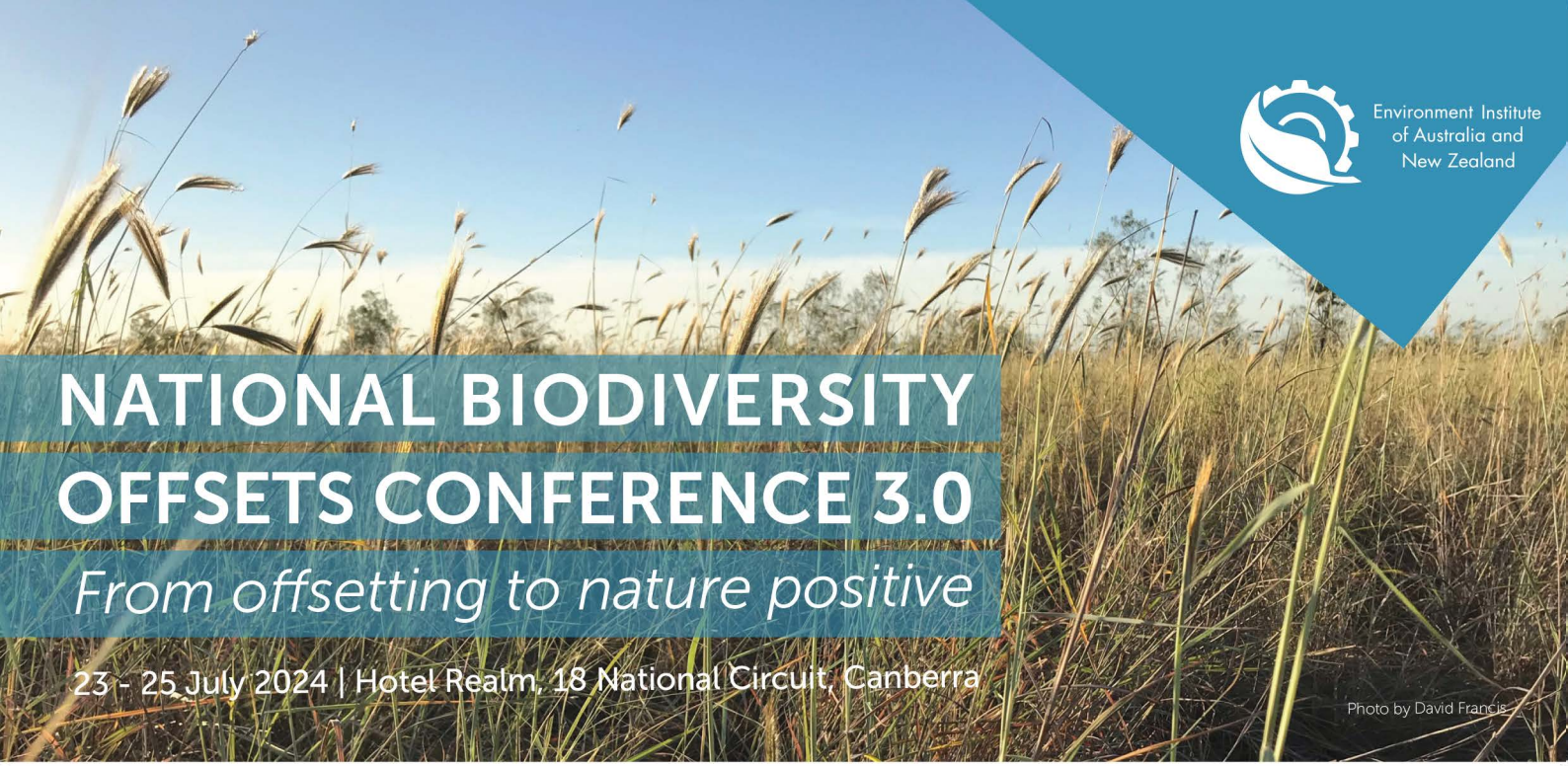

Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS CONFERENCE 3.0

From offsetting to nature positive

23 - 25 July 2024 | Hotel Realm, 18 National Circuit, Canberra

Photo by David Francis

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Presentation materials | accessible here

ABSTRACT

How to make offsets (aligned with) nature positive

Nature positive is a far more ambitious goal than society has ever set for biodiversity. Concerningly, we have always fallen far short of even those less-ambitious goals, so something pretty radical is going to have to change if we are to achieve it. All actions, actors, and sectors that impact nature will need to start pulling in the same direction. All impacts directly under our control must have nature positive outcomes; all wider threatening processes must be adequately managed, and even all wider value chain impacts will need to be managed. So where do offsets sit among this shift, and how might they have to change if they to be properly aligned with a nature positive future? This question is especially key given that currently, offsets are routinely falling short of achieving even 'no net loss' of biodiversity, even relative to declining baselines. Nature positive-aligned offsets will need to be different from the status quo in three fundamental ways. First, policy scope must widen; offsets must apply to the full range of direct and attributable biodiversity losses that human activities cause. Second, policy design must change. Averted loss offsets are out; only absolute gains over time, relative to a fixed baseline, count in a nature positive equation. This means that biodiversity that is irreplaceable simply cannot be lost, and so understanding the limits to what biodiversity we can replace is key. Finally, policy implementation must improve; we need to address the myriad small-but-significant issues that lead to even good policy resulting in poor outcomes on the ground. Offsetting and offset-like mechanisms can form a key component of strategies to halt and reverse nature loss, but ensuring our offset policies and practice are up to the task will be a difficult journey.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Martine Maron is Professor of Environmental Management at The University of Queensland, Brisbane. Her research identifies ways to minimise impacts on biodiversity – through sound impact mitigation, and effective restoration of habitats – and seeks to embed this knowledge into policy. A particular focus is the design and consequences of policies intended to compensate for environmental impacts, such as biodiversity offsetting. She leads the IUCN's Thematic Group on Impact Mitigation and Ecological Compensation, and sits on international advisory bodies on biodiversity credit development and governance. Martine's research group also works on the conservation and restoration of Australia's woodlands and woodland birds, and wildlife management in Africa. She is a director of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, and a councillor with The Biodiversity Council.