

How to fill in an OM1 (offset management) plan

What is an offset?

An offset is works or other actions to compensate for the loss of native vegetation. An offset may be an area:

- of existing vegetation that is protected and managed
- that is revegetated with indigenous plants.

Types of offset plans

Revegetation only – do not complete section 5 or 6

Select 'revegetation only' if you answer 'yes' to any of these questions

- Do you have a lot of cleared land and space to replant?
- Do you not have trees or patches of vegetation available to protect?
- Do you want to rehabilitate areas, such as creeks?
- Does your property have plenty of trees but little understorey such as shrubs present?
- Are you only removing a couple of trees and are looking for a straight forward way of offsetting your vegetation removal?

Protect existing trees and revegetate – complete all sections of the template

- Select 'protect existing trees and revegetate' if you answer 'yes' to any of these questions Do you live in a bushfire risk area and large amounts of additional planting will add to the fire risk?
- Do you have trees that you would like to protect? By protecting trees you qualify for a reduced replanting ratio so this means you have to do less work replanting.

Section 1: Principles and goals

1. Offset requirements

Describe how many trees you are removing and the site of the native vegetation patch. Then state how many plants you must replant and the area of native vegetation you must protect.

2. Objective and goal

Describe the goals for the offset area. Typical goals include:

- contribute to an increase in vegetation extent and quality on the property
- reduce environmental weed coverage on the property
- provide habitat for indigenous fauna
- provide a bird corridor

3. Site assessment

- Tell us about your site and what your property looks like e.g.: Sloping block with mature trees 10 metres from house and a shed near boundary fence
- Other information you may want to include in the site assessment:
 - Is there current habitat for a range of native species? Can you create/enhance habitat with offset?
 - Do you have the ability to create a linkage to other native bushland that surround your property?
 - Do you know your local indigenous vegetation community?
 - Where is vegetation/offsets located in relation to existing/proposed buildings?
 - Have you considered reducing fire risk?
 - Any waterways?
 - Is your property flat or has some slope?

- What type of soil do you have?

4. Indigenous plant origin

Provide details of where your plants will be sourced from, indigenous plant nurseries are listed on Council's website. Only native plants (indigenous plants) that are found in the local area must be used in offset planting. Council's Indigenous plant guide will assist with the correct plant selection for all areas within the Shire. www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/indigenousplantguide

5. Planting design and method

- The **mixture of plants** used in an offset planting must include a range of trees, shrubs, native wildflowers, groundcovers and grasses. Typically, at least 15 per cent of the plants must be made up of trees. You must plant at least one tree for every tree removed. A list of plant species to be used must be included in the offset management plan.
- **Setback of planting from built structures** must be considered so that the plants will not threaten people or property in the long term. Planting should not be placed within a bushfire management zone.
- The **arrangement of plants** must also be considered. Plantings will provide the greatest habitat if they are located next to existing remnant vegetation or if the planting links clusters of vegetation to form a 'wildlife corridor' within which animals can move.
- Plants that are in the **smaller 'square tube' size** are preferable to larger potted stock (six-inch pots) because they require less water, grow more intensively and are more tolerant to 'plant shock' from transplanting (these are generally cheaper).
- The **density of the planting** is important if the area is to provide suitable habitat for native animals. Distances can vary from site-to-site, but generally, trees should be placed approximately 10 metres apart. Shrubs and ground storey plants should be placed one plant for every 1 square metre.
- To meet the planting requirements of your permit, **replacement planting** should be built into the plan of works to compensate for the natural death of plants in the first year. A typical death rate for a well-maintained planting may be between 15–20 per cent.
- The **planting time** 'window of opportunity' is usually April to September. Planting at this time this will ensure less effort is required to keep the plants alive as they become established compared to summer planting.
- **Tree guards and mulch** should be incorporated in most plantings to ensure that the plants are protected while they are young, and that weeds will be controlled around the plant.
- The use of **water holding products** is likely to increase the chances of success of planting.
- **Follow-up maintenance activities** must be incorporated into the calendar of works. Key maintenance activities to consider include: follow-up watering and weed control.
- Where the removal of extensive areas of vegetation are proposed and significant offset works are required, Council may require a **site monitoring report** to be submitted annually as part of a condition of permit. For a smaller area of vegetation, the same form must be submitted to Council at the third, fifth and tenth year of the offset plan.
- Annual follow-up maintenance must be **scheduled at ten years** after the planting to ensure ongoing, long-term success.

