

Attachment 1 – Reasons for using more appropriate data

Outcomes of running the Threatened Species Tool within PVP developer have resulted in a red light as the type of vegetation being used to offset the proposed clearing is a different vegetation type to that being offset. As a result, the threatened species tool specifies that “no management actions were found for the following species in the specified offset area(s) in the specified condition: Powerful Owl, Masked Owl.” Consequently, assessment of offsets was not possible.

The Accredited Expert is of the opinion that more appropriate local data should be used in this case based on the following reasons:

1. The vegetation type to be cleared is classified as Eastern Tablelands Dry Forest. The vegetation within the offset area is classified as Tablelands Hills Grassy Woodland. The Powerful Owl and the Masked Owl are only listed as occurring in the Eastern Tablelands Dry Forest.
2. Both the Powerful Owl and the Masked Owl inhabit a range of vegetation types, including both woodland and open forest (DEC 2006).
3. Tablelands Hills Grassy Woodland is transitional between the Southern Tablelands Grassy Woodlands and the Southern Tableland Dry Sclerophyll Forests vegetation classes (Keith 2004) which include the Eastern Tableland Dry Forests. In other words, the two subject vegetation types have many similarities.
4. The offset area is within very close proximity of the clearing area (within 500 metres), and it is unlikely that these species would utilise the clearing area, and not the offset area.
5. Specific habitat features required by these species, particularly foraging areas, would be common to both clearing and offset areas.
6. Both the Powerful Owl and the Masked Owl have high movement abilities and are likely to hunt over large areas including both the clearing, offset and adjoining areas.
7. The information provided in the threatened species tool is considered inaccurate, and should be changed to reflect the potential for these species to utilise Tablelands Hills Grassy Woodland.

Recommendation:

Due to the above reasons, it is recommended that the vegetation type, Tableland Hills Grassy Woodland be recognised as providing potential habitat for the Powerful Owl and the Masked Owl, thus making offsets possible for the proposed clearing.

It is the opinion of the accredited expert that this proposal would maintain or improve environmental outcomes for all threatened species and that the Property Vegetation Plan is approved on this basis.