



**Proposed Amendments to Chapters 8A and  
14 of the Tasmanian Electricity Code**

**Consultation Paper**

**November 2014**

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Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator

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## **ATTACHMENT – DRAFT AMENDED CHAPTER 8A (MARKED UP VERSION)**



# INVITATION FOR SUBMISSIONS

This consultation paper has been prepared to assist interested persons in making submissions on the draft amendments to Chapters 8A and 14 of the Tasmanian Electricity Code (the Code). The paper is intended to provide the context for the proposed amendments.

It is the Tasmanian Economic Regulator's (the Regulator) policy to publish all submissions on the Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator's (OTTER) website unless the author of the submission requests confidentiality in relation to the submission (or any part of the submission). Those parts of a submission that are requested to be confidential should be submitted as an attachment to that part suitable for publication.

The Regulator will not publish submissions which contain material that the Regulator believes is, or could be, derogatory or defamatory.

Submissions should be received by close of business on 19 December 2014.

To facilitate the publication of submissions on OTTER's website, submissions by email are preferred. Submissions and enquiries may be made to:

office@economicregulator.tas.gov.au

or to

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A copy of this Consultation Paper and the proposed amendments may also be found at OTTER's website [www.economicregulator.tas.gov.au](http://www.economicregulator.tas.gov.au).

# 1 BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

On 11 September 2014, the Tasmanian Economic Regulator (the Regulator) received a code change proposal from Tasmanian Networks Pty Ltd (TasNetworks) requesting amendments to Chapters 8A and 14 of the Tasmanian Electricity Code (the Code).

A revised proposal was received from TasNetworks on 6 November 2014. After considering the proposals, the Regulator has drafted amendments to both Chapters. This paper is intended to provide the context for the proposed changes as enclosed.

Following consultation, the amendments (with or without alteration) will be incorporated into the Code and published on the Regulator's website, alongside a Statement of Reasons.

## 1.2 Chapter 8A

Chapter 8A was developed in 2002, as an advisory chapter of the Code, to provide guidance as to standards and procedures for the management of vegetation in the vicinity of distribution powerlines. The Chapter became mandatory in October 2007 and has the following objectives:

- to promote public safety in respect of fire hazards;
- to establish a standard of care which should be observed when managing vegetation near distribution powerlines;
- to reduce vegetation related interruptions to electricity supply;
- to encourage the Distribution Network Service Provider (DNSP) to consult with affected persons, seek advice on specifics from the relevant authorities and have regard to any guidelines provided by relevant authorities;
- to balance fire safety, reliability of the electricity system and community costs with conservation, amenity, utility and heritage values in the best interests of the people of Tasmania; and
- to minimise the effect of the management of vegetation around distribution powerlines on the natural environment.

There are currently two licensed DNSPs to which Chapter 8A applies: TasNetworks (mainland Tasmania) and Hydro Electric Corporation (Bass Strait Islands).

### **1.3 Black Saturday Bushfires and Industry Reform**

The context of the proposed code change includes a number of elements.

In 2009, the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission found that failures of electricity assets had been the cause of a number of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. The Commission made a number of recommendations intended to reduce the risks of electricity assets leading to bushfire ignitions in the future.

In August 2010, the Victorian Government established the Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce to consider the implementation of the Commission's recommendations. The Taskforce released a report to the Government in September 2011. The Report offered technical solutions to bushfire risks posed by electrical assets, including options for improving vegetation management.

From 2010-11, the Victorian Government undertook review and reform of the legislation, regulation and associated administrative provisions governing the mitigation of bushfire risks arising from electricity assets. The outcome of this review was summarised by Energy Safe Victoria in its November 2012 White Paper *Review of Statutory Provisions relating to the Mitigation of Bushfire Risks Arising from Electricity Assets*.

Following the bushfires, and the 2010-11 review, significant industry wide change occurred across Victoria, particularly in relation to distribution businesses' bushfire mitigation strategies, management plans, and safety and vegetation management practices.

In 2011-12, Aurora Energy Pty Ltd's distribution business (now part of TasNetworks) also reviewed its bushfire mitigation strategy. The review highlighted the need to re-develop the classification process for fire risk areas relative to the distribution network. These risk areas are currently codified in clause 8A.3.2 of the Code, hence a code change is required should the re-defined fire risk areas be adopted.

### **1.4 The Regulatory Framework and Draft Code Chapters**

Under clause 12.3.2(b) of the Code, the Regulator must decide within 30 days of receiving a code change proposal whether the proposed change will proceed and, if so, whether amendments to the proposal are required. In making that decision, the Regulator may consult with such Licensees and interested parties that it considers appropriate (if any).

