

Community Fact Sheet – Post Bushfire Vegetation Management on Bendalong Rd, Manyana

1 April 2021

Endeavour Energy met with Manyana Matters in February to discuss concerns about the post bushfire vegetation management we are conducting in the Shoalhaven. We understand that the recovery from the 2019/20 summer bushfires has been lengthy and traumatic for many who are trying to re-build their lives and their communities, and that the post bushfire vegetation management is a visible and painful reminder to many people. We committed to providing the community information regarding the program of works around Manyana (especially on Bendalong Rd). We hope the advice below is useful to you.

Why are we still undertaking bushfire vegetation management?

All three of the state's megafires (Currowan, Green Wattle Creek and Gospers Mountain) occurred within Endeavour Energy's network area, and it has taken Endeavour Energy more than 12 months to undertake management of the dead and dying vegetation surrounding our powerlines, with consent from private landowners, local councils and the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS). We are at the tail end of our post bushfire vegetation management program, and these last packages of work include communities in the Shoalhaven such as Manyana.

How much vegetation management has been required?

All three of the state's megafires (Currowan, Green Wattle Creek and Gospers Mountain) occurred within Endeavour Energy's network area, burning through more than 10,800 square kilometres and destroying an estimated 168 million trees.

About 170,000 trees left standing in close proximity to the electricity network, from the Hawkesbury to Ulladulla, were rendered "hazardous" by the megafires. These are the trees that we have either been pruning or removing, depending on an assessment by qualified arborists as to the risk they present. To put that into perspective, in an ordinary year Endeavour Energy would only remove about 1,000 "hazard trees" from the roughly 13 million trees in close proximity to our network.

What risk do these trees present?

Unfortunately, the 170,000 trees identified by Endeavour Energy present a real risk to community safety and reliability. They pose a significant risk of falling onto powerlines, endangering lives and livelihoods, and interrupting supply. Unstable trees falling on powerlines can also start fires, which is risk that weighs heavily on our concern.

Further, epicormic growth (the green fluffy growth seen on badly fire affected trees) also presents a risk, as it is weakly attached to the trunks and can fly off into powerlines, creating further risk of fire. We appreciate that trees with green epicormic growth, which may appear vital from a distance, may not in fact be healthy or structurally sound, and we are guided by expert advice from qualified arborists in this regard.

Typically, "hazard trees" created by the fires are trees that have lost their canopies and demonstrate mostly epicormic growth (fine, lightly attached sprouts on their trunks). Trees with healthy canopies are not generally considered fire-related hazard trees.

Safety is our legal and moral obligation

Our core objective is community safety, and this includes the immediate safety of residents, road users, pedestrians and our people working in the field. It also includes reliability and continuity of supply. The post bushfire management program is driven only by safety and reliability considerations. We undertake this work to fulfil our legal and moral obligations to keep our communities safe and to keep you connected to power.

The fact that these unstable trees must be removed both to protect public safety and to ensure power supply to dozens of communities is a regrettable but unavoidable consequence of the megafires.

What work are we doing around Manyana?

Endeavour Energy will be pruning and removing trees along Bendalong Rd, where ferociously hot fires burned through the Conjola National Park. We have worked closely with NPWS to obtain consent to undertake these works, which permit Endeavour Energy to prune or remove “trees heavily fire affected along this section of the road/powerline corridor”. Fire-affected trees are defined in the NPWS consent as:

“Visually defective vegetation (which is vegetation that is dead, dying and appears structurally unsound as identified from the perspective of the Network Asset as far as it is reasonably practicable to do so), that is outside the Minimum Clearing Requirement distances from Network Assets and which may require pruning, cutting or removal to obviate the risk of it falling, dropping and contacting the assets”.

Unfortunately, in some sections of Bendalong Rd this will include trees on both sides of the road. However, in other sections of Bendalong Rd, little or no vegetation management will be required, because the trees have recovered, showing visible and healthy canopies.

The following image defines the area in which we will be working – **but it does not mean trees will be pruned or removed along the entire corridor.** It only delineates the boundary within which NPWS has permitted Endeavour Energy to undertake vegetation management.



Figure 1: Hazardous trees on Bendalong Rd

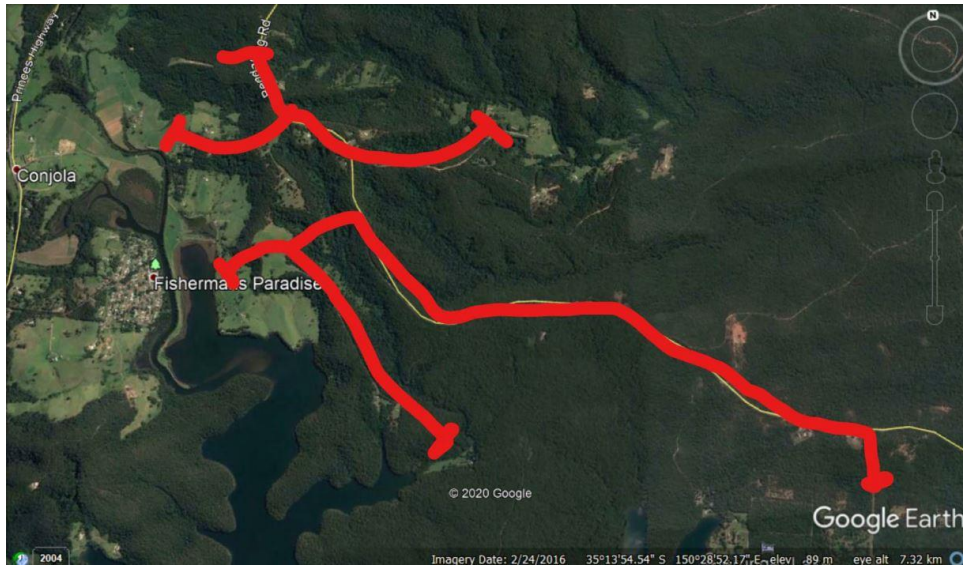


Figure 2: works area defined by NPWS consent

How we will take care to undertake only what is necessary?

Endeavour Energy is providing increased supervision of our contractors for this package of works to give the community confidence in the execution of our approved vegetation management plan. This has included off-site briefings and will include an increased presence of Endeavour Energy staff on site during the work, with careful attention to only undertake tree removal and pruning necessary to maintain public safety, in keeping with NPWS consent. This includes careful management of endangered flora and fauna (including local orchid species) and careful protection of sites with heritage significance.

When will these works commence and how long will they take?

Endeavour Energy will **not** undertake any vegetation pruning or removal in the Easter school holiday period. These works are expected to commence after the holidays in the second half of April. Our contractors may undertake some scoping or planning works in this time, but no trees will be pruned or removed during the holiday period. We expect the work to take up to two months to complete.

We regret the necessary removal of this vegetation, and the concern that it causes in the community. We hope this information gives you a better understanding of the need for the work, as well confidence in our commitment to supporting the best outcomes for your community in terms of safety, reliability and protection of the bushland that is recovering.

Greening Australia Initiative

Endeavour Energy has agreed to fund a *Greening Australia* tree planting program in Manyana and Lake Conjola, to act as an offset to the vegetation management necessitated by the fires. We look forward to *Greening Australia* working with interested residents and Shoalhaven City Council in the development of this planting program. We look forward to the growth and renewal that this program will help bring to your community.