

# Media Release

9 December 2025

## **Council adopts tree protection policy subject to WA Planning Commission and Ministerial approval**

Cockburn Council has listened to the nearly 80 per cent of people who had their say in favour of adopting a planning policy to protect trees on private land and enhance the City's tree canopy.

A Council decision to adopt 'Local Planning Policy 5.23 – Tree Protection' was made at the 9 December Ordinary Council Meeting but is subject to approval from the WA Planning Commission (WAPC) and the Minister for Planning.

The WAPC and Minister must first approve the deletion of clause 4.18 in the City's Town Planning Scheme No.3 which only provides protection for trees already on the City's Significant Tree Register. It is expected the decision could take anywhere between six and 12 months.

The new local planning policy is designed to provide a clear description of a 'regulated tree' on private land and when development approval is required for any 'tree damaging' activity, including trees already listed on the City's Significant Tree Register.

The City publicly advertised the draft policy between 5 May and 1 September this year, receiving 323 submissions in response to a variety of community consultation methods.

A majority of the respondents – 76 per cent – supported the idea of the need for Development Approval to remove or damage certain trees on private land.

Only 21 per cent of respondents opposed the policy, which is based on the model prepared by the WA Local Government Association, but with added adjustments tailored to ensure clarity for the Cockburn community.

City of Cockburn Director Sustainable Development and Safety, Dan Arndt, said community supporters of the proposed policy highlighted the importance and benefits of mature trees.

"This includes their environmental value, climate change mitigation, managing urban

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heat, and improving amenity and liveability,” Mr Arndt said.

“This reflects a broader shift in community expectations, with growing support for affording trees a greater level of protection within the planning framework.”

Those who opposed the policy were concerned about the impingement of private property rights, legal implications, safety, approval costs and application delays.

City of Cockburn Deputy Mayor Phoebe Corke said the policy struck a practical balance, safeguarding trees that contributed significantly to the urban canopy while allowing for reasonable development potential consistent with land zoning.

“It also prioritises safety by providing exemptions for urgent works required to address public safety or the security of buildings and equipment.”

The Council decision also instructs the Chief Executive Officer to develop an implementation plan for aspects of the policy that can be delivered within existing resources.

Regulated trees on private land would be defined as:

- Trees 8 metres and taller (excluding palms and specific pest species)
- Trees listed on the City’s Significant Tree Register
- Trees identified to be retained or planted to replace a large tree removal due to subdivision or development.

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