



STATE
PLANNING
COMMISSION

Preserving our Green Infrastructure Policies in the Planning and Design Code



Image credit: Don Brice

August 2022



Government of South Australia
Department for Trade
and Investment

PRESERVING OUR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Introduction

Natural resources and the environment underpin South Australia's economic prosperity and social wellbeing.

They provide us with water, food, fuel, fibre, and support industries and communities as well as our quality of life.

Our green infrastructure contributes to climate regulation; air and water filtration; natural pest control; and provides economic, cultural, spiritual and recreational benefits. How we manage our resources and environment is integral to how we develop our cities, suburbs and regions.

As our climate changes, we become particularly vulnerable to the risks associated with extreme weather patterns, which will significantly impact where we live and the infrastructure we will need to sustain our way of life. What we build now and into the future will need to respond to these anticipated impacts to avoid increased operational and maintenance costs, particularly in coastal settlements and areas near bushfire hazard zones.

Research shows that it is important for us to remain connected to nature, particularly when we live in highly urbanised environments. It is essential we find ways to remain connected to nature in these built-up areas, particularly through our green infrastructure networks, which are important for our health, happiness and wellbeing.

We recognise that past decisions have changed our natural environment and now more than ever we need to protect it so it can continue to support our communities. The planning system has a key role to play in facilitating the provision of green infrastructure within our communities.

Green infrastructure plays an important part in:

- mitigating and adapting to climate change
- protecting and securing our water resources
- valuing and enhancing biodiversity
- building resilience to hazards.

This brochure provides an overview of the policies in the Planning and Design Code (the Code) and related legislation concerning the environment and preservation of our green infrastructure.

Environment Policy Benefits

- Consideration of native vegetation up-front in the planning process to avoid unnecessary clearance
- Protect environmentally sensitive locations through the application of the Conservation Zone
- Continue regulated and significant tree protections in greater Adelaide
- Contribute to green infrastructure and urban tree canopy targets through the introduction of stronger policy, underpinned by legislative requirements, that ensures new development includes an appropriate amount of landscaping and tree planting.

Key Themes / Principles:

- Native Vegetation
- National Parks and Conservation Areas
- Regulated and Significant tree policy
- Mandatory tree planting and stronger policies to incentivise the inclusion of soft landscaping for infill development.



Property value in leafy streets can be up to **20% HIGHER** than similar properties in treeless streets

The infographic features a light blue background. At the top, there are icons of a stack of money with a dollar sign, a coin, and an upward-pointing arrow. Below these are icons of a house with a garage and trees. At the bottom, there are icons of a house with a garage and trees, with the text 'Property value in leafy streets can be up to 20% HIGHER than similar properties in treeless streets'.



Trees and plants make a good city great!

Cooler Urban Areas Healthier, happier & more productive people Improved air quality Boosted Economy Water Management

The infographic has a light pink background. At the top, there is a row of icons: a pine tree, a classical building, a bushy tree, a modern house, a traffic light, and a tall tree. Below this is the text 'Trees and plants make a good city great!'. At the bottom, there are five icons with corresponding text: a thermometer (Cooler Urban Areas), a heart with a tree inside (Healthier, happier & more productive people), a window with wind (Improved air quality), a piggy bank with money (Boosted Economy), and a stack of water pipes (Water Management).

Native Vegetation

Native vegetation means a plant or plants of a species indigenous to South Australia including a plant or plants growing in or under waters of the sea (*Native Vegetation Act 1991*).

Our state's natural landscapes are diverse, ranging from the arid areas of the north to the higher rainfall ranges and landscapes of the south. The native vegetation of these landscapes includes grass and shrub lands, woodlands and forests, wetlands and the underwater seagrass in our gulfs and coastal waters. This vegetation is highly valued because it:

- provides critical habitat for South Australia's unique biodiversity
- helps protect our land, coastlines and waterways from erosion, salinity and climatic extremes, mitigating the effects of a changing climate
- supports agricultural production through the provision of windbreaks, shelter for stock, and habitat for natural pest predators and crop pollinators
- improves our health and wellbeing by providing us with a connection to nature, and an important element of our state's natural identity.

KEY FEATURES

- The State Significant Native Vegetation Overlay applies to areas identified by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) as having significant stands of native vegetation including selected reserves, national parks and heritage agreements. The overlay includes a 50-metre buffer area to capture development near these areas.
- The Native Vegetation Overlay applies to all other areas of the state where the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* applies (generally outside metropolitan Adelaide).
- In areas where the State Significant Native Vegetation Overlay or Native Vegetation Overlay applies, development applications that involve the removal of native vegetation may trigger a requirement for expert input into the development assessment process via an accredited consultant's report and/or a referral to the Native Vegetation Council.
- Both the State Significant Native Vegetation Areas and Native Vegetation overlays improve integration between native vegetation assessments and the planning and development approval processes.

