Description	First party offset sites are on land owned by the holder of a permit to remove native vegetation. They are used to meet landowners' own offset requirements.	Third party offset sites are on land owned by another party. Permit holders can buy native vegetation credits from other landowners to meet their offset requirements.
Eligibility	All offset sites must meet the eligibility requirements described in section 9.1 of the Guidelines and summarised in Step 1 of this guide.	
Security	<p>All offset sites must be protected in perpetuity (forever) with an on-title security agreement. The security requirements are described in section 9.2 of the Guidelines and Step 2 of this guide.</p> <p>First party offset sites can be secured with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an agreement with the Secretary to DELWP under section 69 of the <i>Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987</i> • an agreement with a responsible authority under section 173 of the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> • an agreement with Trust for Nature to register an offset covenant under the <i>Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972</i>. 	<p>Third party offset sites can be secured with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an agreement with the Secretary to DELWP under section 69 of the <i>Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987</i> • an agreement with Trust for Nature to register an offset covenant under the <i>Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972</i>.
Management	All offset sites must be managed to ensure gain is achieved. The management requirements are described in section 9.3 of the Guidelines and Step 2 and 5 of this guide.	
Trading and registration	<p>First party offset sites should be recorded on the Native Vegetation Offset Register.</p> <p>Any first party offset site that will be allocated over time to a number of approvals must be registered on the NVCR.</p>	<p>Third party offset sites must be recorded on the Native Vegetation Credit Register.</p> <p>Third parties can sell credits that their offset site generates to permit holders needing to meet offset requirements.</p>

Quick Guide

To deliver a first party offset you must agree to protect and manage native vegetation on your property in perpetuity (forever). Figure 1 explains the process to establish a first party offset site. The remainder of this document provides the details required to respond to each step.

Figure 1. Summary of process to establish a first party offset site

Step 1 <i>Is my native vegetation eligible to be an offset site?</i>	<p>Check whether the native vegetation you wish to protect is eligible to be an offset site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have an area on your property that contains a patch of native vegetation, scattered tree(s) or that can be revegetated with native vegetation? • Does the native vegetation meet minimum condition, size and configuration requirements? • Are current and future land use(s) compatible with managing the native vegetation for conservation? • Can significant threats to the native vegetation be controlled? • Is the vegetation under another agreement, incentive or grant to manage the native vegetation? • Does the native vegetation have to be managed to reduce bushfire risk?
Step 2 <i>Can I secure and manage an offset site?</i>	<p>You must agree to protect and manage native vegetation on your property forever. Decide if you are able to deliver a first party offset:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you enter into a security agreement to permanently protect the native vegetation? • Are you able to undertake all of the management commitments and actions? • Do you accept the costs to secure and manage the native vegetation as an offset site?
Step 3 <i>How much gain is available?</i>	<p>An assessment is completed to determine how much gain (measured in general and species habitat units) is available at the proposed offset site. There are two options for this assessment:</p> <div> <div> A. Complete your own assessment using the Native Vegetation Information Management (NVIM) native vegetation offset tool <p>Identify and map the vegetation you want to protect as an offset site.</p> <p>The <u>NVIM native vegetation offset tool</u> will use this information and statewide maps determine the amount of gain available and include this in a <i>Native vegetation offset report</i>.</p> <p>Only general habitat units of gain can be generated using this method.</p> </div> <div> B. Appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete the assessment <p>Your local council can recommend an assessor that services your area. The assessor will work with you to identify and map vegetation that can be protected and they will complete a gain scoring assessment based on native vegetation condition, proposed management actions and type of security.</p> <p>The assessor will get a <i>Native vegetation offset report</i> from DELWP that details the available gain.</p> <p>General and species habitat units of gain can be generated using this method.</p> </div> </div>
Step 4 <i>Does the offset site meet offset requirements?</i>	<p>Look at the offset requirements on the permit condition or the <i>Native vegetation removal report</i>. Compare these to the information in the <i>Native vegetation offset report</i>. Confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have sufficient gain on your property to meet your offset requirements • the native vegetation has the appropriate offset attributes to meet your offset requirements (i.e. minimum strategic biodiversity value score, same CMA or municipal area, number of large trees and/or species habitat).
Step 5 <i>Prepare the OMP and security agreement</i>	<div> <p>An offset management plan (OMP) template for first party general offset sites is available on the <u>DELWP website</u>.</p> <p>The statutory body will review this plan, check the eligibility requirements and work with you to prepare the security agreement.</p> </div> <div> <p>The assessor will develop the offset management plan and work with you and the statutory body to confirm eligibility requirements and prepare the security agreement.</p> </div>

Step 1. Is my native vegetation eligible to be an offset site?

To deliver a first party offset you must have eligible native vegetation and agree to protect and manage it forever. This step will determine if the native vegetation you plan to protect is eligible to be an offset site.

To establish a first party offset site, the vegetation you protect and manage must be located on your own land. The offset site can only be used for your own offset requirements.

1.1 Do you have a suitable area on your property?

The Guidelines state that an offset can be any or a combination of:

- a patch of native vegetation
- a scattered tree
- an area of revegetation.

Appendix 1 has information to help recognise native vegetation and classify whether native vegetation is a patch or a scattered tree.

1.2 Is the native vegetation eligible to be an offset?

An area of native vegetation is eligible to be an offset site when:

- it meets condition, size and configuration standards
- surrounding land uses are compatible
- significant threats can be controlled
- it is not subject to certain other agreements, and
- it is not managed to reduce bushfire risk.

Does the native vegetation meet minimum condition, size and configuration requirements?

Appendix 2 has information on the minimum size condition and configuration standards for patches, scattered trees and revegetation. The NVIM native vegetation offset tool will check these in Step 3.

Are current and future land use(s) compatible with managing the native vegetation for conservation?

Incompatible uses may include:

- activities requiring the removal of logs or trimming/clearing of understorey plants or trees
- horse-riding, cycling or motorised vehicle use off established tracks
- infrastructure easements
- cropping
- earth works
- ongoing activities that are likely to degrade vegetation condition or restrict improvement in vegetation condition.

If any of these land uses occur, or are planned to occur at the proposed offset site, then it is not eligible.

Can significant threats to the condition of the native vegetation be controlled?

Significant threats to the condition of native vegetation impact on your ability to complete management commitments. Consider:

- high levels of continued nutrient run off
- salinity issues where the issue will continue or increase
- significant erosion that cannot be controlled without impacting native vegetation
- significant invasion from pest animals such as rabbits, deer, goats and pigs
- extensive die-back or plant diseases

If these threats are present and you cannot effectively manage them, the site is not eligible to be secured as an offset site.

Is the native vegetation already a native vegetation offset or carbon credit, or under a grant or incentive program?

A site is not eligible to be an offset if it is:

- already being used to offset other removal of native vegetation or species habitat required under Victorian or federal legislation
- subject to a current agreement or initiative to generate carbon credits
- subject to a current agreement under a biodiversity or native vegetation related incentive or grant program.

Does the native vegetation need to be managed to reduce bushfire risk?

A site is not eligible to be an offset if it is:

- within 50 metres of a dwelling (or future dwelling) that is not in a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
- within 150 metres of a dwelling (or future dwelling) that is in a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
- The distance can be reduced if a planning permit or the Country Fire Authority, or relevant fire authority as defined by the planning schemes, has allowed this distance to be safely reduced.

Planned disturbance regimes

Planned disturbance regimes such as fuel reduction burning, or flooding may impact on your ability to complete management commitments. Consider whether these apply to the land and whether they are incompatible with conservation objectives.