The Regulator has consulted with the following parties, for clarification purposes, on the initial proposal:

- TasNetworks;
- the Tasmanian Fire Service;
- the Energy Policy Branch of the Department of State Growth;

- the Electrical Standards and Safety Unit (ESSU) of the Department of Justice; and
- Energy Safe Victoria.

On 30 September 2014, the Regulator decided to proceed with the proposed code change under clause 12.3.3 of the Code.

### **12.3.3 General Code Change Procedure**

*(a) If the Regulator considers that it is necessary or desirable to change the Code (including any change which is submitted to it by a Licensee or an interested party under clause 12.3.2), the Regulator must consult all Licensees and interested parties on the Code change proposal in accordance with the Consultation Guidelines<sup>1</sup>.*

*(b) The Regulator must consider any timely submissions received by the Regulator.*

Following further consultation, on 6 November 2014, the Regulator received a revised proposal from TasNetworks, developed in conjunction with the Tasmanian Fire Service. It is the revised proposal that is the subject of this consultation paper.

Section 2 of this paper provides an overview of the drafted amendments. In drafting the amendments, the Regulator has considered issues raised during its preliminary consultations with interested parties, as well as the revised TasNetworks proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the Regulator's Consultation Guidelines is available on the Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator's website [www.economicregulator.tas.gov.au](http://www.economicregulator.tas.gov.au) .

## 2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED CODE CHANGES

### 2.1 Fire Risk Areas

TasNetworks uses the current Clause 8A.3.2 Fire Hazard Categories (to be renamed Fire Risk Areas) to inform both its cyclic cutting<sup>2</sup> and bushfire mitigation practices. The proposed changes to the Code reflect the interaction between the two cutting practices.

#### 2.1.1 Low and High Fire Risk Areas

Clause 8A.3.2, and the fire hazard categories it mandates, was developed in 1995 by the Tasmanian Fire Service and made mandatory in October 2007 as recommended by the then Code Change Panel. The 1995 categories were modelled using raw vegetation and seasonal climatic conditions to indicate the likelihood of a fire being sustained in a particular area.

The Fire Risk Areas suggested by TasNetworks have been developed using a different method to that currently prescribed in the Code, differentiating between urban and rural areas of Tasmania as defined in TASVEG 3.0<sup>3</sup>:

**Low Fire Risk Area** is an area that is listed as an 'Urban' area in accordance with the TASVEG 3.0 vector of The List online service, produced by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, or as succeeded from time to time.

**High Fire Risk Area** is an area that is not a low fire risk area.

The key change proposed in this regard is to simplify the terminology used in the Code by replacing the terms *Low to Moderate Fire Risk Areas (predominantly urban)* and *High to Very High Fire Risk Areas (predominantly rural)* with those

<sup>2</sup> Cyclic cutting refers to pruning and clearing that the DNSP conducts in accordance with the pruning and clearing cycle prescribed in clause 8A.2.2(d) of the Code.

<sup>3</sup> The TASVEG 3.0 vector is a comprehensive digital map of Tasmania's vegetation produced by the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment. TASVEG is available to the public via [LISTmap](#) and can be requested as a standalone file for use within a Geographic Information System.

proposed above, and linking them directly to urban and rural classifications by definition.

The use of the TASVEG 3.0 urban and rural classifications to define each category has received support from the Tasmanian Fire Service; does not deviate from the objectives of the Chapter; and reflects current practice on mainland Tasmania. In addition, geographical representation of the new Fire Risk Areas would be publically available via the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment's LISTmap website, should each definition be adopted.

The effect of this change would be minimal in practice as urban and rural vegetation management methods have already been adopted by TasNetworks in managing vegetation on mainland Tasmania. As such, TasNetworks notes that there would be no change to its current risk framework in adopting the proposed Fire Risk Areas.

Further, it is noted that the re-defined Fire Risk Areas are equivalent to those that currently exist on the Bass Strait Islands and thus should not require any operational changes for the management of vegetation on the Islands.

### 2.1.2 Bushfire Loss Consequence Areas

TasNetworks' current approach to vegetation management accounts for both regular cyclic cutting and bushfire mitigation cutting:

*TasNetworks vegetation management has two aspects:*

- 1. **regular cyclic cutting** will take place across Tasmania: urban regions will be cut to low risk area specifications and rural regions will be cut to high risk area specifications.*
- 2. during that cutting cycle, **bushfire mitigation cutting** will also take place: after the initial cyclic cut is made to the applicable specification for the area, documentation of overhang will be assessed and documented by a suitably qualified person, and cut where appropriate.*

To reflect the need for a higher standard of vegetation management in bushfire prone areas, TasNetworks proposes to include additional classifications in the Code, specific to bushfire mitigation cutting practices:

**High Bushfire Loss Consequence Area** is an area categorised as *Extreme Loss Consequence* or *Very High Loss Consequence*.

