

Australian Capital Territory

Urban Forest (Approval Criteria) Determination 2025 (No 1)

Disallowable instrument DI2025-16

made under the

Urban Forest Act 2023, section 20 (Criteria for approval of activities)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Urban Forest (Approval Criteria) Determination 2025 (No 1)*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after it is notified.

3 Determination

I determine that the criteria for approving an activity that would or may damage a protected tree or be prohibited groundwork in the protection zone for a protected tree or a declared site are as set out in Schedule 1.

4 Revocation

I revoke the *Urban Forest (Approval Criteria) Determination 2024 (No 1)* DI2024-289.

Tara Cheyne MLA
Minister for City and Government Services

28 February 2025

Schedule 1

This determination includes approval criteria for approving an activity that would or may damage a protected tree or be prohibited groundwork in the protection zone for a protected tree or a declared site. Protected trees include registered trees, regulated trees and trees on public unleased land (public trees) within the meaning of section 9 of the *Urban Forest Act 2023*.

Regulated Trees

1 Approval to damage a regulated tree

- (1) The Decision-Maker may give an approval to damage a regulated tree under section 28 when:
 - (a) the tree is in decline and its life expectancy is short; or
 - (b) the tree represents an unacceptable risk to public or private safety; or
 - (c) the tree is shown to be causing or threatening to cause substantial damage to a substantial building, structure or service; or
 - (d) the location of the tree is inappropriate given its potential size and growth habit (excluding remnant eucalypts); or
 - (e) the tree is causing excessive shading to the lessee's residence, or neighbouring residence, during winter between the hours of 9am to 3pm and pruning is not sufficient to remedy this (excluding remnant eucalypts) and is supported by shadow diagrams; or
 - (f) the tree has poor form or low vigour and is of low amenity or ecological value to the surrounding landscape or canopy cover; or
 - (g) where the tree is part of a close planting of a number of trees, the removal of the tree will allow the other trees to develop; and
 - (h) all other reasonable remedial treatments and risk mitigation measures have been determined to be ineffective.
- (2) When deciding whether the criteria in paragraph 1 are met, the Decision-Maker may consider:
 - (a) any exceptional circumstances that have been raised by the applicant, taking into account advice from the Tree Advisory Panel;
 - (b) the importance of the tree in the surrounding landscape; and
 - (c) if the tree is a species listed in schedule 2, whether the tree has ecological importance to the local environment.
- (3) In considering whether criteria (1) (b) or (c) are met the Decision-Maker must assess whether the removal of the tree is urgently required in accordance with section 32 of the Act.

- (4) The Decision-Maker may give an approval under section 28 of the Act to undertake major pruning on a regulated tree when:
- (a) the work is required:
 - (i) as a remedial treatment; or
 - (ii) in the general interests of the health of the tree; or
 - (iii) to reduce an unacceptable risk to public or private safety; or
 - (iv) to reduce the risk of damage or prevent further damage to a substantial building, structure or service.
 - (b) the tree is substantially affecting solar access to the lessee's residence, or neighbouring residence, during winter between the hours of 9am to 3pm and minor pruning is not sufficient to remedy this (excluding remnant eucalypts).
- (5) The approval of lopping should only be considered when criteria (1) is met and the retention of the tree is considered necessary.

Example: Where the retention of the tree is necessary to maintain habitat or heritage values.

2 Approval to undertake prohibited groundwork within the tree protection zone of a regulated tree

The Decision-Maker may give an approval under section 28 of the Act to carry out groundwork within the tree protection zone of a regulated tree or public tree where the groundwork will have minimal impact on the tree if the activity complies with the conditions stated in the approval.