If your answers to the below questions are in the **GREEN** boxes, continue to Step 2.

Do you have an area on your property that contains a patch of native vegetation or scattered tree(s), or that can be revegetated with native vegetation?	Y	N
Does the native vegetation meet minimum condition, size and configuration requirements?	Y	N
Are current and future land use(s) compatible with managing the native vegetation for conservation?	Y	N
Can significant threats to the condition of the native vegetation be controlled?	Y	N
Is the native vegetation already a native vegetation offset or carbon credit, or under a grant or incentive program?	Y	N
Does the native vegetation need to be managed to reduce bushfire risk?	Y	N

If any of your answers were in the RED boxes

If any of your answers were in the RED boxes then you will not be able to meet your offset requirements with a first party offset. You can purchase your offset from a third party via the NVCR. For more information on the NVCR visit the [DELWP website](#).

Step 2. Can I secure and manage an offset site?

A statutory body must agree to sign a security agreement with you. The agreement is registered on the land title and protects the native vegetation forever.

Ensure you read and understand the management and security obligations and commitments described in this section and the costs associated with these before proceeding.

If you don't want to protect your vegetation forever or if the costs to secure and manage a first party offset site are too high, you can purchase your offset from a third party via the Native Vegetation Credit Register (NVCR).

Buying credits from existing offset sites can be more convenient and cost effective. You can download a list of the prices of previous native vegetation credit trades from the DELWP website, or you can contact an offset broker.

2.1 Management obligations

Are you able to undertake all the land management commitments and actions?

Offset sites must be managed in perpetuity, either by yourself or a suitable contractor. You must commit to 10 years of land management commitments, plus ongoing management commitments to maintain the vegetation at the improved condition, following the initial 10 year period. Land management commitments are detailed in the security agreement, and include:

- retain all trees, including dead trees that are standing
- exclude stock and other threats
- ensure that weed cover does not increase beyond the current level
- monitor for new and emerging weeds and eliminate to less than one per cent
- retain all logs, fallen timber and organic litter
- control rabbits
- for grassland vegetation types biomass management may be a requirement

- for scattered trees you must recruit or plant at least five native canopy tree species for each scattered tree that is protected
- for revegetation you must undertake revegetation in accordance with the minimum planting standards specified in the *Native vegetation gain scoring manual, Version 2*
- report annually on management actions.

2.2 Security agreement

Can you enter into a security agreement to permanently protect the native vegetation?

Offset sites need to protect the native vegetation in perpetuity (forever). To protect the native vegetation, you must sign a security agreement with a relevant statutory body.

The security agreement details your legal obligations, includes the offset management plan, the first two pages of the *Native vegetation offset report* and a survey diagram, and will be recorded on your land title.

There are three types of agreements available to secure first party offsets:

- an agreement with a responsible authority (usually local **Council**) under section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
- an agreement with the Secretary to **DELWP** under section 69 of the *Conservation Forest and Lands Act 1987*
- an agreement with **Trust for Nature** to register an offset covenant under the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972*.

One of Council, DELWP or Trust for Nature must be willing to sign a security agreement to protect the native vegetation as an offset site. Contact them to confirm they are willing to enter into a security agreement with you and to obtain a copy of any standard agreements used. If these organisations are unwilling to enter into an agreement then you cannot use the property as an offset.

DELWP has developed templates for:

- a section 173 agreement for first party offset sites that Council may choose to use.
- a standard 10 year offset management plan for a site mapped using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool. Step 5 has more details.

Templates are available on the DELWP website: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/offsets>.

2.3 Offset site costs

Do you accept the costs to secure and manage the native vegetation as an offset site?

Estimate the security and management costs before you commit to establishing a first party offset site.

Security agreement costs

Consider the cost of the security agreement. This is estimated below (as at June 2018) but will vary and is subject to change – get a current cost estimate from the statutory body when you contact them.

- costs to establish the agreement with:
 - a responsible authority (usually local Council) under section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* – varies between Councils, approximately \$5,000
 - the Secretary to DELWP under section 69 of the *Conservation Forest and Lands Act 1987* – approximately \$15,000
 - Trust for Nature to register an offset covenant under the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972* – approximately \$20,000
- preparation of a site plan by a licensed surveyor to Land Victoria's specifications – approximately \$1,500, depending on size of offset site
- legal fees associated with drafting and reviewing the security agreement, and recording your offset site on the land title. Contact a legal organisation to find out their rates
- Land Titles Office fee for the registration of the security agreement on the land title – approximately \$100.

Potential lost income

Consider whether you will lose income from foregoing a potential use or development of the land by designating the land for conservation. Remember that the site must remain an offset site forever, in accordance with the security agreement.

Costs of any assessment

If you complete your own assessment using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool, there is no cost.

If you appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete a gain scoring assessment and an offset management plan, the cost is likely to be at least \$3,000. This cost will vary between assessors and will depend on the size of the offset site and the type of vegetation to be assessed.

There are some benefits to appointing an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete a gain scoring assessment, such as generating species habitat units of gain, and gain for wetland vegetation. This is described in Table 2.

You will need to contact an assessor to get a quote for your site. Your local council can recommend an assessor that services your area.

Management costs

You must commit to managing the offset site in perpetuity (forever). Management costs will vary between properties and may include:

- initial set up costs e.g. erecting fences, intense weed or pest control, or planting native vegetation
- annual ongoing management costs e.g. repairing damaged fences, regular weed and pest control and replacing dead plants. These costs continue forever – not just for the first 10 years of management
- monitoring and reporting costs specified in the management plan (landowners time or consultant's fees).

NOTE: Costs and fees in this section are estimates based on known fees in June 2018. Costs and fees are subject to change and standard increases.

Can you secure and manage a first party offset site? If you answer **Yes** to all of these questions, continue to Step 3.

Can you enter into a security agreement to permanently protect the native vegetation?	Y	N
Are you able to undertake all the land management commitments and actions?	Y	N
Do you accept the costs to secure and manage the native vegetation as an offset?	Y	N

If you answered No to any of these questions

If you answered No to any of these questions then you will not be able to meet your offset requirements with a first party offset. You can purchase your offset from a third party via the NVCR. For more information on the NVCR visit the [DELWP website](#).

Step 3. How much gain is available?

The site must be assessed to determine how much gain (measured in general or species habitat units) is available at the proposed offset site.

There are two options to complete an assessment:

1. appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete the assessment, or
2. complete your own assessment using the Native Vegetation Information Management native vegetation offset tool (NVIM native vegetation offset tool).

Table 2 provides an overview of the two options, when they can be used, their advantages and limitations.

If you have a **general** offset requirement and you want to establish an offset site on your own property, you can use the NVIM native vegetation offset tool to complete your own assessment.

If you have a **species** offset requirement and you want to establish an offset site on your own property, you must appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete the assessment.

