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MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland Environmental offsets fall short say environment lawyers

Environment lawyers say Queensland's new Environmental Offsets Bill falls short of core principles that would ensure offsets achieve the conservation outcomes they are meant to.

The Association's submission to the Queensland Parliament's inquiry into the Environmental Offsets Bill 2014 advocates a national biodiversity offset standard to promote transparency and certainty in offset practices. It sets out a list of suggested improvements to the Bill based on core principles of good practice for environmental offsets.

'In general, NELA supports the Bill as a positive step towards consolidating the environmental offsets regime in Queensland and across the country' says NELA President Amanda Cornwall.

'But it fails fundamentally in not having an underlying principle that there will be no further loss of conservation values. The federal Environmental Offsets Policy requires that biodiversity is 'improved or maintained' so if Queensland is serious about aligning with federal policy it should include that principle,' Cornwall said.

'We're also very concerned that when proponents pay a financial settlement instead of delivering offsets themselves there's no clear link to ensure the money is spent on addressing the particular impact on the environment.'

NELA also expresses serious concern that members of the public will not be invited to make submissions on the Queensland Environmental Offsets Policy before it comes into effect.

The submission highlights the particular issues for environmental offsets in the marine environment, which has obvious implications for the Great Barrier Reef.