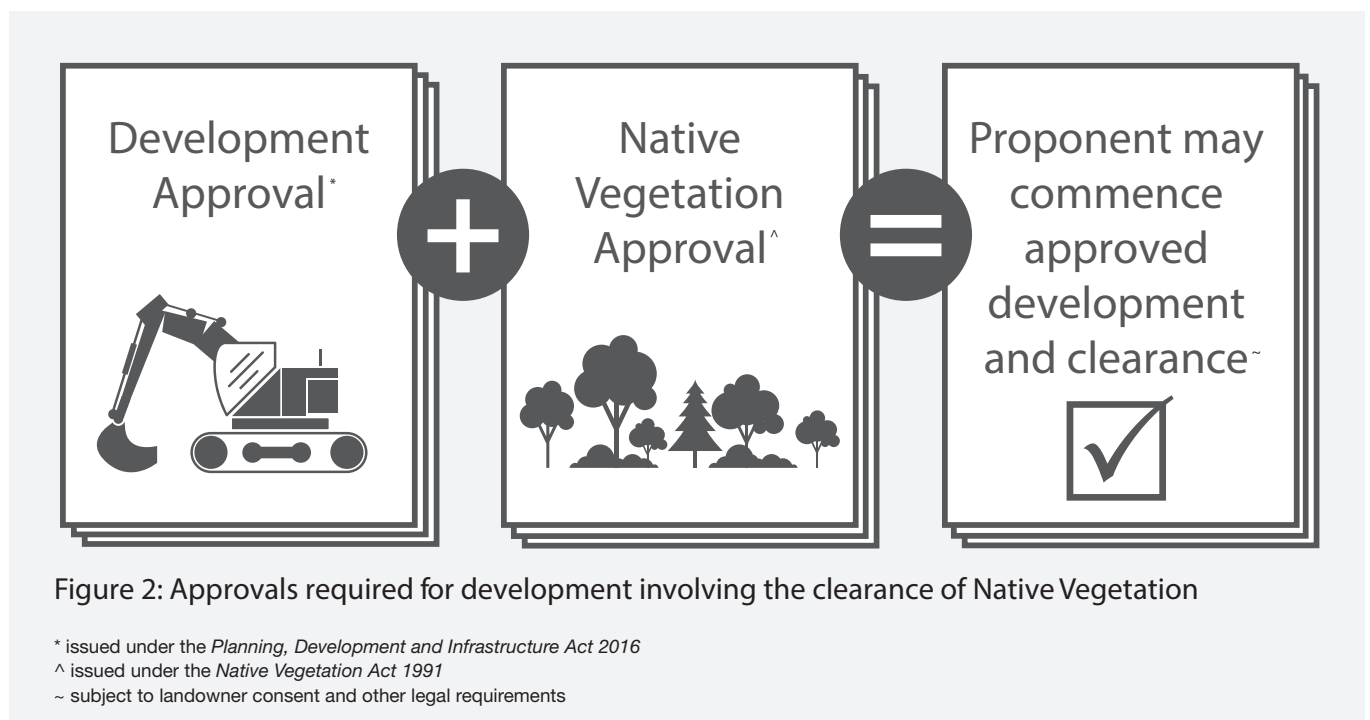


Figure 2: Approvals required for development involving the clearance of Native Vegetation

* issued under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*

^ issued under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991*

~ subject to landowner consent and other legal requirements

National Parks and Conservation Areas

South Australia's 340 parks and conservation areas cover 21% of the state comprising national parks, regional reserves, conservation reserves, conservation parks, game reserves, recreation parks and wilderness protection areas.

The Code brings all our parks and conservation areas into the Conservation Zone to strengthen long-term protection of South Australia's unique cultural, historical and natural places.

There is a long-term strategy to enhance park visitor experiences by providing improved attractions, services, access and facilities in parks, with the added benefit of supporting local jobs and the tourism industry. The Code supports this by better aligning the planning system with the park management planning process.