**Extreme Loss Consequence** means the worst 50% of modelled fire starts in terms of damage utilising a fire control authority endorsed bushfire hazard assessment tool.

**Very High Loss Consequence** means the second worst 30% of modelled fire starts in terms of damage utilising a fire control authority endorsed bushfire hazard assessment tool.

TasNetworks suggests that the term *High Bushfire Loss Consequence Area* be included in Clause 8A3.4<sup>4</sup> of the Code to account for its current bushfire mitigation cutting and risk assessment process whereby foliage and limb overhang in areas of very high or extreme bushfire loss consequence is inspected, assessed for risk and managed as necessary.

If the proposal is adopted, this would mean that, in addition to managing vegetation in accordance with the proposed Clause 8A.3.2 Fire Risk Areas, a DNSP would also be required to monitor limb and foliage overhang (as described above) in those areas classified as being of extreme or very high loss consequence.

The Bushfire Loss Consequence Areas proposed by TasNetworks (as above) have been established using the PHEONIX Rapidfire bushfire tool (PHEONIX) which models the consequences of a bushfire start in terms of the likely extent of the damage from the fire and allows for the scenario testing of specific fire events in the Tasmanian context.

PHEONIX modelling has been endorsed by both the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and the Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce and has been employed by distribution businesses operating in the Victorian Electricity Supply Industry since the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires.

The inputs and methodology used by TasNetworks to develop the suggested Bushfire Loss Consequence Areas are further discussed in the TasNetworks proposal.

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<sup>4</sup> Clause 8A.3.4. of the Code relates to the clearance space dimensions applicable for each fire risk area.

The major point of difference between the proposed areas and the current Clause 8A.3.2 Fire Hazard Categories is that the latter is modelled to indicate the likelihood of a fire being sustained in an area. In contrast, the PHOENIX derived areas specifically consider the potential loss caused by a fire starting at a known point near the DNSP's network, on an extreme day of localised climatic predictions (e.g a Total Fire Ban day). The Regulator notes that this approach is one that has been applied in other jurisdictions and is supported by the Tasmanian Fire Service.

The proposed amendments in regards to both the suggested Low and High Fire Risk Areas, and the High Bushfire Loss Consequence Area, are highlighted (in marked-up form) in the attached draft of the amended Chapter 8A.

## **2.2 The Customer (Clauses 8A.4.1 and 8A.4.2)**

Clause 8A.4.2 of the Code exists to mandate a customer obligation indirectly to maintain safe clearances between vegetation on a customer's property and electrical infrastructure providing supply to the customer's electrical installation.

TasNetworks proposes to amend Clause 8A.4.2 to include a reference to the Service and Installation Rules between a customer and the DNSP on mainland Tasmania. While section 42 of the *Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995* provides for a tariff to be set for Bass Strait Island customers, the term 'tariff' is now redundant for customers on mainland Tasmania<sup>5</sup>. The reference to the Service and Installation Rules has been proposed to provide the DNSP on mainland Tasmania with an alternate means of creating a contractual obligation between the customer and the DNSP to maintain safe clearances as stipulated in Clause 8A.4.2.

The draft clause has been further amended to provide clarification as to what constitutes 'safe clearances between vegetation' for the purpose of the clause.

The Regulator also proposes to take the opportunity to simplify clause 8A.4.1, following consultation with the ESSU, and remove the reference to clause 8.6.2(a)(9) in 8A.4.2, which was deleted in an earlier Code change.

The proposed amendments to clauses 8A.4.1 and 8A.4.2 are highlighted (in marked-up form) in the attached draft of the amended Chapter 8A.

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<sup>5</sup> Section 40 of the *Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995* provides for a 'standing offer price' (which replaced the previous fixed 'tariff' on 1 July 2012) offered under a standard retail contract, the terms and conditions of which are standard and set out under the National Energy Retail Law.

## 2.3 Chapter 14 (Glossary)

Adopting the Fire Risk Areas and Bushfire Loss Consequence Categories proposed by TasNetworks, along with the additional changes proposed in the TasNetworks submission, would require amendment to Chapter 8A with consequential amendments to Chapter 14 (Glossary).

Accordingly, the Regulator proposes to adopt the following terms in Chapter 14 of the Code:

**Extreme Loss Consequence** means the worst 50% of modelled fire starts in terms of damage utilising a fire control authority endorsed bushfire hazard assessment tool.

**High Bushfire Loss Consequence Area** is an area categorised as Extreme Loss Consequence or Very High Loss Consequence.

**High Fire Risk Area** is an area that is not a low fire risk area.

**Low Fire Risk Area** is an area that is listed as an 'Urban' area in accordance with the TASVEG 3.0 vector of The List online service, produced by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, or as succeeded from time to time.

