



Tara Cheyne MLA
Manager of Government Business
Attorney-General
Minister for Human Rights
Minister for City and Government Services
Minister for the Night-Time Economy

Member for Ginninderra

Mr Tom Duncan
Clerk
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

 December 2025

Dear Mr Duncan 

Thank you for your letter regarding petitions E-PET 028-25 and PET 061-25, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA regarding habitat development in urban Canberra.

The ACT Government shares the commitment to enhance biodiversity and ecological resilience. We acknowledge the value of understorey planting and habitat enhancements, which are key actions under the ACT Urban Forest Strategy. These efforts are supported by projects such as the Urban Forest Ecological Advice initiative, the Tree Health and Biodiversity Restoration guidelines, and the Connecting Nature, Connecting People program, which delivered 20 demonstration sites in collaboration with community groups in 2024-25.

Mowing remains necessary in many areas to manage bushfire risk, maintain visibility, support access and control weeds. Crews avoid mowing directly under tree canopies to protect tree health and an unmown buffer is left around water bodies to prevent erosion and filter runoff into the water body. Some areas of conservation significance are not mown as regularly, or at all, to ensure conservation values are maintained. Barriers are put in place to protect these areas to keep mowing away from conservation areas. The City and Environment Directorate (CED) continues to seek ecological advice from across ACT Government to explore opportunities to further reduce mowing in suitable areas, while balancing safety and other amenity needs.

Felled timber is reused in nature reserves and selected urban spaces to support habitat and nature play but is only retained in high-use parks where it can be installed and managed to not pose safety or access concerns.

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The ACT Government recently undertook community consultation on the draft Urban Wood Reuse Plan which outlines how the ACT Government plans to reuse harvested wood and achieve the best environmental, economic and social outcomes for the Canberra community.

CED also works with Urban Parks and Places volunteer groups, and groups who have received an ACT Environment grant, to facilitate safe and appropriate use of salvaged urban logs in projects achieving weed control, habitat restoration and site revegetation.

The ACT Government recognises the value of understorey planting as part of a healthy urban forest. This is a key focus of the Urban Forest Strategy and is supported by a range of initiatives, including the Urban Forest Ecological Advice project, Tree Health and Biodiversity Restoration guidelines, and the Connecting Nature, Connecting People program. These efforts are helping to restore habitat, improve connectivity, and strengthen the resilience of our urban ecosystems. Progress against these actions has been documented annually since 2021 in the Urban Tree Canopy Coverage Report, which can be found on the City Services webpage.

However, careful consideration of individual sites is essential prior to installing understory vegetation, as there are necessary limitations within inner asset protection zones.

The arrangement of fuels is important for effective bushfire management. A combination of surface and near surface fuels (litter and long grasses) and elevated fuels such as shrubs in combination with tree cover leads to much greater risk. Work from Wollongong University has shown that well maintained ground cover such as mowed grass and patchy shrub cover (rather than continuous shrub layer) under trees can reduce risk substantially. This is reflected in the way fire fuels are assessed by bushfire managers, where overall fuel hazard is strongly influenced by the presence of multiple vertical fuel elements and not just the canopy layer.

In an urban context, where mowing, pruning and other management activities occur, the amount of litter and groundcover, coarse woody debris and shrubs that provide a “fire ladder” to the tree canopy are reduced, or entirely absent, minimising potential crown fires.

Gravel surfaces are commonly installed in road median strips and similar locations where regular maintenance, such as mowing, weeding and tree maintenance, is unsafe or impractical. These areas often present challenges due to steep ground slopes, limited access, historical chemical use, and safety risks to maintenance crews. Additionally, Austroads guidelines restrict planting in certain median locations to maintain visibility and reduce hazards. The placement of services in medians can also be an impediment to planting. In such cases, gravel or granite is selected as the most suitable solution to ensure safety, reduce maintenance needs, and maintain a clean, low-risk urban environment.

The petition aligns with many current initiatives, and I thank the principal petitioner and signatories for their advocacy.

Sincerely



Tara Cheyne MLA
Minister for City and Government Services