Public Trees

3 Approval to damage a public tree

- (1) The Decision-Maker may give an approval to damage a public tree under section 28 when:
- (a) the activity would otherwise be undertaken by an administrative unit approved under section 19 of the Act within a reasonable timeframe and:
 - (i) the tree is in decline and its life expectancy is short; or
 - (ii) the tree is shown to be causing, or threatening to cause, damage to a substantial building, structure or service; or
 - (iii) the tree is causing excessive shading to a primary residence during winter between the hours of 9am to 3pm, and pruning is not sufficient to remedy this (excluding remnant eucalypts) and is supported by shadow diagrams; or
 - (iv) the pruning will contribute to public safety outcomes by improving line of sight of, or public access to public space, services or structures; or
 - (v) the tree has poor form or low vigour and is of low amenity or ecological value to the surrounding landscape or canopy cover; or

- (vi) the tree is part of a close planting of a number of trees, the removal of the tree will allow the other trees to develop; or
 - (vii) the pruning will contribute to an improved arboriculture or ecological outcome; or
 - (viii) the tree is a pest species; or
 - (ix) the tree is dead; or
 - (x) removal of a tree that is an inappropriate species for a location, considered against the strategic objectives of the Urban Forest Strategy; and
 - (xi) all other reasonable remedial treatments and risk mitigation measures have been determined to be ineffective.
- (b) the pruning is required for vehicles, machinery or equipment to access to a construction site, or other leased or unleased land to undertake construction works, if all other practical alternatives have been considered and determined to be ineffective and the decision maker is satisfied that the access is required at this location; or
 - (c) the proposed damaging activity is associated with essential access to leased or unleased land, where an existing access point requires upgrades to meet compliance under the Australian Standards or Municipal Infrastructure Standards and/or to provide for essential accessibility requirements; or
 - (d) the proposed activity is to remove a juvenile tree, and the decision-maker is satisfied that the tree can be replaced like-for-like with an advanced juvenile tree in close proximity to where the tree is to be removed; and
 - (e) all other reasonable remedial treatments and risk mitigation measures have been determined to be ineffective.
- (2) When deciding whether the above criteria in section 3(1) are met, the director-general must consider:
- (a) whether the proposed activity will result in the decline and death or necessitate the removal destruction of the tree;
 - (b) whether the proposed activity will cause the tree to become unstable;
 - (c) the reason for the applicant undertaking the activity and location of the tree(s); and
 - (d) if the tree is a species listed in schedule 2, whether the tree has ecological importance to the local environment.
- (3) When deciding whether the above criteria in section 3(1) are met, the director-general may consider, taking into account the value of the tree:
- (a) any exceptional circumstances that have been raised by the applicant;
 - (b) the importance of the tree in the surrounding landscape; and
 - (c) if a bond is required on the protected tree.

4 Approval to undertake prohibited groundwork within the tree protection zone of a public tree

- (1) The Decision-Maker may give an approval under section 28 of the Act to carry out groundwork within the tree protection zone of a public tree where the groundwork

will have an acceptable impact on the tree if the activity complies with the conditions stated in the approval.

- (2) When deciding whether the groundwork will have an acceptable impact on the tree, for the purposes of this section, the director-general must consider:
 - (a) whether the proposed activity will result in the decline and death or necessitate the removal destruction of the tree;
 - (b) whether the proposed activity will cause the tree to become unstable;
 - (c) the reason for the applicant undertaking the activity and location of the tree(s); and
 - (d) if the tree is a species listed in schedule 2, whether the tree has ecological importance to the local environment.

Registered Trees

5 Major or minor pruning of registered tree

- (1) The Decision-Maker may give an approval for major or minor pruning of a Registered Tree under section 28 of the Act if the work is required:
 - (a) to maintain the health and structure of the tree; or
 - (b) to maintain clearance from services; or
 - (c) as a remedial treatment.
- (2) The Decision-Maker may only give an approval for major pruning of a Registered Tree under criteria (5) (1) if the work is considered necessary and will not:
 - (a) substantially alter the tree's shape and form; or
 - (b) cause the tree to become unstable; or
 - (c) result in the decline and death or necessitate the removal or destruction of the tree.

6 Approval to undertake prohibited groundwork within the tree protection zone of a registered tree

The Decision-Maker may give an approval under section 28 of the Act to carry out groundwork within the tree protection zone of a registered tree where the groundwork will have minimal impact on the tree if the activity complies with the conditions stated in the approval.