**Service and Installation Rules** means the Service and Installation Rules published by a Distribution Network Service Provider.

**TasNetworks** means Tasmanian Networks Pty Ltd ACN 167 357 299

**Very High Loss Consequence** means the second worst 30% of modelled fire starts in terms of damage utilising a fire control authority endorsed bushfire hazard assessment tool.

In addition to adopting the above, the Regulator proposes to remove the following terms from Chapter 14 of the Code (which would be redundant should the proposed amendments be adopted):

**Fire Hazard Rating** a rating assigned by the fire control authority designating propensity for ignition and spread of fire.

**High to Very High Fire Risk Area** an area for which the fire control authority has allocated a fire hazard rating of “high” or “very high”.

**Low to Moderate Fire Risk Area** an area which:

(a) will not be given a fire hazard rating by the fire control authority; or

(b) has been given a fire hazard rating of “low” or “moderate” by the fire control authority.

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# CHAPTER 8A

## DISTRIBUTION POWERLINE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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# CHAPTER 8A                      DISTRIBUTION POWERLINE    VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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## CHAPTER 8A                      DISTRIBUTION POWERLINE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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### 8A.1 INTRODUCTION

#### 8A.1.1 Objectives

Italicised expressions in the Chapter are defined in Chapter 14.

This Chapter has the following objectives:

- to promote public safety in respect of fire hazards;
- to establish a standard of care which should be observed when managing vegetation near *distribution powerlines*;
- to reduce vegetation related interruptions to electricity *supply*;
- to encourage the *Distribution Network Service Provider* to consult with affected persons, seek advice on specifics from the relevant authorities and have regard to any guidelines provided by relevant authorities;
- to balance fire safety, reliability of the electricity system and community costs with *conservation*, amenity, utility and heritage values in the best interests of the people of Tasmania; and
- to minimise the effect of the management of vegetation around *distribution powerlines* on the natural environment.

#### *Note*

~~*Aurora-TasNetworks*~~ is the licensed *Distribution Network Service Provider* on mainland Tasmania and the *Hydro-Electric Corporation* is the licensed *Distribution Network Service Provider* on the *Bass Strait Islands*.

#### 8A.1.2 Application of Chapter

This Chapter applies to any *distribution powerline*.

#### 8A.1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this Chapter is to assist *electricity entities* in the management and the pruning and clearing of vegetation in the vicinity of *distribution powerlines*. To that end, this Chapter sets out:

- the minimum standards and practices for maintaining vegetation clear of *distribution powerlines*;

- who is responsible for maintaining the *clearance space*; and
- the role of the *Distribution Network Service Provider*.

#### **8A.1.4 Review**

This Chapter is to be reviewed by the *Regulator* eighteen months after its commencement.<sup>1</sup>

The *Regulator* will provide a report of that review and propose any *changes* that are considered necessary and appropriate.

## **8A.2 PRINCIPLES OF MAINTAINING CLEARANCE BETWEEN DISTRIBUTION POWERLINES AND VEGETATION**

### **8A.2.1 General**

There are a number of methods of maintaining the *clearance space*. The most common method is pruning and clearing of vegetation. Other methods include:

- using *construction* methods such as underground *electric lines*;
- selecting *distribution powerline* routes which avoid vegetation;
- using engineering solutions, for example, taller poles for low growth vegetation areas;
- planting appropriate vegetation species which will not interfere with *distribution powerlines* even when fully grown;
- informing private landowners as to appropriate vegetation species to be planted under and around *distribution powerlines*; and
- using insulated cables such as *aerial bundled cable* to reduce the *clearance space* required (refer clause 8A.3.3).

Factors determining the most appropriate method of maintaining the *clearance space* include:

- minimisation of the potential risk to the public;
- cost;
- community *conservation* and heritage values, utility, amenity and visual impact;
- negotiation and consultation with *owners* or *occupiers*; and
- the type of vegetation and its growth and regrowth characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 8A commenced in September 2002. The results of the review are contained in *Review of Distribution Powerline Vegetation Management Code, November 2005*.

The nature of the ground conditions, topography, the nature and density of vegetation and climate will cause the cost of each method and any recurrent savings from avoided clearing and pruning to vary significantly from place to place.

It is for the *Distribution Network Service Provider* to determine the most appropriate method of maintaining the *clearance space* (refer clause 8A.5.1). This does not preclude affected persons approaching the *Distribution Network Service Provider* in order to discuss alternatives.

## 8A.2.2 Vegetation Management

Where pruning or clearing of vegetation is necessary, the *Distribution Network Service Provider* should employ effective management procedures. Personnel should be trained and skilled in pruning practices to recognised industry standards, such as Australian Standard AS4373-2007 - Pruning of Amenity Trees.

