

DRAFT URBAN FOREST BILL 2022

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

The Canberra community and key stakeholders were invited to have their say on the draft *Urban Forest Bill 2022* from 21 April 2022 to 2 June 2022.

The *Urban Forest Bill 2022* (the Bill) will repeal and replace the *Tree Protection Act 2005* to improve tree protection of protected trees on both public land and extend protections to trees on public land. Feedback received during the review of the *Tree Protection Act 2005* and on the draft Urban Forest Strategy was also used to inform the development of the draft Bill.

The Bill proposes protecting more trees including on public land and smaller trees. The Bill recognises the significance individual trees have in having a healthy and sustainable urban forest and introduces a canopy contribution framework to ensure when trees are removed they are replaced. The Bill retains the ACT Tree Register and clarifies penalties for those who damage trees without approval. Canberrans will also be encouraged to consider sustainable design options when building new structures to safely retain mature trees for current and future generations.

THE CONVERSATION

Online and email submissions

Submissions were invited via the YourSay engagement website and email during the consultation period. A total of 66 submissions were received from individuals and organisations representing diverse interests and sectors.

Industry briefings and meetings

Four industry briefings were held during the consultation period targeting arborists, landscape architects, the construction industry and the community sector. Approximately 50 representatives attended the briefings. We also held meetings with a range of organisations that requested individual briefings.

WHO WE ENGAGED

The consultation targeted industry, peak bodies, community groups and the wider Canberra community.

We received 40 submissions from individuals and 26 submissions from organisations. Submissions from organisations included peak environmental and development associations and community groups.

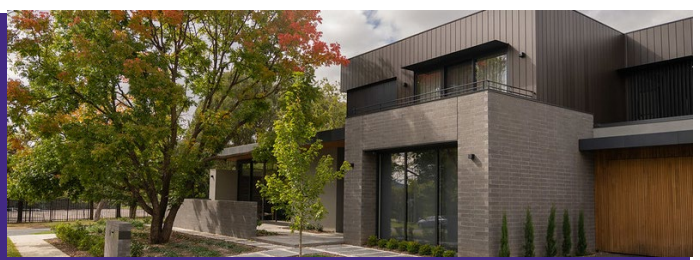
WHAT WE HEARD

The key insights below represent the most common themes raised across submissions and feedback channels.

Key insights

Support for a sustainable urban forest

1. There is widespread recognition across submissions of the valuable contribution a sustainable urban forest canopy makes to the lives of all Canberrans.
2. There is also recognition that canopy contribution agreements and tree bonds support increased sustainability of the urban forest, as long as they are supported by appropriate valuations, penalties and compliance measures.



Protecting significant and cultural trees

3. There is strong support for continuing to protect significant trees including mature native trees, Aboriginal cultural trees, and trees with high ecological value.
4. We heard strong support for the automatic provisional registration of Aboriginal cultural trees.

Balancing tree protection and safety

5. We heard that it's important to maintain a balance between ensuring that more trees are cared for and protected, whilst mitigating the risk that trees may pose to people's safety and damage to infrastructure.
6. There is broad support for reducing the height and canopy of protected trees from 12 metres to 8 metres.
7. We heard a desire for an easier process to remove trees that are unhealthy, pest-affected, weedy, an inappropriate size or threaten powerlines.

Improving tree management

8. The proposed holistic management of Canberra's urban forest is broadly supported, including consistency in how trees are managed on private land and public land.
9. There's strong support for clear monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes for canopy contribution plantings, payments and exemptions; tree bonds; ACT Government plantings; and tree protection decisions.

Compliance and impact

10. We heard it's important to ensure no one is disadvantaged by the new reforms and that industry would like us to focus more on outcomes and streamlined processes.
11. There was feedback on either the end of the spectrum suggesting that the financial impacts in the Bill were too low and too high. On one end there was concern that the valuations do not reflect the full value of trees and act as a deterrent. On the other end there was concern about financial burden being placed on homeowners and developers was too high.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Feedback from this engagement has helped us refine the draft Bill. It will also be used to inform how we administer the new legislation and assist industry and the wider community to adapt to the changes.

Updates will continue to be provided via the YourSay page. If you have any questions about this project or would like to be kept updated on its progress, please email communityengagement@act.gov.au.

Key Timings

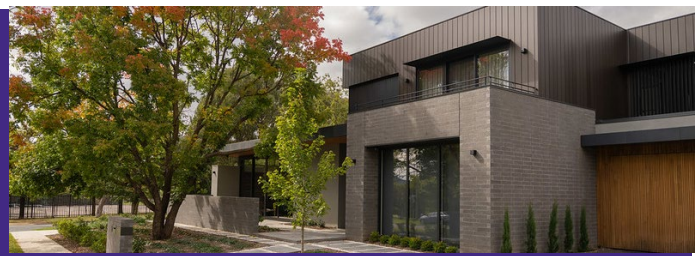
2019: Review of the *Tree Protection Act 2005* commences

Mid 2020: Consultation on draft Urban Forest Strategy

March 2021: Release of the ACT's Urban Forest Strategy

21 April 2022: Start of industry and community consultation on the draft Urban Forest Bill

2 June 2022: Consultation on the draft Urban Forest Bill concludes



July 2022: Review submissions and refine draft Bill

3 August 2022: What We Heard report released [**we are here**]

3 August 2022: *Urban Forest Bill 2022* introduced in the Legislative Assembly

Late 2022: Work on *Urban Forest Bill 2022* regulations and instruments.

1 July 2023: Urban Forest Bill comes into effect

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

66

we received 66 submissions in total via YourSay and email including 26 submissions from organisations and 40 submissions from individuals

4

we delivered four industry briefings to arborists, landscape architects, the construction industry and the community sector

50+

we spoke with more than 50 stakeholder representatives and attended several meetings with stakeholders and individuals

1,000+

a total of 1,069 people visited the YourSay web page during the consultation period resulting in 3,314 unique page views