Table 2. Options for the assessment of a first party offset site

	1. Appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete the assessment	2. Complete your own assessment using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool
Description	<p>An accredited native vegetation assessor completes a gain scoring assessment of the potential offset site in accordance with the Guidelines and the <i>Native vegetation gain scoring manual, Version 2</i>. The gain scoring assessment includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a site assessment • an assessment of a site's eligibility, threatening processes and weed cover • the calculation of a gain score. <p>The assessor provides this information to DELWP and DELWP generates a <i>Native vegetation offset report</i> used to establish an offset site.</p> <p>This option is used if you want to generate general and species habitat units of gain to use as an offset for your own offset requirements. This establishes a First party offset site.</p>	<p>The online NVIM native vegetation offset tool enables landholders to complete their own assessment. The tool allows you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • map the native vegetation you propose to protect and manage • find out how much gain is available if that mapped native vegetation is protected and managed (calculate gain) • download a <i>Native vegetation offset report</i> used to establish an offset site. <p>This option can be used if you want to generate general habitat units of gain to use as an offset for your own offset requirements. This establishes a First party general offset site.</p>
Advantages	<p>A gain scoring assessment completed by an accredited native vegetation assessor can be used if you want to generate species habitat units of gain, and gain for wetland vegetation. Native vegetation condition is assessed on site, threats are identified and a purpose-built management plan is developed.</p> <p>If a gain scoring assessment is completed by a NVCR-accredited site assessor, the property could be established as a third party offset site to generate native vegetation credits. You can use credits for your own offset requirements and trade any excess to others.</p>	<p>Using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool and the standard offset management plan template provides a simplified process that allows a landowner to complete the assessment themselves (at no cost).</p>
Limitations	<p>A gain scoring assessment <i>must</i> be completed by an accredited native vegetation assessor. An accredited assessor will charge a fee for their services.</p>	<p>This tool cannot be used to generate species habitat units or protect wetland vegetation types. This option can only be used to establish a first party general offset site.</p>
More info	Step 3.1 has more information.	Step 3.2 has more information.

3.1 Appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete the assessment

You can appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete the assessment. Accredited native vegetation assessors are listed on DELWP's Vegetation Quality Assessment Competency Register. Your local council may be able to recommend an assessor that services your local area. The assessor will:

- ensure that the native vegetation meets all eligibility requirements
- complete a gain scoring assessment of the native vegetation to be protected
- provide you with a *Native vegetation offset report*
- tell you if the proposed offset meets your offset requirements
- develop an offset management plan outlining the commitments and actions required to manage the native vegetation.

3.2 Complete your own assessment using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool

The online NVIM native vegetation offset tool can only be used to establish a first party general offset site.

The following can be protected at an offset site:

- A patch of native vegetation.
- A scattered tree.
- An area of woody revegetation.

Appendix 1 has information on how to recognise and classify native vegetation. If you are unsure seek advice from your local council, they may be able to assist you or refer you to someone who can help. Take photos of the bark, leaves, flowers, fruit or gum nuts that will help identify if it is native.

You need to map areas on your property that you want to protect as an offset site. The tool will use this information and:

- check and report the condition, size and configuration of the native vegetation
- determine the general habitat units of gain
- generate a *Native vegetation offset report* that you can download.

The following sections describe how to do this.

3.2.1 Collect site information

Before you use the online NVIM native vegetation offset tool to map the native vegetation you plan to protect, you need to collect site information:

- the location and boundary of patches of native vegetation
- the location and boundary of any proposed revegetation
- the location and trunk circumference of native canopy trees that are taller than 3 metres.

There are minimum size and quality requirements for native vegetation protection (Appendix 2). The NVIM native vegetation offset tool will determine this for you using information you provide.

Measure the trees

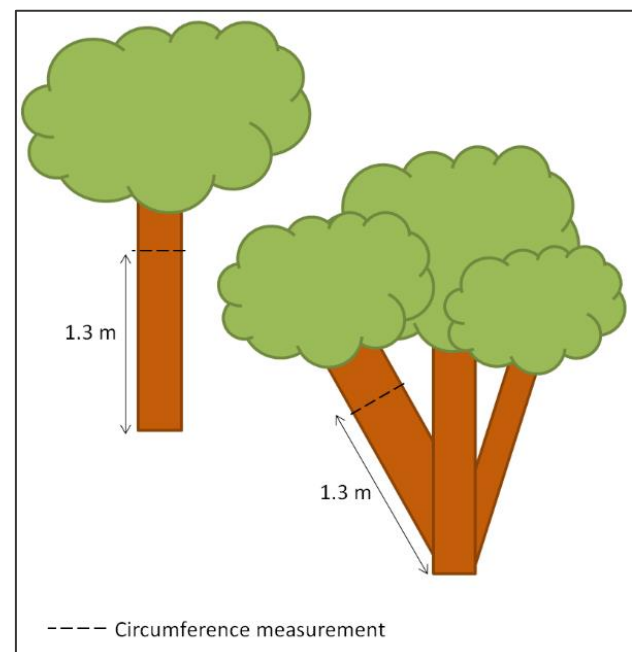
A native canopy tree is a mature tree that is taller than 3 metres and normally found in the upper layer of the relevant vegetation type.

Use a measuring tape to measure the trunk circumference in centimetres (i.e. the distance around the trunk) of any native canopy trees you want to protect. Figure 2 shows how to do this.

The trunk circumference must be measured at 1.3 metres above ground level. If the tree has multiple stems, measure the largest stem.

You do not need to measure or map native trees that are less than 3 metres tall as these do not qualify as canopy trees.

Figure 2. How to measure the trunk circumference of a tree



Take photographs

You must take photographs of all the native vegetation proposed to be protected, including photos taken from several different locations and distances. These photos will be included in the offset management plan prepared during Step 5.

It is desirable to include close-up photographs of the plants and their leaves, flowers, bark and fruit (as applicable) to assist in identification. If the area of native vegetation to be protected is large, provide photos that are indicative of the native vegetation.

3.2.2 Map the native vegetation in the NVIM native vegetation offset tool

Access the NVIM native vegetation offset tool at <https://nvim.delwp.vic.gov.au/> to map the native vegetation information you collected in Step 3.2.1.

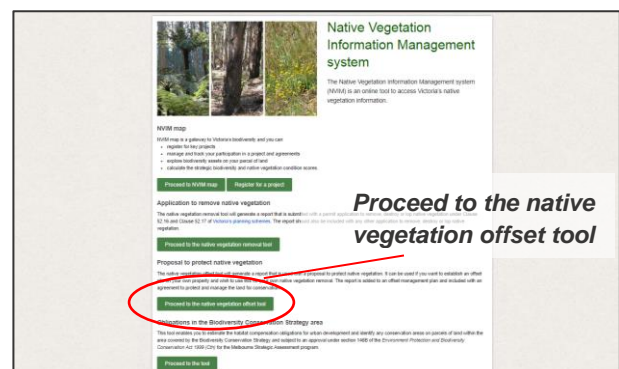
Table 3 explains how to use the NVIM native vegetation offset tool. Points 5, 6 and 7 explain how to map native vegetation you plan to protect. The native vegetation can include a patch, scattered tree or revegetation or a combination of these.

Table 3. How to use the NVIM native vegetation offset tool

1. Open the NVIM native vegetation offset tool

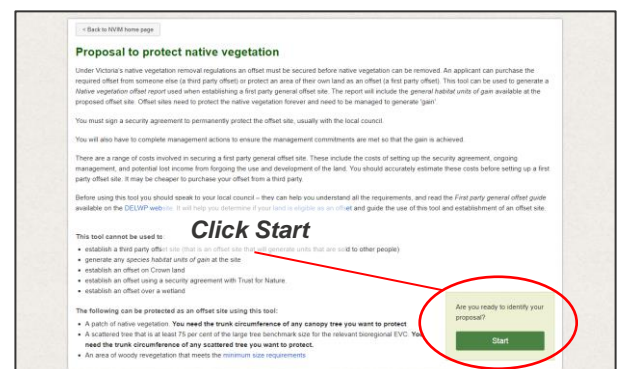
Go to the NVIM system home page
<https://nvim.delwp.vic.gov.au/>

Click 'Proceed to the native vegetation offset tool'.



