Fact Sheet

Native Vegetation

What is Native Vegetation?
Native vegetation is an important environmental asset of the South Gippsland Council. Native vegetation is not just the trees but also the equally important, but often overlooked, understory. The understorey consists of small trees, shrubs, grasses and herbs.

Why is Native Vegetation Important to us?
We need to protect our native vegetation for the following reasons:

• Maintain the characteristic landscapes of the South Gippsland Council.
• Protect habitat for wildlife.
• Provide wildlife corridors along roadsides and watercourses which link to larger patches of native vegetation.
• Ensure plant and animal varieties are maintained.
• Form shelter belts which protect stock and crops from extreme weather and improve productivity.
• Hold soil together preventing wind and water erosion.
• Lower the water table reducing salinity.
• Protect water quality.
• Increase carbon retention to reduce the greenhouse effect.
• Promote environmentally sustainable development.
• Promote heritage values.
• Allow future generations to enjoy our native vegetation and wildlife.

How is Native Vegetation Protected?
Victoria’s Native Vegetation Management – A Framework for Action 2002 (the Framework), has been created to provide direction for the protection, enhancement and re-vegetation of native vegetation across the State. Responsible Authorities must have regard to the Framework when considering proposals involving Native Vegetation removal. As stated in the Framework, the major goal for native vegetation management is: ‘A reversal across the entire landscape, of the long-term decline in the extent and quality of Native Vegetation, leading to a Net Gain’. Net Gain is where overall gains in the retention or enhancement of Native Vegetation are greater than the overall losses.
To achieve Net Gain the Framework sets out a three step management approach:

1. Wherever possible avoid the removal of Native Vegetation.
2. If avoidance is not possible, minimise the extent of the vegetation to be removed.
3. Appropriately offset Native Vegetation removal.

The Native Vegetation Provisions in the South Gippsland Planning Scheme (Clause 52.17) outline when a Planning Permit is required to remove Native Vegetation and help achieve the avoid, minimise and offset objectives of the Framework.

**Bushfire Protection Entitlements**

Entitlements have been introduced to enable residents to manage vegetation around their existing dwellings for bushfire protection, with the need for a planning permit. The 10/50 rule enables all landowners in areas covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay to clear:

- any vegetation on their property, including trees, within 10 metres of a house; and
- any vegetation except for trees within 50 metres of the house.

The 10/30 rule applies state-wide and allows residents to clear:

- any vegetation on their property, including trees, within 10 metres of a house; and
- any vegetation except for trees within 30 metres of the house.

The 10/30 and 10/50 rules enable clearing around buildings or permits approved before 10 September 2009 only. For dwellings after 10 September 2009, clearing for bushfire protection will be considered through the planning permit process.

**Can I clear Vegetation along my Boundary Fence?**

Yes. In areas where the 10/30 rule applies, any vegetation can be removed for a combined maximum width of four metres across an existing property boundary fence. This does not apply to internal fences. Vegetation can only be removed by the owner of the land.

**Can Vegetation be removed if more than four metres is already cleared on one side of the Fence?**

No. If there is already at least four metres of cleared land on one side of the fence, vegetation cannot be removed on the other side of the fence without a planning permit.

- Remove or lop native vegetation on roadsides including fallen deadwood.

Exemptions relating to domestic and farming activities apply, but planning controls are complex, so please contact the Planning Department for advice.
Call Before You Cut!
Planning controls that preserve native vegetation apply across all of Victoria. It is therefore important to telephone Council’s Planning Advisory officer before removing or lopping any native vegetation.
A planning permit may be required to:

- Remove or lop trees, shrubs and understorey native vegetation on private land.
- Remove a dead tree with a trunk diameter of 40cm or more on private land.
- Remove or lop native vegetation on roadsides including fallen deadwood.

Exemptions relating to domestic and farming activities apply, but planning controls are complex, so please contact the Planning Department for advice.