KEY FEATURES

- The Conservation Zone applies to all reserves constituted under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.
- The conservation value of areas under the Conservation Zone is recognised through the zone policies and identification of key activities as restricted development including:
 - renewable energy facilities
 - dwellings - other than a replacement dwelling or when located in specific subzone
 - land division - except where it is to facilitate the creation of an allotment in the Visitor Experience Subzone with an area of 5ha or more for existing tourist accommodation, or it is within the Small Scale Settlement Subzone or it does not create any additional allotments. Boundary realignments may be supported in specific circumstances.
 - tourist accommodation - except within the Visitor Experience Subzone or where a relevant reserve plan of management prepared under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* identifies it as envisaged development, allowing some tourist accommodation proposals to be assessed on its merits against the policies in the Code.
- The Conservation Zone works in conjunction with other layers in the Code, particularly the State Significant Native Vegetation Areas Overlay.



Image credit: Brad Griffin





Regulated and Significant Tree Policy

Tree damaging activity in relation to a regulated or significant tree is included in the definition of development pursuant to the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*. Development must be assessed against the Code. The Code contains policy to guide assessment of development applications involving regulated and significant trees in the Regulated and Significant Tree Overlay.

KEY FEATURES

- The Code maintains and strengthens the policy established under the previous planning system with regard to the assessment of development proposals involving regulated and significant trees.
- The Regulated and Significant Tree Overlay includes policy for both regulated and significant trees, including more rigorous tests for proposals that involve damage or removal of significant trees.
- The Regulated Trees and Significant Tree Overlay applies to areas where regulated and/or significant tree controls were prescribed in the former *Development Regulations 2008*. The overlay applies primarily to areas located within Metropolitan Adelaide and parts of Greater Metropolitan Adelaide.
- The Regulated and Significant Tree Overlay complements regulated and significant tree controls in the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* and *Planning, Development and Infrastructure (General) Regulations 2017*.