Declared Sites

7 Approval to undertake prohibited groundwork within a declared site

- (1) The Decision-Maker may give approval under section 28 of the Act to carry out prohibited groundwork within a declared site if satisfied that the area of the site affected by the prohibited groundwork, and any other prohibited groundwork done with or without approval in the past 12 months, would be less than 10%.

- (2) The Decision-Maker may approve prohibited groundwork within a declared site if, on advice from the territory planning authority, the groundwork is necessary to achieve broader strategic planning objectives of the Territory Plan.

Examples

8 **Examples of reasonable remedial treatments or measures for a regulated tree**

Examples of reasonable remedial treatments or measures for a regulated tree are:

- (1) crown thinning, selective pruning or reduction pruning of trees to lessen wind resistance, to reduce weight of limbs, to reduce competition, to increase light penetration and air circulation through the crown, undertaken every three years; or
- (2) general pruning to remove dead, diseased, dying, or defective and conflicting branches deemed to be dangerous or detrimental to the tree, undertaken every two years; or
- (3) selective or formative pruning, to remove identified branches that encroaching on utilities or buildings, undertaken every two years; or
- (4) crown lifting for pedestrian or vehicular access undertaken every two years; or
- (5) thinning, selective pruning or reduction pruning on trees to provide solar access and property alignment to private dwellings undertaken every two years; or
- (6) annual inspection by a qualified arboriculturist to undertake risk and hazard assessment.

9 **Examples of reasonable risk mitigation measures**

Examples of reasonable risk mitigation measures are:

- (1) the erection of fences to prevent access under the tree or an area of risk; or
- (2) landscaping to discourage access under the tree or an area of risk; or
- (3) the erection of signage warning of possible risk.

10 **Examples of damaging activities that may be approved for a regulated tree**

Examples of the kinds of activities for which an approval for damaging activity on a regulated tree may be granted are:

- (1) removal of unsuitable or hazardous trees; or
- (2) pollarding on deciduous trees grown for horticultural amenity or on native trees to retain habitat values; or
- (3) remedial pruning to prolong the useful life expectancy of damaged trees; or
- (4) root pruning to ameliorate damage to built or natural structures.

11 Examples of tree damaging activities that may be approved for a public tree

Examples of the kinds of activities for which an approval for damaging activity on a public tree (at applicants' own cost) may be granted are:

- (1) pruning to facilitate line of sight or movement on public land; or
- (2) pruning or prohibited groundworks for pedestrian and vehicle access, traffic safety, stormwater management, service upgrades or maintenance; or
- (3) removal, prohibited groundwork or pruning in response to a tree damage claim; or
- (4) removal of a declared pest plant; or
- (5) removal of trees in native grassland regions to facilitate restoration; or
- (6) removal where the tree was self-sown and/or is in an inappropriate location or is an inappropriate species for the location; or
- (7) prohibited groundwork to allow installation of bollards to prevent vehicle access to the verge; or
- (8) prohibited groundwork to allow for water sensitive urban design, such as tree pit infrastructure and permeable paving.

The list of examples set out in criteria 8, 9, 10 and 11 do not limit the matters that the Decision-Maker may consider.

Schedule 2

List of local ecologically beneficial species for purposes of schedule 1.

<i>Botanical Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>
<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	Blackwood
<i>Allocasuarina verticillata</i>	Drooping She-oak
<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i>	River oak
<i>Eucalyptus blakelyi</i>	Blakely's red gum
<i>Eucalyptus bridgesiana</i>	Apple box
<i>Eucalyptus dives</i>	Broad leaf peppermint
<i>Eucalyptus goniocalyx</i>	Bundy
<i>Eucalyptus mannifera</i>	Red spotted gum
<i>Eucalyptus nortonii</i>	Silver bundy
<i>Eucalyptus pauciflora</i>	Snow gum
<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemos</i>	Red box
<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>	Narrow-leaved Peppermint
<i>Eucalyptus rossii</i>	Scribbly gum
<i>Eucalyptus rubida</i>	Candle bark
<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>	Yellow box