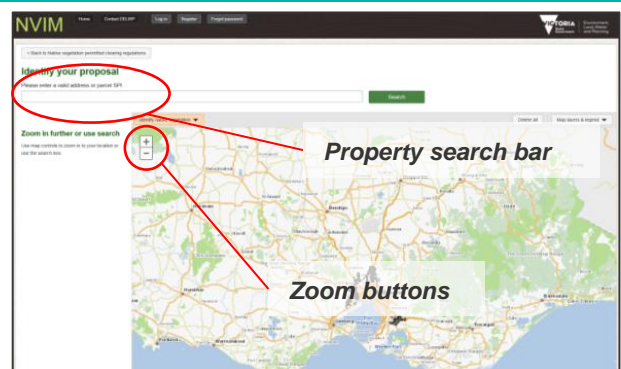
2. Proposal to protect native vegetation

Read the information about protecting native vegetation. Make sure the NVIM native vegetation offset tool is the right tool for you. If it is - click 'Start'.



3. Locate your site

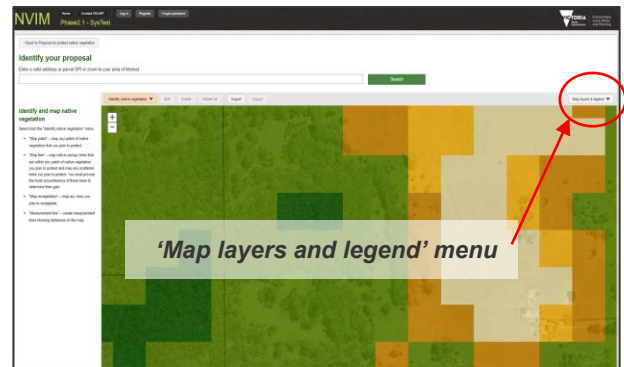
Type your address in the property search bar. You can also use the zoom buttons or your mouse scroller to find your site.



4. View the condition score and strategic biodiversity value score

Select the 'Map layers & legend' menu.

- Select 'Aerial imagery' to view the native vegetation.
- You will generate more gain if you protect areas of native vegetation with greater biodiversity value. These are the areas with:
 - higher 'native vegetation condition' (select layer to view, and expand the legend)
 - higher strategic biodiversity value (select layer to view, and expand the legend), and
 - large scattered trees.



5. Draw the boundary of any patches

Select the 'Identify native vegetation' menu to start mapping.

Select 'Map patch' to draw a boundary around any patches of native vegetation you plan to protect.

- A patch is either an area with 25 per cent native perennial understorey plant cover OR three canopy trees with a continuous canopy (see Appendix 1). Draw a line that follows the boundary of the patch.
- If the patch boundary includes a tree, the drip line of the tree canopy is the boundary of the patch.



6. Map native canopy trees

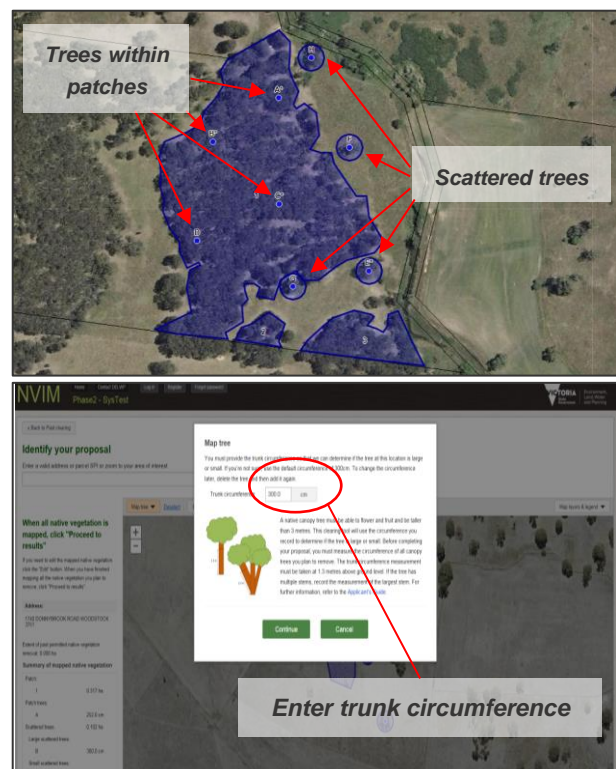
Select 'Map tree' to map the location of all canopy trees you want to protect.

- Mark the location of trees within patches of native vegetation.
- Mark the location of trees outside patches of native vegetation (scattered trees).

For each tree you map, the NVIM native vegetation offset tool will prompt you to enter the trunk circumference.

- Type in the trunk circumference (see section 3.2.1 and Figure 2) when prompted.

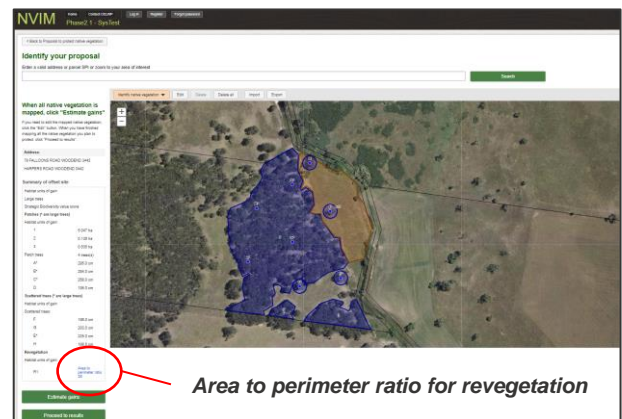
The NVIM native vegetation offset tool determine if a tree is scattered or within a patch and if the tree is large, or too small to be protected as an offset.



7. Draw the boundary of any areas of revegetation

Select the 'Identify native vegetation' menu. Choose 'Map revegetation' to draw a boundary around any area you plan to revegetate.

An area of revegetation must be woody and must meet the minimum size and configuration requirements (Appendix 2). The NVIM native vegetation offset tool will tell you the area to perimeter ratio of any revegetation area that you map. Generally, circular or square areas of more than 0.64 hectares would meet the requirements. Long and narrow revegetation sites would not.

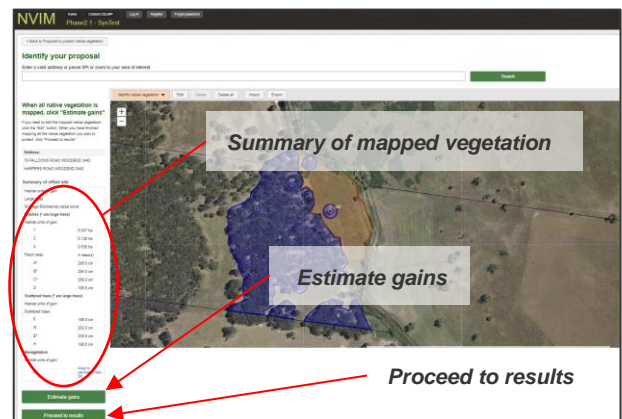


8. Estimate gains and proceed to results

As you map the vegetation you want to protect, a summary will appear on the left of the screen.

Click 'Estimate gains' at any time to see how many habitat units of gain would be generated by protecting the vegetation you have mapped. You can use this to check if potential gain meets your offset requirements or if more vegetation has to be protected.

When you have finished mapping the vegetation you want to protect, click 'Proceed to results'.