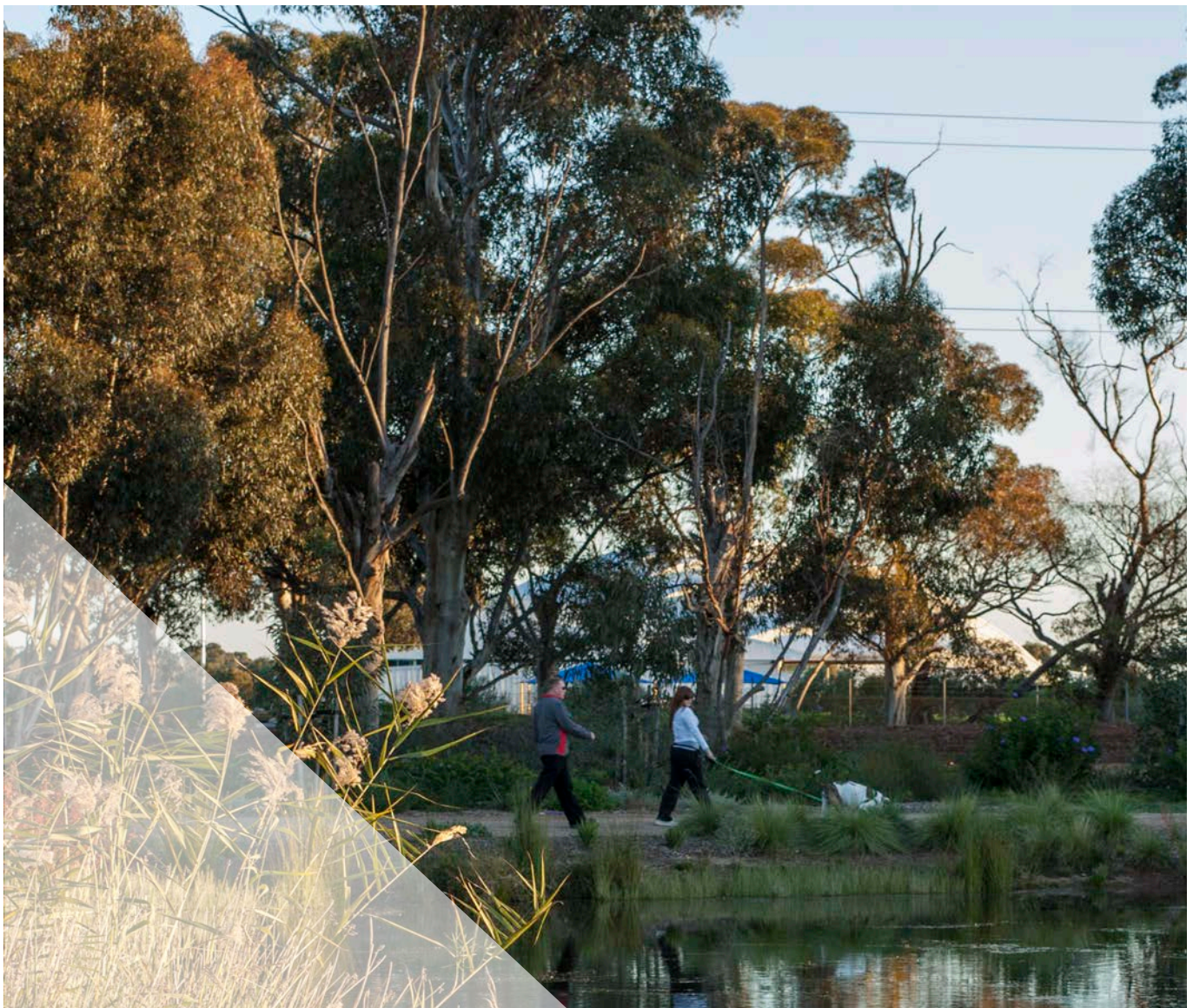


Image credit: Peter Barnes

Tree planting and landscaping in residential infill areas

To help support and create cooler and more liveable neighbourhoods, the Code introduces stronger and more comprehensive policy to provide for garden areas and tree planting in residential areas. This policy will help to retain the open garden character of established suburbs, contribute to greener streetscapes, and assist with achieving tree canopy targets.

In alignment with *The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide (2017 Update)*, which sets a target to increase urban green cover across Greater Adelaide by 20%, the Code introduces the Urban Tree Canopy Overlay and contains policy for soft landscaping, deep soil areas for trees and tree planting as part of a development's design.

KEY FEATURES

- The Urban Tree Canopy Overlay identifies residential areas within metropolitan Adelaide where minimum tree planting requirements apply, and:
 - supports the retention and planting of new trees when undertaking residential development
 - complements established requirements and processes around regulated and significant trees
 - requires at least one tree per new dwelling
 - requirements as to tree size depend on the dwelling site area
 - larger trees can be 'swapped' for multiple smaller trees, providing scope to adjust tree planting to site constraints or project designs
 - tree planting can be offset by the retention of existing trees
 - in some circumstances, a financial contribution can be made to the Urban Tree Canopy Off-set Fund in lieu of tree planting under the Urban Tree Canopy Overlay.
- The soft landscaping policies in the Code seek:
 - a minimum of between 10-25% of the site area should be used for soft landscaping, noting that the amount varies depending on the size of the dwelling site
 - at least 30% of the above amount be provided in the front yard to enhance streetscapes
 - each area of landscaping has a minimum dimension of 0.7m to support plant growth.
- Provision for deep soil zones is included for medium to high-rise developments in the Code, and:
 - supports the provision of trees to contribute to tree canopy targets, improve the appearance of streetscapes and soften built form
 - seeks the establishment of a deep soil space with a minimum dimension of 4m in front of buildings
 - provides for deep soil zones as a proportion of any site of 300m² or more, with each deep soil zone having a minimum dimension of 3m, as well as a deep soil zone for sites under 300m².

Urban Tree Canopy Offset Scheme

The Code contains a set of residential infill policies that include the requirement to plant or retain trees when new dwellings are built in urban residential areas, particularly the Urban Tree Canopy Overlay (the Overlay).

Supporting the Overlay is the Urban Tree Canopy Off-set Scheme (the Scheme), a new off-setting contribution scheme established under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (the Act). The Scheme enables payment into the Urban Tree Canopy Off-set Fund (the Fund) in lieu of planting and/or retaining the required trees on site in designated areas where tree planting is not feasible.

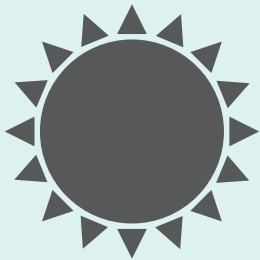
While the Urban Tree Canopy Overlay affects most residential areas in metropolitan Adelaide, the Scheme only operates in a few zones or areas where tree planting is less feasible due to factors such as soil type (specified in accordance with Australian Standard AS2870, highly reactive sites) or limited building setbacks as follows:

- Housing Diversity Neighbourhood Zone
- Urban Renewal Neighbourhood Zone
- City Living Zone
- Any site with a 'Designated Soil Type' as described in the Scheme.

The Fund is to be used for the planting, establishment and maintenance of trees within reserves or public land anywhere within a designated local government area. It can also be used to purchase land within a designated local government for the preservation and/or planting of trees.



Adelaide's average number of hot days above 35 degrees is predicted to increase by up to 47 days per year by 2070



Despite our hot, dry climate, we can mitigate the urban heat island effect by growing our urban tree canopy and retaining water in urban landscapes.





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