



# Roadside Vegetation

## Habitat, wildlife corridors and natural beauty

### Why roadsides are considered special?

Due to past land management practices, roadsides often contain the only remnants of once extensive native grasslands or forests. They also provide habitat for native animals and provide visual amenity for our towns and rural areas.

Landholders often “clean up” the roadside out of concern about fire or snakes but do not realise that their “clean up” by mowing, burning or spraying is illegal and they may be having a detrimental impact on the amenity or habitat value of the roadside.

If you are unsure about whether your roadside vegetation is native or not, contact Council’s Natural Resources Officer for advice.

### Do I need a Planning Permit to remove vegetation from a roadside?

Yes. Under Clause 52.17 of the Golden Plains Planning Scheme, a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation on a roadside. The terms remove, destroy or lop include grazing of stock, mowing, slashing, spraying with herbicide, pruning, digging out, raking, burning or the removal of timber.

*Clause 52.17 of the Planning Scheme contains a list of exemptions. Check with Council to determine if your proposed works are exempt from the provisions.*

### My roadside is a fire hazard! What can I do?

Roadsides with remnant vegetation are viewed by many as a fire hazard and they ‘clean up’ their roadside to reduce this threat.

A landholder is not required to “clean up” the roadside adjacent to their property to reduce the fire threat. It is most important to manage fuel on your property around your house and any outbuildings to reduce the fuel load and corresponding level of risk in close proximity to your assets and family.

The Country Fire Authority conducts roadside fuel reduction burning in strategic areas to create fuel reduced zones to help control wildfires

### Can I collect firewood from my roadside?

Collection of timber for firewood from roadside areas is not permitted due to concerns regarding road/traffic safety and legal liability should a roadside firewood collector be injured. Firewood collection areas are operated by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Phone 136 186).

Removal of firewood does not remove fine fuels which are the main contributor to fire intensity and spread and therefore removal of firewood contributes very little to reducing the impact of wildfire.

### Can I plant my roadside with trees, shrubs or flowers?

If you want to revegetate or plant your roadside with attractive garden type plants it is best to contact Council with an idea of what you want to plant and where you want to plant it.

By consulting with Council you can avoid planting inappropriate species that may be “weedy” or interfere with traffic, drainage or underground services.

In most cases, Council will permit roadside revegetation provided it is with native plants sourced from the local area via a reputable nursery and the plants do not interfere with utility services, impede traffic flow or reduce driver sight distance on bends and intersections.

### Can I clear native vegetation to build or maintain my fence?

Council consent must be sought prior to removing vegetation on the road reserve outside your property. You wouldn’t jump your neighbour’s fence and start chopping down their trees without asking their permission.

Council does not clear vegetation from fence lines for landholders.

You may clear native vegetation to the minimum extent necessary to build or maintain your boundary fence without a Planning Permit provided the maximum total width of the clearing is less than 4 metres (this is usually 1 metre on the road reserve and 3 metres inside your property boundary). Clearing native vegetation to construct internal fences on your property requires a Planning Permit.

Remember, native vegetation on a roadside is protected so if you are in any doubt as to what you can legally do, contact Council before undertaking any lopping or removal works.

You can remove branches or trees that have fallen across your fence line without a permit.

### Can I graze my goat, horse or other stock on a roadside?

Grazing of stock or household animals on a roadside can only be carried out under permit. Grazing can have an adverse impact on native species, damage soil structure, encourages the establishment and spread of weeds and present a safety risk for road users.

If your roadside is subject to a VPO, application for a grazing permit will usually be refused.

If you wish to graze your animals on the roadside, contact Council to arrange a permit to avoid the possibility of a fine or impoundment of stock.

### Can I remove or lop native vegetation that is a safety risk?

Dangerous trees in the road reserve that are a risk to traffic or pedestrians should be reported to Council. Vegetation that is an *immediate* risk of personal injury or damage to property can be removed without a permit. By immediate, it is inferred that the tree or limb is in imminent danger of falling and is a direct threat to personal safety. In some situations a professional arborists report may be required. *Check with Council before undertaking any work*