

The North West Shelf Flatback Turtle Conservation Program (NWSFTCP)

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Australia-wide environmental offsets are becoming increasingly common as a tool for environmental management and are used as a last resort after avoidance and mitigation measures. The Commonwealth and most States and Territories have policies, guidelines or position statements on the identification and implementation of environmental offsets (for examples see Environmental Protection Agency (Qld) – 2008, DSEWPaC 2011). In Western Australia, environmental offsets are outlined in a position statement (Environmental Protection Authority – WA 2006), guidance document (Environmental Protection Authority – WA 2008) and policy (Anon. 2011).

The North West Shelf Flatback Turtle Conservation Program (NWSFTCP) is one of four environmental offsets from the Gorgon Gas Project at Barrow Island and is outlined in the Variation Agreement 2009 to the Barrow Island Act 2003 (http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrtitle_76_currencies.html). The purpose of this offset is to increase the conservation and protection of the Northwest Shelf flatback turtle population including: (a) surveying, monitoring and research; (b) reducing interference to key breeding and feeding locations; and (c) establishing information and education programs. The North West Shelf flatback turtle population is defined as the summer breeding management unit (MU) that nests from the Pilbara to the south west Kimberley. Under this definition, this not only includes the conservation at nesting beaches and WA waters but includes the whole range and life history of this MU (including Commonwealth, Northern Territory and Queensland jurisdictions). A total of \$32.5 million has been allocated to the offset program over 30 years at which time a review by the CALM Act Minister will assess the program and decide whether an additional \$30 million dollars for a further 30 years is

necessary. To advise the Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation an Advisory Committee will be established that will include an independent Chair and a member from the Joint Venturers, Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the Commonwealth government (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities). In addition, a Scientific Panel of Experts will be formed to support the Advisory Committee with technical advice. The NWSFTCP will form part of sea turtle conservation strategy for Western Australian.

References

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- Environmental Protection Authority (WA) (2006) Environmental Offsets. Position Statement No. 9. Environmental Protection Agency, Western Australian Government, Perth. Pp 31.
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- Environmental Protection Agency (Qld) (2008). Environmental Offsets Policy. Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Government, Brisbane. Pp 27 Government, Perth. Pp 31.
- DSEWPaC (2011) EPBC Act Environmental Offsets Policy: Consultation Draft. Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities, Australian Government, Canberra. Pp 19.