

# NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY

## OFFSETS CONFERENCE 2.0

2022 CANBERRA



### PRESENTATION | LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS: TRANSITIONING FROM IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO CONSERVATION PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

#### ABSTRACT

Biodiversity offsets are a tool to compensate for, and mitigate the impacts of development. Lake Macquarie City Council has implemented offsets in land use planning and development processes in a coastal NSW area with rapid growth and high biodiversity values. The Council has dealt with biodiversity offsets in its roles as a regulator, developer, community facility provider, offset provider and land manager.

Biodiversity operates on a number of spatial scales, with the local, landscape and regional scales most effective for offset delivery and active conservation management. Local government can play a key role in integrating biodiversity offsetting, land use planning and active management of conservation land, within the direction and context provided by state and Commonwealth legislation and policy.

The presentation is informed by over two decades of local government experience in planning for biodiversity in a changing legislative and social context. It outlines the scope of local government opportunities to conserve biodiversity through land use planning processes, and highlights the importance and effectiveness of considering biodiversity and offsetting at the local scale within a robust strategic regional conservation planning framework.

The effectiveness of past biodiversity offsetting arrangements is discussed, including experience implementing the 2017 NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme. Transitioning from biodiversity impact assessment to a strategic conservation planning framework will be required to support local offsets and effective conservation management that limits biodiversity loss.

Strategic local biodiversity conservation planning should extend beyond biodiversity offsetting to recognise the wide range of local government roles. Opportunities for improvement include (1) recognising local and regional biodiversity values in addition to state and national listings, (2) incentives for local and advanced offsetting arrangements linked to strategic plans to protect conservation land, (3) linking biodiversity loss and carbon offsets through financial mechanisms, and (4) supporting local government in strategic biodiversity planning as a biodiversity offset provider and conservation land manager.

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY



#### **ROBBIE ECONOMOS-SHAW & MARTIN FALLDING LAKE MACQUARIE CITY COUNCIL NSW**

Robbie and Martin are environmental planners at Lake Macquarie City Council, a local coastal government area, with a population of 220,000 people just to the south of Newcastle. Lake Macquarie retains nearly 59% of its native vegetation and home to around 135 recorded state and 71 nationally listed threatened species and threatened ecological communities.

As practicing professionals Robbie and Martin have experienced the evolution of legislation and policy regarding both the environment and biodiversity over recent decades.

Robbie has a background in science, environmental management and town planning and has contributed to the establishment of biodiversity offsets from land development and mining proposals over the past two decades.

Martin has a background in urban and regional planning, science and environmental impact assessment and has worked on integrating biodiversity conservation in land use planning for nearly 30 years in local and state government, and as a consultant. He is a member of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Advisory Panel.

Lake Macquarie City Council received Regional Sustainability Planning Project funding from the Commonwealth in 2014. This project brought significant benefits to the Council's biodiversity program including preparation of a national threatened species significance guideline, local species planning and management guidelines, and species and habitat connectivity modelling tools for conservation planning.

