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Environment & Heritage Committee
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Submission re: Sustainable Cities 2025

1 Preserve bushland, significant heritage and urban green zones.

I am a Consulting Arborist working in Shoalhaven, NSW.

CASE STUDY

Shoalhaven City Council are currently reviewing their Tree Policy. Council propose to replace the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) that has protected the trees of Shoalhaven for the past 30 years, with a *draft Tree Management Policy, August 2003*.

There are categories of trees that are exempt from the TPO: Bushfire Hazard Reduction Work; Wire Clearance; Emergency Work; Approved Development Consent.

However, Shoalhaven City Council plan additional exemptions which will result in:

- thousands of healthy trees (and vegetation) that are structurally sound, that can be topped, lopped or removed by the owner for no valid reason;
- trees will no longer be protected by legislation (TPO);
- there will not be a Council Officer available to come and assess the trees and ensure best management on the basis of that assessment, for the tree, the owner, and the community at large.

Council will pass on any responsibility for these trees to the landowner.

Tree Management will be replaced by a 45 degree rule. That is:

“Trees on private land where any part of a tree on the same land is above a line 45 degrees from the vertical extension of the wall of any building measured from its base”.

If any part of the tree appears to be above this 45 degree line, the tree is said to potentially impact the building and the tree may be removed.

This rule is confusing and unworkable.

Upslope, one could lose every tree/vegetation for a very long distance and for no valid reason.

I applied this rule at Hyams Beach

Of 117 houses surveyed, 70 houses have trees that provide visual amenity for the streetscape, shade for the people, habitat for wildlife. A total of 342 trees. Under this rule 261 of the 342 trees i.e. 76% of the residential trees at Hyams Beach could be topped/lopped or removed for no valid reason.

Extrapolate these figures to the whole of Shoalhaven. The amenity and the benefits provided by the trees of Shoalhaven will rapidly decline.

BENEFITS OF TREES

Statewide Best Practice Manual – Trees and Tree Root Management Version 2, 2003 (p.4), points out that properly managed trees that stand in streets, parks, private property, contribute significantly to the amenity and aesthetics of an urban area and to the well being of its residents and visitors.

“A well managed urban forest contributes significant infrastructure cost savings in areas such as storm water and air quality control, and energy conservation.

- *The urban forest is a source of economic revenue attracting recreational users and tourists.*
 - *Urban forests provide infrastructure services without which development opportunities decline ie tree roots stabilize stream flow, reduce storm water run-off, protect land and earth structures such as embankments, dunes, roads and canals. Trees reduce urban heat island effects, conserve energy and absorb air pollutants responsible for numerous breathing ailments.*
 - *Annual CO2 reductions achieved through tree planting programs can offset from 0.2% - 2% of annual emissions with flow-on benefits to public utilities.*
 - *Urban forests contribute to the value of real estate and tourism potential.*
 - *Air temperature reductions up to 8 degrees centigrade can be achieved in the presence of appropriate tree cover.*
 - *Trees shading building and road surfaces reduce a major source of heat gain and hence reduce community reliance on air conditioning cooling loads.*
 - *The average ecological contribution of a typical community tree has been estimated at \$270.*
 - *Appropriate urban trees enhance biodiversity by providing wildlife habitat.”*
- Selected examples. (Stringer)

(Refer: Best Practice Manual, 2003, p. 5

www.google.com.au/search?q=Best+Practice+Manual+Trees+btnG=

WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE

- legislation that ensures Councils cannot facilitate the destruction of trees and vegetation by relinquishing their responsibility of properly assessing trees; i.e. replacing assessment with a '45 degree rule' (totally unacceptable to the arboricultural industry).
- Council taking on the challenge of properly managing all trees in its area; promoting the benefits of trees to the community; ensuring replacement trees where it is necessary to remove trees.

As the urban sprawl widens, so trees and vegetation are removed. This is done for fire prevention, for building construction, and not least for 'views'.

I recently looked at a hill that needed reconstruction, with deep irrigation pipes, because of removal of trees/vegetation and over development of the hill. I was called to the location to 'save' a tree, the roots of which were helping to stabilize this hill. However, the site had been cut away for a driveway within two metres of the tree and on two sides.

There had not been proper consideration of the land capability or the consequences of clearing and building upon this hill. Subdivisions, views, short term gains, prevail.

It is at a Council level and at the landholder's level that destruction of our vegetation starts and grows. We lose the benefits of reduced energy requirements, of storm-water harvesting and the filtering of water before it enters our waterways. Loss of wildlife. Yet, there are development interests on Councils that are powerful and seem to win the day, at the expense of the community, the environment, our future.

There must be vigorous and ongoing information re the benefits of protecting the environment. Councils must be held accountable to properly describe (inventory) and assess their ecological assets. Council should allocate an acceptable % of this asset total to managing and ensuring its sustainability.

The benefits of trees (as opposed to the often irrational fears resulting from media beat-ups post fire and post storms) must be disseminated and discussed – especially to reach every resident.

If we are to sustain the ecological resources of Australia, it is necessary not to further the sprawl of our towns. We need to constrict our desires to expand, in order to protect our natural resources for future generations. The benefits of alternative housing such as Christie Walk in Adelaide must be promoted to all Australians.

Yours sincerely
Maree Ellis.