



**The Hon Pru Goward MP**  
**Minister for Planning**  
**Minister for Women**

**The Hon Rob Stokes MP**  
**Minister for the Environment**  
**Minister for Heritage**  
**Minister for the Central Coast**  
Assistant Minister for Planning

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Monday 8 September 2014

### **THE ENVIRONMENT, FARMERS & INDUSTRY TO BENEFIT FROM NEW OFFSET POLICY**

The NSW Government today announced a new approach to biodiversity conservation in NSW.

Environment Minister Rob Stokes said that beginning in October, the NSW Government will give landholders the opportunity to receive payments for managing biodiversity on their land through a fund paid into it by developers to 'offset' the impacts of large projects.

"A new fund will be set up, to enable stewardship payments to landholders wishing to participate in the biodiversity protections for major projects," Mr Stokes said.

"Our aim is to use offsets as an opportunity for landholders to diversify their income and ensure they are a genuinely integrated part of the landscape.

"It will also provide significant environmental benefits by introducing a consistent, transparent and scientific assessment approach, which will put an end to ad hoc offsetting practices.

"The development of an offsets fund will enable a more strategic approach to offsetting. The fund will ease the burden on proponents by letting them make payments towards their offset, instead of finding offset sites themselves."

Planning Minister Pru Goward said the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects introduces - for the first time - clear, state-wide guidance on how to deal with the biodiversity impacts of major projects.

"The policy will cut red tape throughout the planning process and encourage sustainable investment in NSW because it provides certainty for stakeholders," Ms Goward said.

"It is a win for the environment, farmers and industry."

Mr Stokes said a draft policy was placed on public exhibition earlier this year and the Government carefully considered all submissions and consulted with key community and industry stakeholders to ensure that the right balance was achieved.

"In response to feedback, we have removed the original proposal to allow discounting of offsets. This is to ensure the policy provides real certainty to developers and government, and improves its environmental integrity.

“We will commence work immediately to engage with landholders in areas where biodiversity offsets for major projects are needed. This will involve working with organisations on the ground, such as Local Land Services, to ensure information is available on the opportunities that this policy will provide.”

Minister Goward said the fund will source offsets on behalf of developers, and use the money to help landowners manage these offsets on their properties.

“We’re keen to get things underway and the policy will commence on 1 October this year with a transitional implementation period of 12 to 18 months,” Ms Goward said

“We will continue to consult with stakeholders throughout this period and, if needed, will have some flexibility to make minor amendments to the policy and underlying tools to ensure the policy is operating as effectively and efficiently as possible.

“Following this transitional period, the Government will introduce legislation to give full effect to the policy and the fund.”

Further information on the offsets policy and the proposed biodiversity fund is available at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodivoffsets/biooffsetspol.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodivoffsets/biooffsetspol.htm)