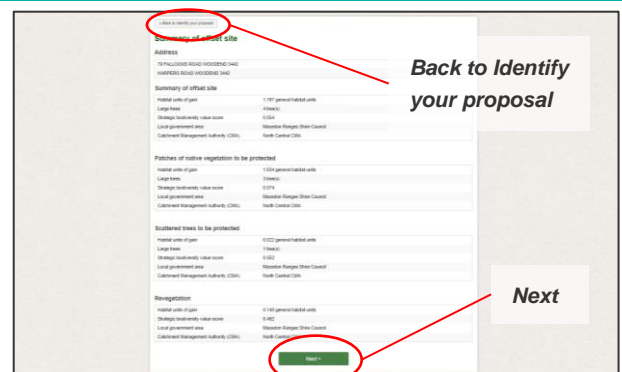
9. Summary of offset site

The summary of mapped native vegetation includes the habitat units of gain, number of large trees and the strategic biodiversity value score.

If you want to adjust the native vegetation you mapped, click 'Back to Identify your proposal'.

You can use the 'Edit' button to adjust the areas you have mapped.

When you are happy with the native vegetation you have mapped and are ready to continue, click 'Next'.

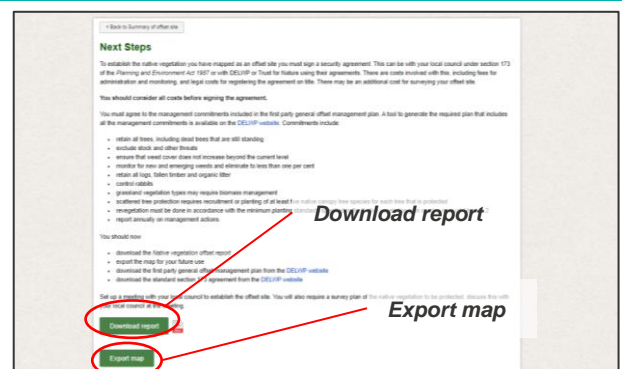


10. Next steps

Review the next steps for securing your first party general offset site.

Click 'Download report' to save the *Native vegetation offset report* to your computer.

Click 'Export map' to save the map to your computer as a Shapefile.



Step 4. Does the proposed offset site meet offset requirements?

Compare the offset requirements on your permit conditions or on the *Native vegetation removal report* with the information in the *Native vegetation offset report*.

If you appointed an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete the assessment, the assessor will provide you with a *Native vegetation offset report*. If you completed your own assessment you would have downloaded the *Native vegetation offset report* using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool.

- Are there enough habitat units of gain at the offset site to meet your offset requirements?
- Is the offset site located in the same Catchment Management Authority area or municipal district as the native vegetation removal site?
- Is the offset site's strategic biodiversity value score the same or higher than the minimum strategic biodiversity value score requirement?

- Are there at least the same number of large trees on the offset site as the number being removed from the removal site?

Next steps

You should now have checked that:

- the native vegetation you have mapped is eligible to be an offset site
- you can secure and manage a first party offset site, the costs are acceptable and a statutory body is prepared to sign the security agreement
- you can generate sufficient habitat units of gain to meet your offset requirements, and
- the property has the appropriate offset attributes to meet your offset requirements (i.e. minimum strategic biodiversity value score, same CMA or municipal area, large trees).

If you have decided to meet your offset requirement with a first party offset, go to Step 5.

Native vegetation removal report

A report to support an application to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation in the **Intermediate Assessment Pathway** using the modelled condition scores.

This report provides information to support an application to remove native vegetation in accordance with the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation*. The report is not an assessment by DELWP or local council of the proposed native vegetation removal. Biodiversity information and offset requirements have been calculated using modelled condition scores contained in the *Native vegetation condition map*.

Date and time: 28 May 2018 11:07 AM

Lat./Long.: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED]

Native vegetation report
346-20180528-0

Assessment pathway

The assessment pathway and reason for the assessment pathway

Assessment pathway	Intermediate Assessment Pathway
Extent of past plus proposed native vegetation removal	0.413 hectares
No. large trees	2 large tree(s)
Location category	Location 1
	The native vegetation is not in an area mapped as an endangered Ecological Vegetation Class, sensitive wetland or coastal area. Removal of less than 0.5 hectares will not have a significant impact on any habitat for a rare or threatened species.

Offset requirement

The offset requirement that will apply if the native vegetation is approved to be removed

Offset type	General offset
Offset amount	0.329 general habitat units
Offset attributes	
Vicinity	Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA) or Mitchell Shire Council
Minimum strategic biodiversity value score	0.520
Large trees	2 large tree(s)

Native vegetation offset report

This report provides information about the amount of potential gain available as a **first party general offset site**. Maintenance, improvement, prior management and security gain scores have been calculated using modelled condition scores in the *Native vegetation condition map*. **This report cannot be used for a third party offset site.**

This report is not an assessment by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The responsible authority must confirm the offset is acceptable and meets eligibility criteria defined in *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation*.

Date and time: 28 May 2018 11:12 AM

Lat./Long.: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED]

Offset site report ID:
346-20180528-001

Summary of offset site

Extent	1.759 hectares
Habitat units of gain	0.331 general habitat units
No. large trees	3 tree(s)
Strategic biodiversity value score	0.692
Local government area	Mitchell Shire Council
Catchment Management Authority (CMA)	Goulburn Broken CMA

Next steps

Offset sites must meet eligibility criteria as outlined in *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (the Guidelines) and any other relevant requirements.

Set up a meeting with your local council to discuss establishing the offset. You will have to:

- Sign an agreement with the local council under section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- Get a site survey plan by a registered surveyor
- Develop an offset management plan.

A template offset management plan and section 173 agreement are available at the [DELWP website](#).

Look at the offset requirements on the *Native vegetation removal report*. Compare these to the information in the *Native vegetation offset report*.

Native vegetation removal report – report ID 346-20180528-0

Native vegetation offset report – report ID 346-20180528-001

Page 6

Step 5. Prepare the offset management plan and security agreement

The security agreement specifies management obligations and commitments for the offset site. The offset management plan becomes a schedule to the security agreement and provides detail on how the management obligations and commitments will be achieved.

Ensure you are aware of the costs to manage and secure your offset site. Obtain quotes and confirm current fees. Estimates are provided in Step 2.3.

5.1 Prepare the offset management plan

The offset management plan sets out a 10 year plan for managing and improving the site condition and includes:

- 10 years of management obligations and commitments to improve the offset site condition, and
- ongoing management commitments to maintain the vegetation at the improved condition, following the initial 10 year period.

Sites assessed by an accredited native vegetation assessor

If an accredited native vegetation assessor completed a gain scoring assessment an offset management plan would have been prepared by them. The plan will be tailored to the specific needs of the offset site to address the threatening processes and weed cover determined during the gain scoring assessment.

The offset management plan must be developed in accordance with the *Native vegetation gain scoring manual, Version 2*. A 10 year offset management plan template is available on the [DELWP website](#).

Sites assessed using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool

A simplified version of the offset management plan template has been developed for landowners using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool. The template is available on the [DELWP website](#) and can be used by a land owner to complete their own offset management plan.

5.2 Prepare the security agreement

You must prepare the security agreement in consultation with the statutory body that agreed to sign it in Step 2. The security agreement is a legal document so you may need a lawyer to assist you.

Ensure you are willing and able to meet the legal obligations for land management and land use restrictions that will be recorded on your land title. The following must be included in the agreement:

- Agreement – legal obligations and commitments of the landowner and the responsible authority
- Schedules to the agreement:
 - details of the agreement, signatories and description of the land
 - site plan to Land Victoria's specifications
 - the offset management plan
 - pages 1 and 2 of the *Native vegetation offset report*, produced in Step 3.