Correct pruning practices can discourage regrowth towards the *distribution powerline* and reduce:

- the frequency of pruning;
- the likelihood of disease and decay; and
- the risk of vegetation becoming a hazard to the public and the *distribution powerline*

while maintaining the integrity, amenity and utility of the vegetation.

The *Distribution Network Service Provider* should have regard to the principles of prevention of soil erosion, and the preservation of water quality, windbreaks and specific wildlife habitat.

To provide a consistent and measurable approach to pruning or clearing vegetation near *distribution powerlines* and to assist people to understand these concepts, the following practices and classifications apply:

### (a) Clearance Space

The *clearance space* varies with the type of *distribution powerline* installed and the risk of the ignition of fire at that location (refer clauses 8A.3.2 and 8A.3.3). The *clearance space* is designed to provide fire safety in low ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas and ~~high to very high~~ fire risk areas and reliability and continuity of electricity supply. The dimensions of the *clearance space* have been determined following consideration of the effect of adverse environmental and weather conditions (refer clause 8A.3.4).

(b) Regrowth Space

The *regrowth space* required varies with the species of vegetation, the quality of the pruning or clearing, the micro-environment and the *pruning and clearing cycle*. Determining the regrowth rate is a matter of considering the factors involved. It should be assessed with the support of expert knowledge in vegetation management and following consultation with affected persons.

(c) Hazard Space

The *Distribution Network Service Provider* should take appropriate action in relation to trees and limbs in the *hazard space* to ensure the safety and reliability of the *distribution powerline*. The *hazard space* will vary with the species of vegetation and the extent of exposure to adverse weather conditions. The *hazard space* should be determined with reference to these factors and assessed with the support of vegetation management and arboriculture expertise, following consultation with affected persons.

(d) Pruning and Clearing Cycle

The *pruning and clearing cycle* is based on practical factors which include cost, local growing conditions and the anticipated vigour of the regrowth of species involved, coupled with the use of the land, community values and the utility and amenity the vegetation provides to the area. The *pruning and clearing cycle* need not be the same for all areas, but will be determined according to conditions in a particular location.

### 8A.2.3 Suitable Vegetation Species

In some situations, vegetation cannot be pruned to the requirements of this Chapter across successive *pruning and clearing cycles* without destroying the vegetation's character, amenity and utility value or encouraging vigorous regrowth. In the longer term this could cause the vegetation to become unstable, unhealthy and a hazard to the public and the *distribution powerline*. This vegetation should be removed where judged appropriate following assessment of the vegetation's *conservation* value and appropriate consultation (see clause 8A.5.3).

As a general rule, species with a mature height greater than 3.5 metres should not be planted or nurtured under *distribution powerlines*.

Saplings whose mature height will infringe the *clearance space* are best removed at an early stage of their growth to minimise cost and disruption to the area in the future.

Planting of suitable species by *owners* and *occupiers* will remove the potential risk to *distribution powerlines* and the need for costly recurrent pruning or clearing as well as retaining the amenity and utility value of vegetation to the public and environment. On *public land*, planting of suitable native species is preferred.

### 8A.2.4 Important Vegetation

Locations recognised by relevant authorities or bodies as containing 'important vegetation' require special attention.

For the purposes of this Chapter ‘important vegetation’ includes:

- botanically, historically or culturally important vegetation;
- vegetation of outstanding aesthetic value;
- vegetation of ecological significance;
- vegetation referred to in the National Trust Tree Register; and
- the habitat of threatened species.

Before commencement of pruning and clearing the *Distribution Network Service Provider* should identify where the maintenance of the *clearance space*, the *regrowth space* and the *hazard space* may be detrimental to important vegetation. The *Distribution Network Service Provider* should seek advice from the relevant authorities, for example the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, and Water and Environment and local government, as well as land care and community groups as advised by the relevant authorities, to identify ‘important vegetation’.

Alternative *distribution powerline* routes or *construction* methods may help to preserve ‘important vegetation’. The manner in which this may be done needs to be decided in consultation between the *Distribution Network Service Provider* and the person or body responsible for the vegetation. This should result in an agreement on the most practical management arrangements and conditions that may apply.

### **8A.2.5 Important Locations**

The *Distribution Network Service Provider* should consult with the relevant authorities on the management of ‘important locations’. For the purposes of this Chapter ‘important locations’ contain the following:

- sites of historically or culturally important remnants or artefacts;
- sites of historically or culturally important events;
- areas of geo-conservation significance as identified in the Tasmanian Geo-Conservation database;
- sites of outstanding aesthetic value or landscape or streetscape values; or
- sites of ecological significance.

Before commencement of pruning and clearing the *Distribution Network Service Provider* should identify where the maintenance of the *clearance space*, the *regrowth space* and the *hazard space* may be detrimental to an important location. The *Distribution Network Service Provider* should seek advice from the relevant authorities, for example the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, and Water and Environment and local government, as well as community groups as advised by the relevant authorities, to identify ‘important locations’.

