

# Tree policy review submission

From Conservation Botany Society

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The Conservation Botany Society aims to improve the practice of local flora conservation, restoration, and management on public land and private properties. This submission outlines the principles which we would like to see incorporated into planning policies and procedures.

The main aim of tree planning policy seems to be microclimate maintenance. There should be no assumption that tree planting and retention of large trees automatically protects local flora biodiversity although it can do when the big trees are remnants of the original forest and woodland canopy or when the planted trees are non-hybrid descendants of the original canopy. We do not address the aim of microclimate modifications in this submission.

This submission relates to measures that specifically aim to conserve and restore local native flora. At present, local flora conservation and restoration is not specifically addressed in planning policies and this needs to be rectified. It is imperative that botanists and experienced ecological restoration practitioners are consulted and not just arborists and horticulturists who may know little of these areas of science. The points made here are necessarily brief, but we would be happy to discuss and elaborate in person should an opportunity arise.

## 1. Need for Local Biodiversity Action Planning.

All LGAs should have a biodiversity inventory and action plan prepared by people competent in both botany and ecological restoration and management. This is because it is impossible to plan for and manage what you don't know exists. The inventory will document remnant original native trees and areas where local native mid and ground layer flora survive. It will also identify areas of public land that are suitable for the incorporation of well managed local flora into urban areas.

## 2. Tree Protection Zones

Where areas have existing canopy of original forest and woodland trees, these areas should be defined as tree protection zones. In these zones, all indigenous trees should be protected and there should be no intensification of development footprint. Where trees are dense, or where native understorey exists, an area should not be developed but should become a public park.

## 3. Protection of Smaller-growing Local Native Trees

Where original trees exist in urban and development areas, these need special consideration for retention during development. It is the species and origin status of a tree that is important for biodiversity conservation not its size. Smaller growing species such as silver banksia (*Banksia marginata*), native pine (*Callitris gracilis*), and native apricot (*Pittosporum angustifolium*), at present are ignored from a planning point of view because they never attain a size specified as being significant. Where new residential areas are being subdivided, remnant native trees should be in reserves and wide road verges.

#### **4. Provision for Quality Ecological Restoration**

Planning regulations needs to be clear to distinguish areas for local flora restoration from areas for ornamental landscaping. Local flora restoration should be consistent with a local biodiversity action plan whereas landscaped areas should be quite distinct using non-weedy exotic species and should not pretend to be local flora. All local flora restoration and establishment should use diverse local provenance so as to be suitable for use a seed source for future project sites.

#### **5. Offset Funds to be used in the Local Area.**

If any trees or flora are approved for removal, adequate offset money should be levied from the developer and this money should be spent on best practice flora conservation and restoration in the locality and not, as presently the case, directed to anywhere in the state.