

21 March 2014

The Research Director  
Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

**RE: Environmental Offsets Bill 2014**

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Environmental Offsets Bill 2014. FBA is the leading community-based organisation for sustainable natural resource management in Central Queensland. We are committed to long term sustainable use of our natural resources, and we value healthy ecosystems, a strong regional economy and a prosperous community. Membership of FBA comprises a broad cross section of the community, including representatives from sectors of Landcare, conservation, education, research, industry and agriculture as well as representatives from Indigenous groups and local and Queensland Government agencies.

In general, FBA supports the Environmental Offsets Bill 2014 and its efforts in streamlining the five separate offsets policies that currently exist in Queensland. There are however, several areas of concern to FBA, in relation to the following:

- Page 14, s8 refers to a *significant residual impact*, defining this as an adverse impact, direct or indirect, that despite mitigation measures, will remain after the activity, and is significant. There is no further definition as to the term 'significant', presumably leaving this open to authority holders (e.g. developers or resource companies), to demonstrate if their activity will be 'significant' or not. FBA submits that this is unacceptable, and that the term 'significant' must be defined more precisely before it can be used as a measure to determine impacts in relation to an offset.

- Several terms under the Bill (e.g. *prescribed activity*, *prescribed environmental matter*) are loosely defined, and shall be given further detail through regulations. FBA submits that these activities and environmental matters should be open to public comment when the regulations are drafted.
- The term *conservation outcome* is the new measure by which an offset is deemed successful (replacing the ecological equivalency measure). This term is not defined in the Bill, nor is it proposed to be further explained in policy or regulation. In its current form, it appears that there is no criteria for determining if a proposed *conservation outcome* is appropriate and will achieve a suitable outcome for the environmental matter being impacted.
- There is no indication of the monetary units or method of calculation for a financial contribution required, to be paid by authority holders, if elected to undertake the financial settlement option for offsets. FBA submits that this information must be made public, and a set of criteria published as to how financial settlements are agreed upon. Likewise, a set of criteria and expected outcomes regarding government investment of monies paid to the offsets trust fund should be developed and made freely available.

FBA thanks you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Environmental Offsets Bill 2014. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Cassandra Bouna, Senior Project Officer, on 07 4999 2820 or [Cassandra.Bouna@fba.org.au](mailto:Cassandra.Bouna@fba.org.au).

Yours faithfully,



**Paul Birch**  
Chief Executive Officer