Site plan to Land Victoria's specifications

The site plan is included as a schedule to the security agreement. This is a black and white plan showing the location of the offset site (i.e. the area of vegetation to be protected).

The plan must be drawn to Land Victoria's Surveyor General's specifications. For example the offset site must be hatched and anchored to a crown point with bearing and distances shown in true north.

A licensed surveyor should be engaged to ensure the plan meets the standards outlined in the Surveyor's Manual. You can provide the surveyor with the Shapefile of the offset site that you downloaded from the NVIM native vegetation offset tool.

5.3 Submit the proposal to the statutory body

The statutory body that will sign the security agreement will review the proposal to ensure it has been correctly completed. They will review the offset management plan and *Native vegetation offset report* to confirm that is in accordance with the Guidelines. They will check that the native vegetation is eligible to be an offset.

If the agreement is a section 173 with local Council, they may require the agreement be peer reviewed by Council's preferred legal provider. Any legal expenses are usually borne by the landowner.

Step 6. Establish the offset site

Offset sites need to protect and manage native vegetation in perpetuity (forever). Once the security agreement has been signed by the landowner and the statutory body it will be registered on the land title and the offset management plan must be implemented.

6.1 Sign the agreement

Make sure you understand the agreement and what you are committing to. Once you are satisfied with the agreement, you must sign and date the agreement and submit it with all the Schedules to the statutory body for their signature. A copy with all signatures will be returned to you for your records.

The 10 year offset management plan commences from the date the statutory body signs the agreement.

6.2 Register the agreement with the Land Titles Office

The statutory body will advise you on the process to lodge the agreement for registration at the Land Titles Office. The statutory body may engage their preferred legal provider to complete this process. Any legal expenses are usually borne by the landowner.

Once the agreement is registered on the land title, the landowner, statutory body and any other parties to the agreement should be notified. Registration of the agreement on the land title ensures that all future owners are aware of, and bound by, the requirements of the agreement.

6.3 Register the offset site on the Native Vegetation Offset Register

Once the site is registered with the Land Titles Office, the landowner should notify DELWP of the registration and send a copy of the approved agreement via email to the Native Vegetation Offset Register - NativeVegetation.OffsetRegister@delwp.vic.gov.au. The site will then be registered on the Native Vegetation Offset Register.

If you intend to use your first party offset site to meet the offset requirements of multiple applications to remove native vegetation, your offset site **must** be registered on the Native Vegetation Offset Register. This ensures that units are correctly allocated over time. To register the site, send an email to the

Native Vegetation Offset Register and include the following:

- *Native vegetation offset report*
- Shapefile of the offset site (this will be provided by your site assessor or downloaded from NVIM)
- Approved security agreement signed by all parties
- A completed Offset allocation form (this can be downloaded from the DELWP website).

If you are not sure whether your site is registered, you can contact the Native Vegetation Offset Register.

6.4 Annual reporting

All offset management plans include a commitment to submit an annual report to the statutory body that signed the security agreement (Council, DELWP or Trust for Nature).

The annual report must outline the actions undertaken for the previous year, and make a comment about the site's 'end of year' condition compared to the 'pre-management' condition of the site.

The annual report template is available on DELWP's website.

NOTE

If the *Native vegetation offset report* forms part of an offset statement included in a permit application, the local council will ensure that the proposed offset site:

- has sufficient habitat units of gain to meet your offset requirements.
- has the appropriate offset attributes to meet your offset requirements (i.e. minimum strategic biodiversity value score, same CMA or municipal area, large trees).

The offset site should not be established until the approval to remove the native vegetation has been granted.

If evidence of the secured offset site is being provided to local council to satisfy a permit condition, the signed agreement with all Schedules must be provided as evidence.

Appendix 1 – How to classify native vegetation

A. What is native vegetation?

Native vegetation is defined in the Victoria Planning Provisions as 'plants that are indigenous to Victoria, including trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses'.

The Guidelines classify native vegetation in two categories; patch and scattered tree.

B. What is a patch of native vegetation?

A patch of native vegetation is either:

- an area of vegetation where at least 25 per cent of the total perennial understorey plant cover is native (Figures 4, 5 and 6), or
- any area with three or more native canopy trees where the drip line of each tree touches the drip line of at least one other tree, forming a continuous canopy (Figures 4 and 7), or
- any mapped wetland included in the *current wetlands* layer, available in systems and tools developed by DELWP.

When you are mapping a patch of native vegetation that contains native canopy trees you will also need to measure the trees to determine if any are considered to be 'large trees'.

C. What is a scattered tree?

A scattered tree is a native canopy tree that does not form part of a patch (Figures 4, 6 and 7).

A scattered tree can be a 'large scattered tree' or a 'small scattered tree'.

D. What is a native canopy tree?

A native canopy tree is a mature tree that is taller than 3 metres and normally found in the upper layer of the relevant vegetation type.

E. What is a large tree?

A large tree is a native canopy tree with a trunk circumference greater than or equal to the large tree benchmark for the local vegetation type¹.

A large tree can be a large scattered tree or a large tree within a patch of native vegetation.

You will need to measure the trunk circumference of all native canopy trees so that the NVIM native vegetation offset tool can determine if a tree is large enough to generate gain or qualify as large. Section 3.2.1 explains how to do this.

F. Extent

The extent of native vegetation is the area of land covered by a patch and/or a scattered tree:

- The extent of a patch is the size of the patch in hectares.
- The extent of a scattered tree is mapped as a circle with a 15 metre radius.

If you are not an accredited native vegetation assessor, you can use the flow diagram in Figure 8 to help you work out if the native vegetation is a patch or a scattered tree.

¹ A large tree is a native canopy tree with a Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) greater than or equal to the large tree benchmark for the local Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC), measured at 1.3 metres above ground level.

