

THE GREAT VICTORIA DESERT BIODIVERSITY TRUST

The Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust was established by the Tropicana Joint Venture (AngloGold Ashanti Australia Ltd 70% and manager, Independence Group NL 30%) as part of its offsets strategy for the Tropicana Gold Mine in Western Australia. Tropicana is located 330 kilometres east-northeast of Kalgoorlie on the western edge of the Great Victoria Desert.

What is it?

The GVD Biodiversity Trust is a condition of the Federal EPBC Act approval for the Tropicana Gold Mine. Whilst the Tropicana JV will endeavour to continue to avoid and minimise significant impacts to biodiversity, offsets are a means to ensure that there is 'no net loss' or a 'net positive impact' as a result of mining and exploration activities.

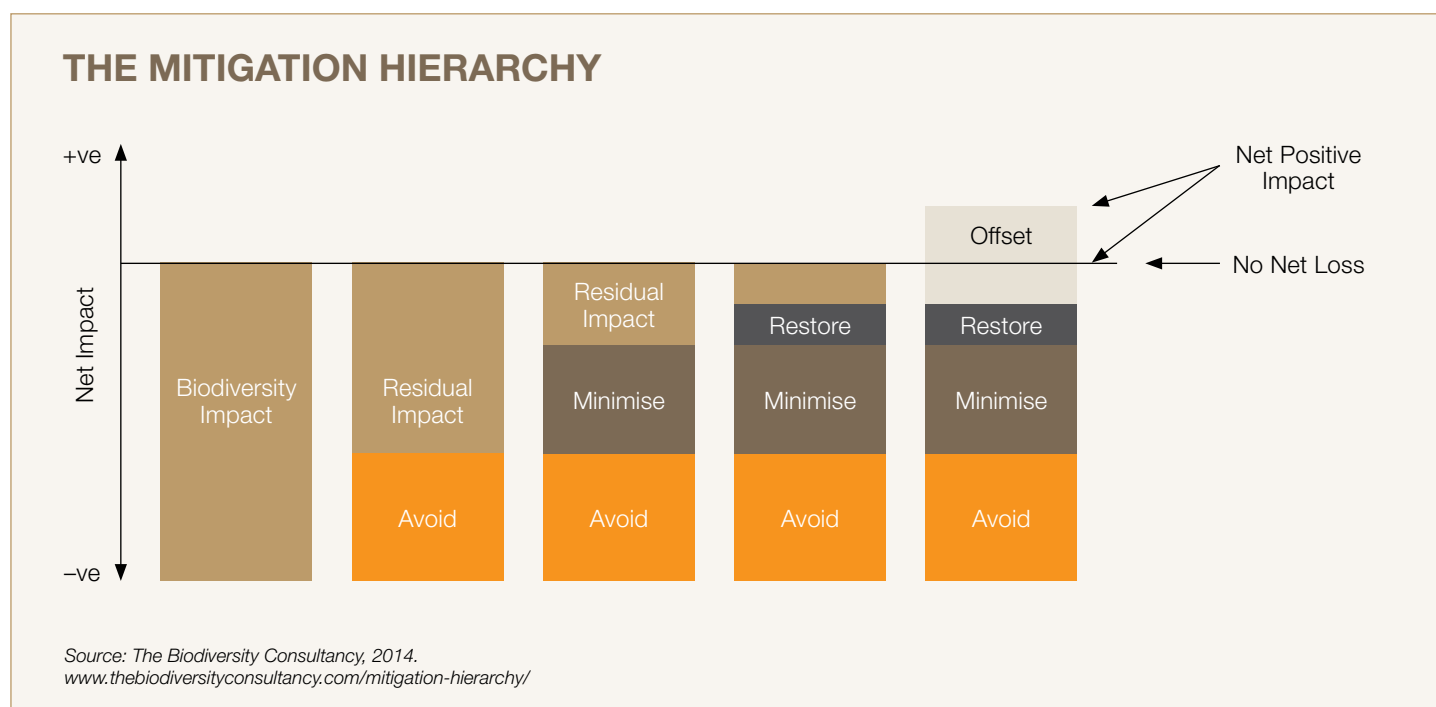
As the offset is linked to the Commonwealth approval for the mine, the Trust must focus on benefits to threatened species and communities within the GVD region, such as Marsupial Moles, Sandhill Dunnarts, Malleefowl and Mulgara.