6. Other sustainable land management activities could include:

- Removing environmental weeds as defined in the Cardinia Shire Planning Scheme so that environmental weed coverage does not exceed 5 per cent cover.
- Fencing off protected vegetation area from grazing or slashing to encourage natural regeneration
- Fencing to protect rare species on-site (if any are present)
- Erecting fauna boxes in trees to attract animals
- Restricting pets from environmental areas and implementing pet curfews

Section 2: Offset property calendar of works

The information in the sample offset property calendar of works can be used in your plan, with relevant amendments for your property.

Section 3: Indigenous plant species list

The plant species listed must be suitable for your site. Council's online indigenous plant guide can assist with your selection. www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/indigenousplantguide

Section 4: Planting specifications for each offset area

Specify the number of plants, species and the goal for each of the designated offset areas on your property. These offset areas must be clearly numbered on your site map to correspond with the numbers on the plan.

Section 5: Protection of existing trees

Only fill in this section for 'Protect existing trees and revegetate' offset management plans

List the existing trees which will be protected on your property. The trees must be clearly numbered and shown on your site map.

Section 6: Ongoing land-use commitments required for protected vegetation area

Only fill in this section for 'Protect existing trees and revegetate' offset management plans

- The trees identified on the attached site plan will be protected in perpetuity and will not be removed, destroyed or lopped without the written consent of the responsible authority.
- An area with twice the canopy diameter of the tree(s) will be fenced, e.g. such as with star pickets and protected from adverse impacts: grazing, burning and soil disturbance.
- Fallen timber from the protected trees will be retained and must not be harvested, i.e. not used as firewood.
- Environmental weeds as detailed in the Cardinia Shire Planning Scheme will be controlled to the satisfaction of the responsible authority within an area twice the size of the canopy diameter of the protected trees.
- Other intervention and management will occur if necessary to ensure adequate natural regeneration can occur.

Section 7: Site plan

Draw up a map of your property covering at least an A4 sheet of paper. Larger properties may need to use an A3 sheet. An aerial photograph or title map can provide the basis and be very useful for this.

Site plan requirements

Requirement	Description
Pointer showing north	Draw an arrow orientated north
Boundaries and roads	Draw your property boundary and any nearby roads
Existing vegetation	Show any isolated trees or any patches of native vegetation (tree, shrubs, grasses etc.)
Proposed vegetation/trees to be removed	Mark any trees or patches of vegetation you are proposing to remove

Requirement	Description
Waterways or water bodies	Show any creeks, dams, periodically inundated areas
Existing and/or proposed buildings	Draw any houses, sheds, pergolas, car ports etc.
Effluent disposal field	The area of dripper lines where the waste water will be disposed of
Photograph locations	Mark and number the location of any photograph included within the application
Construction zone boundaries	Footprint of your total construction including buildings, earthworks, fences etc.
Offset areas	Area you propose to revegetate or existing native vegetation you will protect to compensate for vegetation removal
Wildfire management zones	The area specified in your Bushfire Management Statement that just be modified for bushfire reduction.
Protected vegetation areas	Any area of native vegetation that is protected on your property title

Site monitoring form

A site monitoring form needs to be completed at the end of year 1, 2, 3 and 10 after you have started your offset works. The form can be found on Council's website and needs to be submitted to Council's Development Services team. The monitoring form lets Council know how the offset works are going, whether you have experienced any issues and if there have been any changes to your plans.