Figure 4. How to classify native vegetation

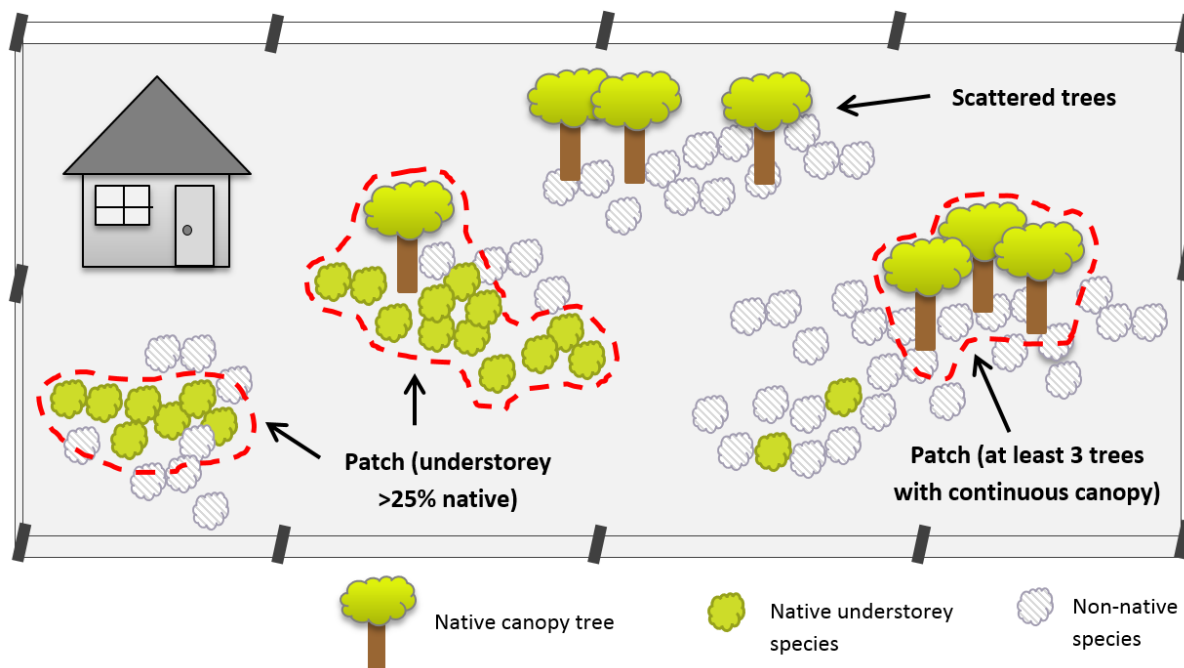


Figure 5. Patch of native vegetation (treeless) where at least 25 per cent of the total perennial understorey plant cover is native

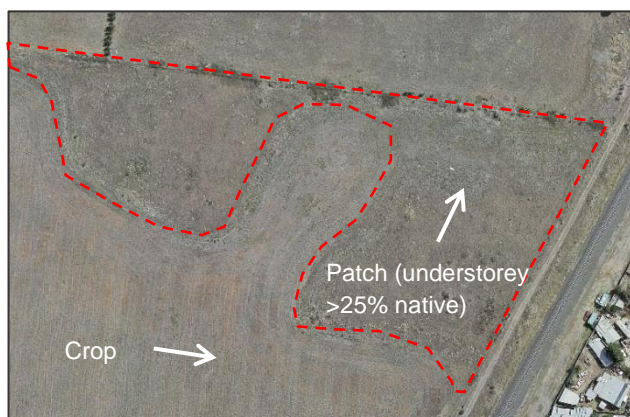


Figure 7. Patches of native vegetation with three or more native canopy trees where the drip line of each tree touches the drip line of at least one other tree, forming a continuous canopy

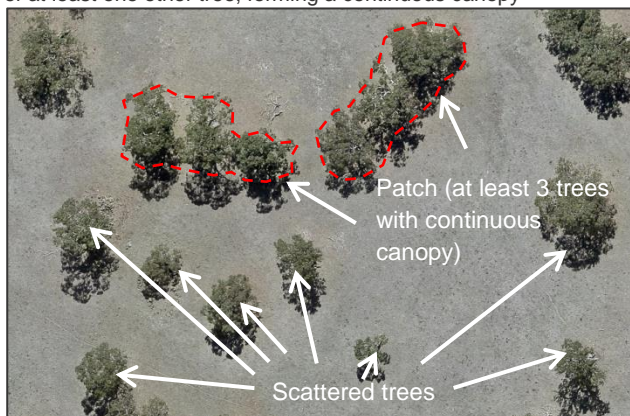


Figure 6. Patch of native vegetation (including trees within the patch) where at least 25 per cent of the total perennial understorey plant cover is native

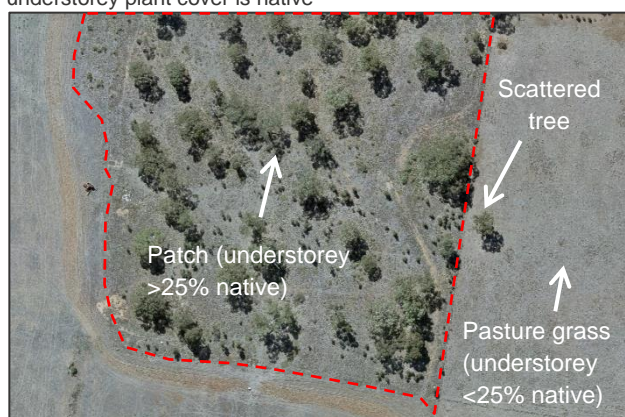


Figure 8. Planted wind row. This is unlikely to meet eligibility requirements to be an offset.

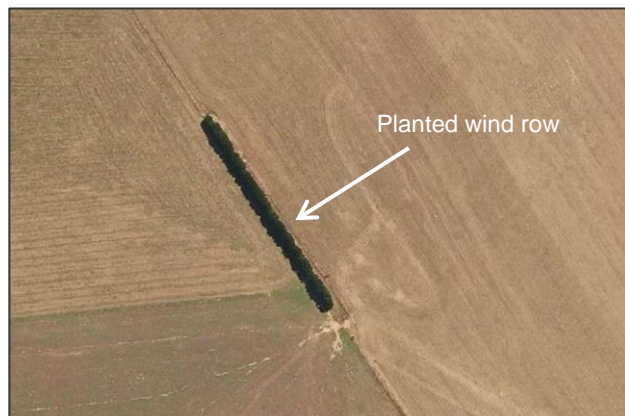
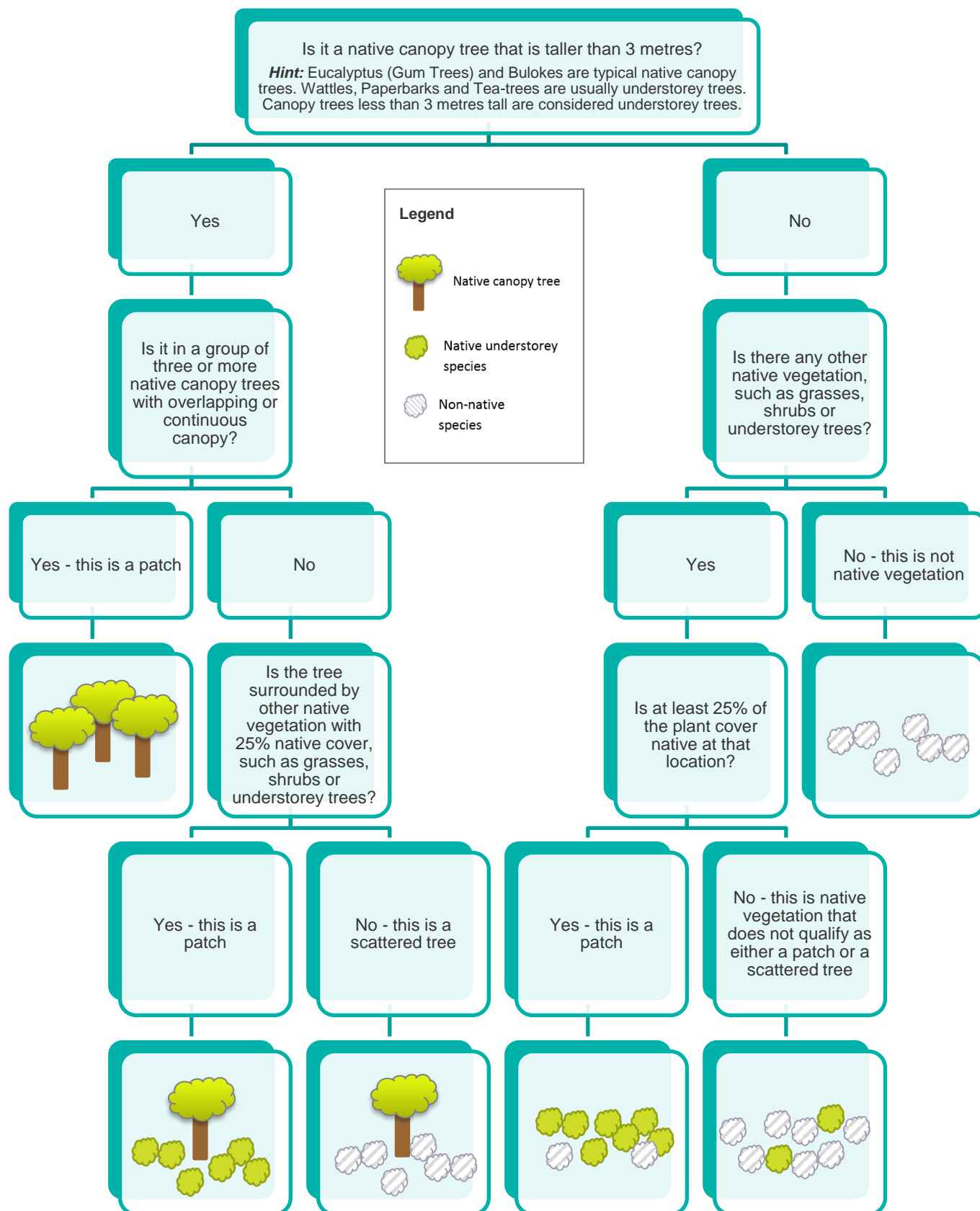