Alternative *distribution powerline* routes, *construction* methods or pruning and clearing methods may help to preserve ‘important locations’. The manner in which this may be done needs to be decided in consultation between the *Distribution Network Service Provider* and the person or body responsible for the location. This should result in an agreement on the most practical management arrangements and conditions that may apply.

### 8A.2.6 Vegetation Management Plans and Practices

In undertaking vegetation management around powerlines a *Distribution Network Service Provider* should take into account vegetation management plans of third parties and vegetation management practices and projects applying to the area(s) immediately surrounding the *distribution powerline*, for example the Tasmanian Roadside Vegetation Management System.

### 8A.2.7 Weed Management

This Chapter must be interpreted and applied in conjunction with the Weed Management Act 1999.

#### Note

Clause 8A.5.3(d) provides that, when proposed pruning or clearing will change from the established practice for a location, the *Distribution Network Service Provider* should make reasonable endeavours to negotiate with the *owner* of the land satisfactory arrangements for avoiding the transfer of noxious *weeds* and diseases.

## 8A.3 DISTRIBUTION POWERLINE CLEARANCE STANDARDS

### 8A.3.1 General

The principal determinants of the dimensions of the *clearance space* are protection of the public from fire start potential and ensuring continuity and reliability of *supply*. Accordingly, the *clearance space* will vary depending on the ~~fire hazard category~~ *Bushfire Loss Consequence Category* of the area in which the *distribution powerline* is situated and factors associated with the type of *distribution powerline* installed.

### 8A.3.2 Fire ~~Hazard Categories~~ Risk Areas

The risk of fire starting and spreading varies throughout Tasmania. To establish the *clearance space* required, Tasmania has been divided into two *categories* in which different *clearance space* dimensions apply:

- *low* ~~to moderate~~ *fire risk areas* (predominantly urban); and
- *high* ~~to very high~~ *fire risk areas* (predominantly rural).

(Refer to Tables 1, 2 and 3).

At the boundary of fire risk areas, the *clearance space* requirements of the ~~high to very high fire risk area~~ may be applied to the ~~low to moderate~~ fire risk area for a distance of 100 metres.

The *Distribution Network Service Provider* should seek advice from the *fire control authority* as to the ~~fire hazard rating of the~~ suitability of any changes to the application of these categories to an area within which the *Distribution Network Service Provider* proposes to undertake vegetation management activity.

### 8A.3.3 Factors Affecting Dimensions of Distribution Powerline Clearance

The dimensions of the *clearance space* are also dependent on factors associated with the type of *distribution powerline* installed and include:

(a) *Distribution powerline* voltage -

the voltage level of the *distribution powerline* influences the potential for electric discharge. The higher the voltage the greater the potential and hence the need for a greater *clearance space*.

(b) *Distribution powerline* type -

insulating *distribution powerline* conductors reduces the risk of electric discharge. Using *aerial bundled cable* or other insulated conductors reduces the necessary dimensions of the *clearance space*.

(c) Span length (distance between poles) -

As the span length increases, the added weight of the *distribution powerline* conductors causes an increase in *distribution powerline* sag. *Distribution powerline* conductors can sway with the wind, therefore all dimensions of the *clearance space* must be greater as the span length increases.

(d) *Conductor size* -

The size of a *distribution powerline* conductor affects its weight and therefore the amount that the conductor will sag. *Distribution powerline* conductors can sway with the wind therefore dimensions of the *clearance space* needs to increase as the size of the conductor increases.

#### Note

(1) Sag in very long spans can be more than 10 metres.

(2) For further information on sag and sway of *distribution powerline* conductors, refer to Appendix A.

(e) Distance along the *distribution powerline* conductors from the pole -

Along the *distribution powerline* conductors the greatest sag occurs midway between the supporting poles (on level ground). Therefore the dimensions of the

*clearance space* should be greater in the centre region of the span than near the pole (refer Figure 1).

#### Note

For uneven ground the greater sag will not necessarily occur at the mid-point of the span. Maximum *clearance space* dimensions are to apply at the point of maximum sag.

- (f) Temperature of the *distribution powerline* conductors -

Increases in the temperature of *distribution powerline* conductors, caused by weather and the amount of electricity being carried, increases the sag of the conductors. These factors are in a state of continual change, so an allowance is made in the dimensions of the *clearance space* for the temperature of *distribution powerline* conductors.

