

Purpose: This fact sheet outlines some useful information about Shire policy surrounding verge tree pruning and removal.

Background: A verge is the portion of land between the road and the property boundary. Road reserves (this includes the verge) are crown land and not owned by the Shire. However, Local Governments do have responsibility for the care, control, and management of this land (unless the road has been designated a highway or main road). The responsibility for the management of verges does not mean that the Shire is required to undertake all works that might be requested. Council policy dictates the level of service provided with this being a balance between the activities undertaken and the associated cost to ratepayers. This means that Shire works tend to be restricted to essential areas such as public safety and infrastructure maintenance.

Verge Tree Works by the Shire

Verge trees are a frequent source of concern for residents and the Shire receives many requests for pruning or removal. The Shire addresses these requests considering the following:

- 1) Is the tree significantly damaging, or has potential to damage, public infrastructure. The Shire undertakes powerline pruning according to Western Power criteria.
- 2) Is the tree causing an unacceptable fire risk.
- 3) Is the tree causing significant damage to buildings or structures on adjoining land.
- 4) Is there an imminent risk to public safety, or to the structure of adjacent buildings.

In all cases the request is assessed of by a suitably qualified and/or experienced Shire representative. Where trees are considered potentially hazardous, a formal Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) will be undertaken by a qualified person.

The following are not considered reason for tree pruning or removal:

- 1) Nuisance from leaves, nuts or seeds, sap, or bird noise.
- 2) Insignificant or perceived fire hazard.
- 3) Unsightly trees or impacts on views.

Fallen Trees and Branches from Storms and Other Natural Occurrences

Where storms or other natural events cause trees or significant branches to fall and impede a public thoroughfare the Shire will remove the obstruction as soon as practical. Incidents where a road has become impassable, or a lack of sight lines creates an imminent risk will take priority.

Where storms or other natural events cause trees or significant branches from the road verge to fall and either damage or affect private property, as a natural event the Shire is not required to take any action. However, if resources are available

the Shire may remove timber from a fence and make temporary repairs as necessary to contain stock to prevent a road hazard.

Verge Tree Works by Landowners

Owners of properties adjoining the verge are permitted without Shire approval, to trim branches or roots of trees at the point these encroach on their property or to permit adequate clearance under driveways or footpaths. In all other cases the approval of the Shire is required. The Shire may conditionally approve works by owners of adjoining properties having regard to the following:

- 1) Whether removal is necessary for the construction of a vehicular crossover.
- 2) Whether the tree is considered by the Shire to be incompatible with its location.
- 3) Whether removal is reasonable given the overall health of the tree.
- 4) Whether the tree is providing food or habitat for native animals.
- 5) Whether the tree is native and requires a clearing permit.
- 6) Whether the tree has historical value or a significant amenity to the community.

Clearing for Fence Line Construction or Maintenance

The Shire is not responsible for, and will not undertake, clearing of trees within the verge for private infrastructure construction or maintenance. Owners of land within the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes are allowed to undertake vegetation clearing within Shire controlled road reserves for the purpose of maintaining or constructing a fence. Strict legislative conditions (with severe penalties) apply to the clearing of native vegetation and people must ensure they fully understand these before proceeding.