



Help protect trees, so they can protect us

New tree protection laws apply from 1 January 2024

The ACT Government recognises the important role that trees play in making our city more resilient to the effects of climate change.

In our Urban Forest Strategy, we set out a roadmap to achieving a target of 30% canopy cover across Canberra's urban footprint by 2045.

New tree protection laws are an important part of the roadmap. The new laws will help achieve the canopy cover target by :

- providing increased protection to more trees
- ensuring that when trees are removed, they are replaced.

Every tree in Canberra – both on public and private land – is part of an urban forest. The new laws have been developed to protect the forest that protects us.

What's changing?

From 1 January 2024, the [Urban Forest Act 2023](#) will replace the [Tree Protection Act 2005](#) and improve tree protection on both public and private land.

The new laws include:

- a new definition for protected trees
- a new Canopy Contribution Framework
- the introduction of tree bonds.

Protected trees

A tree on private land is protected if it:

- is 8m or taller
- has a canopy 8m or wider
- has a trunk circumference of 1m or more at 1.4m above natural ground level
- is a registered tree – that is, the tree has been identified as being of exceptional value and is listed in the ACT Tree Register
- is a dead native tree on leased land that at 1.4m above natural ground level has a trunk circumference of at least 1.88m
- was planted in the last five years as part of a Canopy Contribution Agreement.

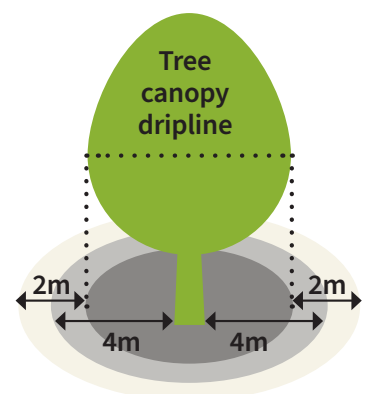


Tree Protection Zone

The definition of the Tree Protection Zone has not changed with the introduction of the [Urban Forest Act 2023](#).

In the ACT, the Tree Protection Zone for a protected tree is:

- the area under the canopy of the tree
- the 2-metre-wide area surrounding the vertical projection of the canopy
- the 4-metre-wide area surrounding the trunk as measured at 1 metre above ground level
- the area as specified in an approved Tree Management Plan.



Permission to work on or around protected trees

You must have permission from the ACT Government to undertake any work that may impact a protected tree. This includes trees on neighbouring public and private land.

- For protected trees on private land, permission can be sought by completing a **Tree Activity Application** online. This can be done by any entity or person, or a third party on their behalf.
- If the tree activity relates to an activity that requires another form of approval, such as a development, building or driveway application, permission can be sought:
 - through a **Tree Activity Application** submitted prior to the other application process, or
 - during the other application process, supported by a **Tree Management Plan**.

Tree Activity Applications

An online Tree Activity Application must be completed when planning to undertake any works on or around a protected tree on private land.

This includes:

- tree removal
- tree pruning
- utility maintenance or installation
- building or landscape construction.

Depending on the type of tree activity or the reason for it, the applicant may need to include a shadow diagram, pruning plan or Tree Management Plan.

Tree Management Plans

Tree Management Plans (TMP) are now compulsory for ACT Government approval processes where the activity being applied for may impact a protected tree.

Approval processes include:

- development applications
- building applications
- driveway applications
- public land use applications.

A TMP shows how protected trees on and around the work site will be protected and cared for prior to works commencing and during all stages of work.

TMPs must comply with legislated Tree Management Guidelines. We recommend that applicants engage a consulting arborist or other suitably qualified professional to develop a TMP for their project.

Work on a protected tree or within its Tree Protection Zone may commence only after receipt of:

- an approved Tree Activity Application,
- a signed Canopy Contribution Agreement (for trees which are being removed), and/or
- an approved TMP and bond agreement (for trees which are being retained, where applicable).

Canopy Contribution Agreements

If a protected tree is approved for removal, the applicant will be required to enter into a Canopy Contribution Agreement with the ACT Government. The Agreement sets out:

- how many replacement trees are to be planted on the block to replace those removed, and
- if some or all of the trees cannot be planted, what financial contribution is required to support tree canopy elsewhere.

Replanting and repayment requirements are different for **homeowners** (owner-occupiers) and **non-homeowners** (such as developers). If a homeowner asks a third party (such as a builder) to complete a Tree Activity Application on their behalf, the replanting and repayment requirements will still be those relevant to the homeowner.

Homeowners

For homeowners, for every protected tree that is removed, two new trees must be planted on site, or a financial contribution of \$600 must be made for each tree that is not replanted. Exemptions may be granted, including if an applicant is experiencing financial or social hardship.

Non-homeowners

For non-homeowners, the number of replacement trees and/or financial contribution will be determined using the Tree Calculator. This online calculator will help developers estimate the replanting and/or financial contribution requirements for proposed tree removals.

Financial contributions will fund tree planting, maintenance and renewal activities throughout Canberra.

Penalties

It is an offence under the [Urban Forest Act 2023](#) to damage a protected tree or undertake prohibited groundwork without approval.

Contravening the Act can lead to on-the-spot fines or court-imposed penalties of up to \$80,000 for an individual and \$405,000 for a corporation, and a criminal record for more serious offences.