Figure 8. How to decide if native vegetation is a patch or scattered tree



Appendix 2 – Minimum condition, size and configuration requirements

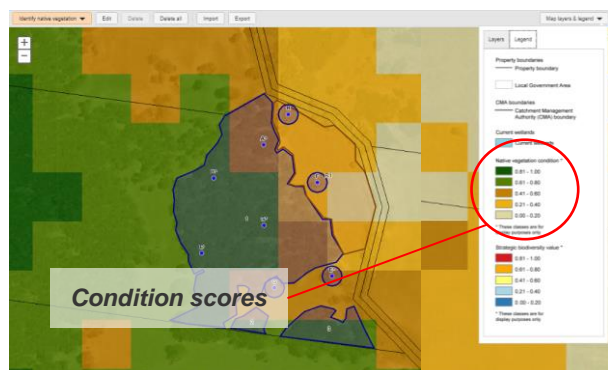
The NVIM native vegetation offset tool is described in Step 3.2.2. This Appendix provides you with further information about the size and quality requirements of a first party general offset site.

A. Patch of native vegetation

A patch of native vegetation should have a minimum condition score of 0.4 out of 1, in the *Native vegetation condition map*.

To see the condition score of the native vegetation you want to protect:

- select the 'Map layers & legend' menu
- in the Layers tab, select 'Native vegetation condition'
- in the Legend tab you can view the condition score for each colour you see in the map.



B. Scattered tree

A scattered tree must have a DBH greater than or equal to 75 per cent of the large tree DBH benchmark for the local area. The NVIM native vegetation offset tool will tell you if a tree is:

- large (i.e. greater than or equal to the large tree benchmark for the local area)
- between 75% and 100% of the large tree benchmark for the local area
- If the tree is less than 75% of the large tree benchmark, the tool will tell you the tree is too small to generate gain.

Each scattered tree must have an area of land secured around it (a circle with a diameter of at least 30 metres) to provide space for recruitment. The NVIM native vegetation offset tool will draw a circle with a 30 metre diameter around each scattered tree you identify for protection.

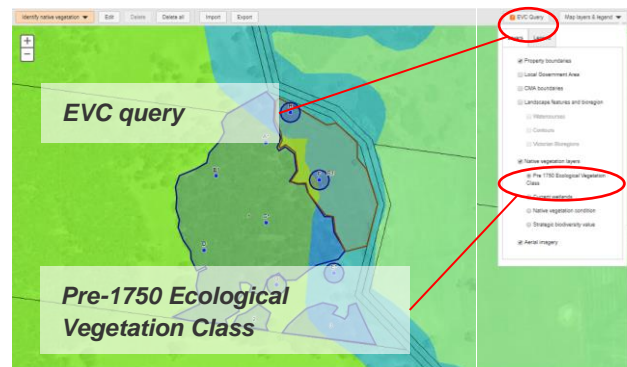
At least five recruits need to regenerate, or be planted in the area around each protected scattered tree.

C. Revegetation

Revegetation must be for a woody vegetation type. The NVIM native vegetation offset tool will tell you if the revegetation you propose is not in a woody vegetation type.

To see the vegetation type of the area you want to revegetate:

- select the 'Map layers & legend' menu
- in the Layers tab, select 'Pre-1750 Ecological Vegetation Class'
- click on EVC query, then click on the area you want to revegetate.



Revegetation must be in accordance with the minimum planting standards specified in the *Native vegetation gain scoring manual, Version 2*. The first party general offset site management plan template on the [DELWP website](#) will assist you.

An area of revegetation must meet the minimum size and configuration requirements:

- When revegetation is not next to a patch of native vegetation the revegetation site must have an area to perimeter ratio of at least 20.
- When revegetation is next to a patch of native vegetation the combined revegetation area and adjacent patch of native vegetation must have an area to perimeter ratio of at least 20.

The area to perimeter ratio is calculated by dividing the area (metres squared) by the perimeter (metres). The NVIM native vegetation offset tool will tell you the area to perimeter ratio of any proposed revegetation area that you map. Generally, circular or square areas of more than 0.64 hectares would meet the requirements. Long and narrow revegetation sites would not.

Glossary

Accredited native vegetation assessor – A native vegetation assessor listed on DELWP's Vegetation Quality Assessment Competency Register. An accredited native vegetation assessor must have current accreditation (less than two years old at the time the site assessment is completed).

First party offset site – an offset site on the same property as the proposed removal of native vegetation, or on another property owned by the party requiring the offset.

First party general offset site – an offset site on the same property as the proposed removal of native vegetation, or on another property owned by the party requiring the offset that can be established using the NVIM native vegetation offset tool and standard templates developed by DELWP without specialist assistance. This site can only generate and provide general habitat units of gain.

Gain – The predicted improvement in biodiversity value of native vegetation due to active management and increased security provided at an offset site.

General habitat unit – A measure of loss and gain in overall biodiversity value of native vegetation. General habitat units are used to measure offset amount and gain generated at an offset site.

General offset – An offset requirement specified in general habitat units to compensate for the biodiversity loss from native vegetation removal

Native Vegetation Credit Register – A statewide register of native vegetation credits that meet minimum standards for security and management of sites. The register is administered by DELWP and records the creation, trade and allocation of credits to meet offset requirements.

Native Vegetation Offset Register – A statewide register containing information relating to existing and potential offset sites including the number of habitat units that an offset site generates and when these offsets have been used to offset the removal of native vegetation. The Native Vegetation Offset Register is administered by DELWP, and includes the Native Vegetation Credit Register

NVCR accredited site assessor – an accredited native vegetation assessor that has signed an agreement to be a service provider with the NVCR.

Native vegetation credit – habitat units protected at a third party offset site are traded as native vegetation credits

Statutory body – a body that can sign a security agreement to protect native vegetation as an offset site. This can be Trust for Nature, Local Council or DELWP.

Species habitat unit – A species habitat unit is the measure of loss and gain in biodiversity value of native vegetation for a particular rare or threatened species. Species habitat units are used to measure offset amount and gain generated at an offset site.

Species offset – An offset requirement specified in species habitat units to compensate for the impact on a rare or threatened species habitat from native vegetation removal.

Third party offset site – an offset site that is established on another party's property. Third party offsets are traded as native vegetation credits.

