

Jacqueline Yetzotis
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms Yetzotis,

I am writing in response concerns you raised in a recent letter about tree trimming around powerlines in the Marrickville area.

EnergyAustralia works closely with local councils to manage vegetation near the electricity network. EnergyAustralia trims trees near powerlines to help ensure the safety of the public, the safety of our staff and to minimise power interruptions. We know that about 60 per cent of power interruptions on our electricity network are caused by external factors like trees coming into contact with powerlines.

When tree trimming we strive to balance the aesthetic of the streetscape with the needs of the electricity network, however, we know that despite our best efforts, tree trimming can look severe. This is due to clearance distances required between trees and power lines which can vary between 3.5 meters to more than 5 meters, depending on the type of power line.

The health of the trees we trim is also a high priority. We prune trees to Australian standards, which set out the need to cut a branch to the growth collar point (often the trunk) to protect the tree from infection and disease.

You raised a specific concern for trees on Excelsior Parade. Since receiving your letter we have had a horticulturalist inspect the street and they found that the older trees had the desired pruning result for trees of this size and species, with the 'tunnel' effect. According to the NSW heritage register these trees are not historical as mentioned in your letter. As for the trees at the other end of the street, it is unlikely that EnergyAustralia is responsible for this pruning. EnergyAustralia's jurisdiction covers only on the branches threatening the electricity network and so we can only trim the offending branches. The style of trimming used here is inconsistent with our practices as the entire canopies have been reshaped.

We have also looked into your concerns about two Fig Trees on Carrington Road. EnergyAustralia did not trim these two trees. These trees are in fact in a loading zone and appear to have been trimmed to allow parking access for trucks.

EnergyAustralia takes the removal of any tree very seriously. Please note that removing trees is always a last resort. Trees are inspected by arborists before any removal takes place. As the trees are owned by council, the agreement across our network area is that the local council completes the stump grinding, which is what occurred on Salisbury Road.

Many trees planted under the electricity network are unsuitable to be growing under powerlines. In the case of Salisbury Road, Elms grow between 15 and 20 meters tall and powerlines are generally only about six meters high. Because of the height of these trees, we were unable to prune them in a way that maintained their health in the long term.

EnergyAustralia works closely with councils and provides advice on appropriate species to be planted under the electricity network. Often, when trees are removed local councils will replace them with more appropriate species. EnergyAustralia is continuing to work closely with Marrickville Council.

As you mentioned, aerial bundled cabling (ABC) reduces the clearance distances required between trees and powerlines because the lines are insulated with a special protective sheath. The replacement of powerlines with ABC is a cost covered by council with a substantial subsidy provided by EnergyAustralia. As yet, we have not received an application from Marrickville Council to replace bare powerlines with ABC.

I also note your concerns about the Oriental Plane Tree on Marrickville Road. At this stage, EnergyAustralia has council approval for the removal of one Oriental Plane tree on Marrickville Road, Marrickville, which is directly under a streetlight. Streetlights are designed in the interest of public safety for both pedestrians and traffic. Oriental Plane Trees can grow more than 25 meters high and 25 metres wide. The canopy of this tree surrounds the streetlight and is affecting the amount of light hitting the street. Concerns about lack of lighting in this section of the street have been raised by residents.

Trimming this tree would adversely affect its health and removal is unfortunately the only option. We are working with council on the timing of this work. We have also raised the relocation of the streetlight with council, however this may not be a viable solution.

Pruning trees around the electricity network is essential to maintaining a safe and reliable power supply for the community. We strive to do this in a way that protects the network and preserves the amenity of local streets. I trust this response helps allay your concerns.

Yours sincerely

Peter Harvey
Supervising Contract Officer
EnergyAustralia