#### 8A.3.4 Clearance Space Dimensions

- (a) The dimensions of the *clearance space* in low ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas and high ~~to very high~~ fire risk areas for high voltage and low voltage distribution powerlines constructed with aerial bundled cable and insulated service cable are those prescribed in Table 1. For low ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas only, the clearance space for aerial bundled cable at the pole as specified in column 1 of Table 1 may be reduced where tree trunks and limbs near the aerial bundled cable present no risk of abrasion. For low ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas only, the clearance space between aerial bundled cable and foliage may also be reduced to allow foliage, which has insufficient strength to abrade the cable for the duration of the pruning and clearing cycle, to remain in contact with the aerial bundled cable.
- (b) The vertical dimensions of the *clearance space* for low ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas and high ~~to very high~~ fire risk areas for *distribution powerlines* other than those constructed with *aerial bundled cable* and *insulated service cable* and for the operating voltages given are those prescribed in Table 2.
- (c) The horizontal dimensions of the *clearance space* for low ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas and high ~~to very high~~ fire risk areas for *distribution powerlines* other than those constructed with *aerial bundled cable* and *insulated service cable* and for the operating voltages given are those prescribed in Table 3.

#### Notes Relating to the Tables

1. All dimensions given in the Tables are from a *distribution powerline* conductor in still air and account for the sag and sway of the conductor. For slender vegetation species and other unique situations, additional allowances may be necessary.
2. In low ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas allowing limbs and foliage to grow over the *distribution powerline* from adjacent vegetation is ~~strongly discouraged~~, but permitted. Healthy and stable limbs may remain as shown in Figure 3 provided

the tree does not readily provide access to the distribution powerline ~~and the voltage of the distribution powerline does not exceed 22,000 volts.~~

3. In ~~low to moderate~~ high -fire risk areas where the voltage of the distribution powerline is equal to or exceeds ~~22-11~~ 000 volts ~~and in high to very high fire risk areas~~ foliage overhang of the *distribution powerline* from adjacent vegetation is strongly discouraged.

Foliage overhang of the distribution powerline may only occur where such cases have been assessed by a suitably trained and qualified person as safe.

Within High Bushfire Loss Consequence Areas, a suitably trained and qualified person shall additionally inspect overhanging limbs and foliage and where hazards are identified a risk assessment shall be undertaken and recorded. This risk assessment shall form the basis of the action necessary to manage or remove the hazard. Figure 4 shows the ideal situation for *high* ~~to very high~~ fire risk areas.

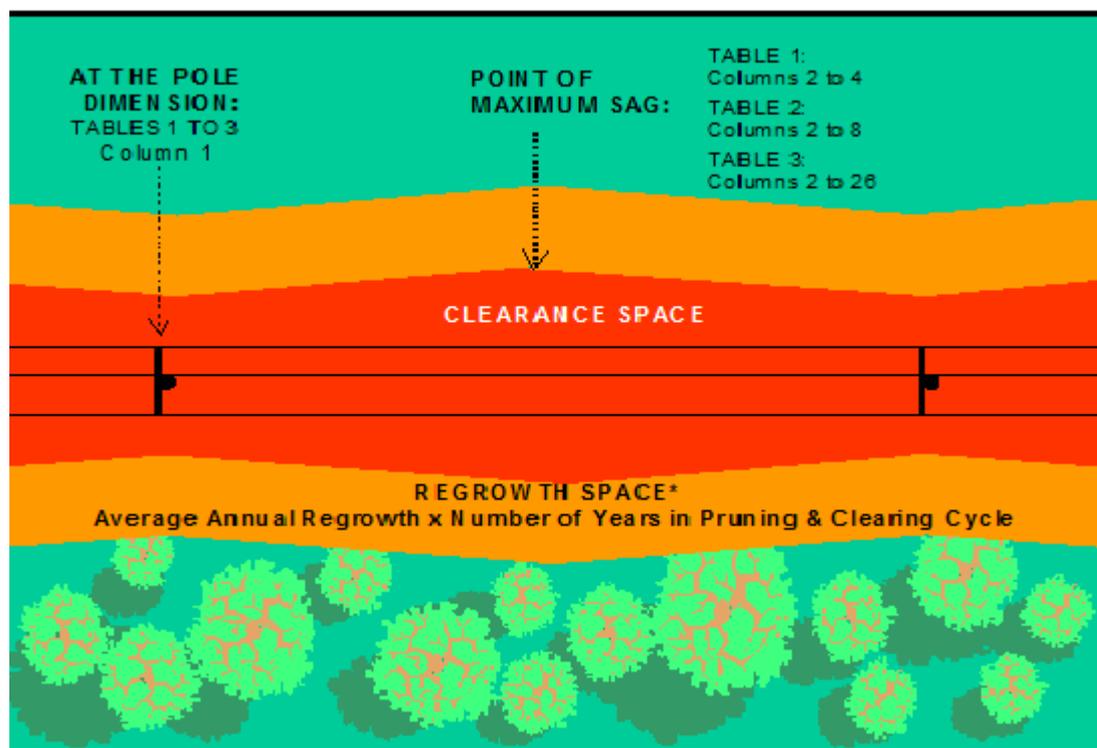
4. For *aerial bundled cable* and *insulated service cable* the clearance space can generally be in the form of a circle in *low* ~~to moderate~~ fire risk areas and *high* ~~to very high~~ fire risk areas.
5. The classifications in each Table are subject, by agreement between both parties, to any clearance areas negotiated by the *owner* with the *Distribution Network Service Provider* prior to the introduction of this Chapter.
6. The figures in column 1 in each Table are clearance dimensions at a power pole.
7. The figures in columns 2 to 4 in Table 1, columns 2 to 8 in Table 2 and columns 2 to 26 in Table 3 are clearance dimensions for powerline spans of the lengths indicated.

