

Biodiversity

January 2018

When the Pacific Highway upgrade is complete we will be providing close to 10,000 hectares of native vegetation as a biodiversity offset, managed under legal conservation agreements, making it one of Australia's largest offset programs.

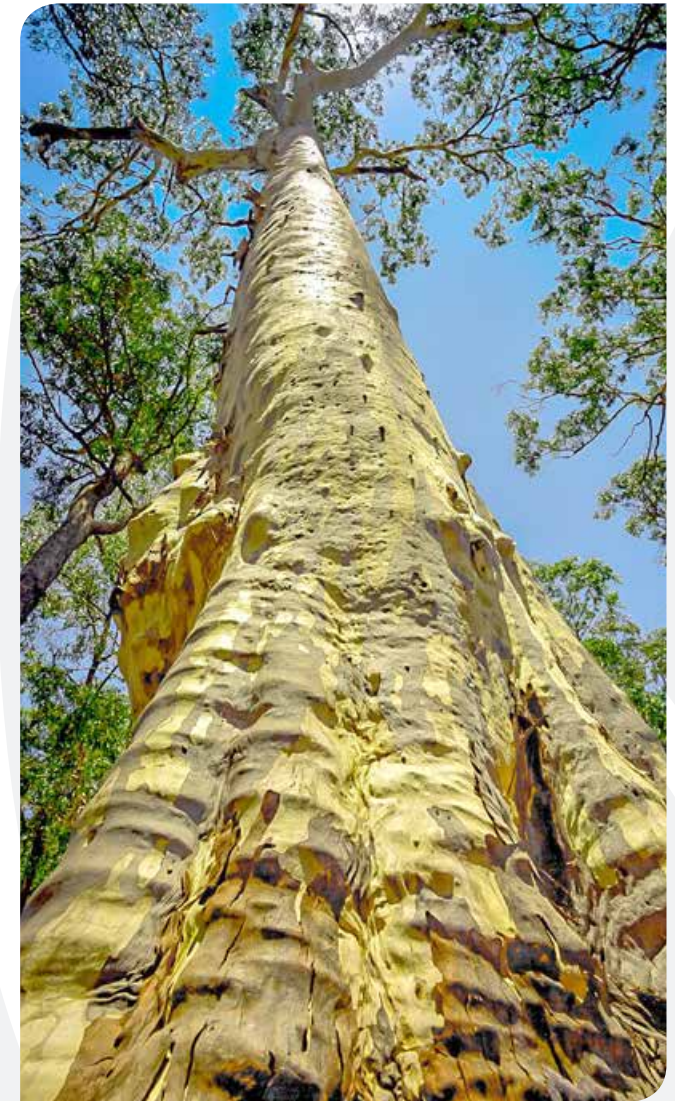
The Woolgoolga to Ballina project alone includes 31 sites covering over 5,100 hectares that will be managed to ensure biodiversity values are maintained or improved in the long term. The project's approval conditions have been met but we have also achieved a greater environmental outcome by working with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and NSW Environment Protection Authority. The project team developed a robust assessment process to identify and prioritise properties with ecological attributes that meet the biodiversity offset requirements, taking into consideration suitable threatened species habitat and landscape connectivity.

Part of the assessment process was a public invitation for property owners to submit their interest in the biodiversity offset program. After extensive consultation with private landowners, we have recently submitted 17 applications to enter into Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements which will provide in-perpetuity protection. More applications will be made during 2018.

On a broader scale, the process to assess sites as biodiversity offsets has now set the benchmark for other Project Offices to identify appropriate properties early and to comply with the new Biodiversity Conservation Legislation. The Clybucca Wetland Rehabilitation Project is another Pacific Highway biodiversity offset project working towards securing over 1,100 hectares of native vegetation. This includes a number private properties and involves a cross agency working group including five state government agencies, the local council and the University of NSW.



Biodiversity offset team on RMS property at Glenugie



Tree on a Pillar Valley biodiversity offset property