Why was it established?

The Tropicana JV partners wanted to ensure that the funding they provided as an offset had a direct benefit for the area and people in the vicinity of the gold mine.

For that reason, the Trust was established with objectives to:

- Develop a Bioregional Management Plan for the Great Victoria Desert (areas 1 and 2).
- Facilitate priority research at the landscape level and into species and communities of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act.
- Fund on-ground environmental and conservation management at a landscape level aimed at providing net conservation benefits to threatened species and communities of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act, including Marsupial Mole, Sandhill Dunnart and Malleefowl.
- Facilitate Indigenous involvement in land management and conservation activities.



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What is unique about it?

The GVD Biodiversity Trust is a model unique to the WA mining and environmental landscape, which is designed to benefit a broad range of stakeholders in this remote part of the world.

Research into biodiversity in this region is extremely limited and the Trust will provide an ideal vehicle for the TJV to contribute to enduring scientific knowledge about threatened species and the landscape ecology. The Trust will make all research findings public to increase the ability of researchers, industry, government and the community to work together to improve the outcomes for threatened species and for preserving biodiversity and ecological functioning across the landscape.

Conventional models for environmental offsets in WA usually consist of a company purchasing an area of land similar to the area of impact and ensuring that the land is protected, improved and managed for conservation in perpetuity, effectively 'offsetting' the impacted site. This method is frequently criticised, as the land purchased may not fully represent the biodiversity of the area impacted by a mine or development. Another method of offsetting consists of a company providing funds to a government agency to conduct offsetting/conservation activities on its behalf. The model for the GVD Biodiversity Trust aims to improve scientific knowledge of the Great Victoria Desert and the threatened species and communities within it.

Where opportunities are identified, direct onsite ground rehabilitation or conservation activities can be funded through the Trust and it will also provide direct improvements to the landscape through funding organisations to do on-ground work. The Trust will also work with Traditional Owners, government and NGOs to improve employment outcomes and to utilise Traditional Ecological Knowledge to increase biodiversity knowledge.

The GVD Biodiversity Trust model ensures that the maximum funds possible are directed to the region and to obtaining enduring positive environmental outcomes for EPBC list threatened species and communities and the broader environment.

How does it work?

The GVD Biodiversity Trust has been established under a Trust Deed with the Public Trustee of WA.

The Public Trustee will release funds, in line with the Trust Deed and the requirements of the Tropicana EPBC approval, as directed by the Management Panel. The Management Panel comprises representatives from the WA Department of Parks and Wildlife, AngloGold Ashanti Australia on behalf of the Tropicana JV, and has an Independent Chair.

The decisions of the Management Panel will be guided by a Technical Advisory Panel made up of technical specialists, representatives from environmental NGOs and community members. A Trust Co-ordinator will co-ordinate the activities, funding and administration of the Trust.

How is it funded?

The Tropicana JV made an initial contribution of A\$1.6 million to the Trust and will contribute approximately \$4.4 million over Tropicana's current expected 10-year mine life.

The annual contributions to the Trust will comprise an annual fee and \$/hectare per annum for the cleared footprint.

To ensure the Trust delivers the maximum benefit, the Commonwealth Department of the Environment has capped its administration cost at 20% of the funds assigned to it. In the event the annual administration cost exceeds the 20% cap, the Tropicana JV will seek additional funds or directly contribute additional funds to cover the extra costs.

Once fully established as an independent entity, the Trust has the capacity to expand its scope and work with other companies in the region to offset their impacts on biodiversity.

Personnel

GVD Biodiversity Trust Chairman: Dr Garry Middle
GVD Biodiversity Trust Coordinator: Kathryn Sinclair

Contact Details

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