**Figure 1: Low and High Fire Risk Areas**

Showing the Clearance Space and the Regrowth Space.

Applies to all types of overhead distribution powerlines.

The distribution powerline shown represents a bare conductor type.



\*Regrowth Space shown is indicative only. It will vary with species, soil conditions and other factors. See Clause 8A.2.

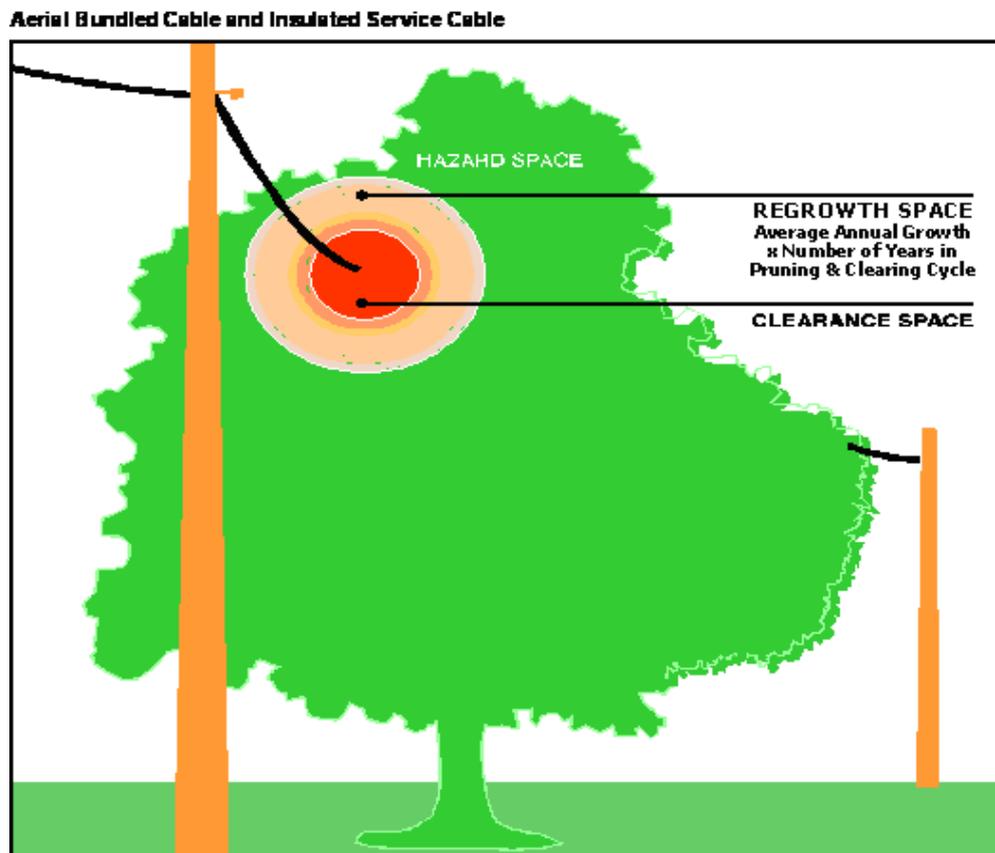
**Table 1: Low ~~to Moderate~~ and ~~High to Very~~ High Fire Risk Areas**

Dimensions of Clearance Space from a Still Distribution Cable - Aerial Bundled Cable and Insulated Service Cable (high voltage and low voltage)

Note: Table 1 is illustrated in Figure 2.

Type of Powerline	Clearance Spaces/Point of Maximum Sag			
	At Pole	Away from Pole		
	Column 1 All Spans	Column 2 Span <40m	Column 3 Span 40-70m	Column 4 Span 70-100m
	In all directions			
Aerial bundled cable	0.3m	0.5m	0.5m	0.7m
Insulated service cable	0.5m	0.6m	1.0m	-

**Figure 2: Low and High Fire Risk Areas**



**Table 2: Low ~~to Moderate~~ and High ~~to Very~~ High Fire Risk Areas**

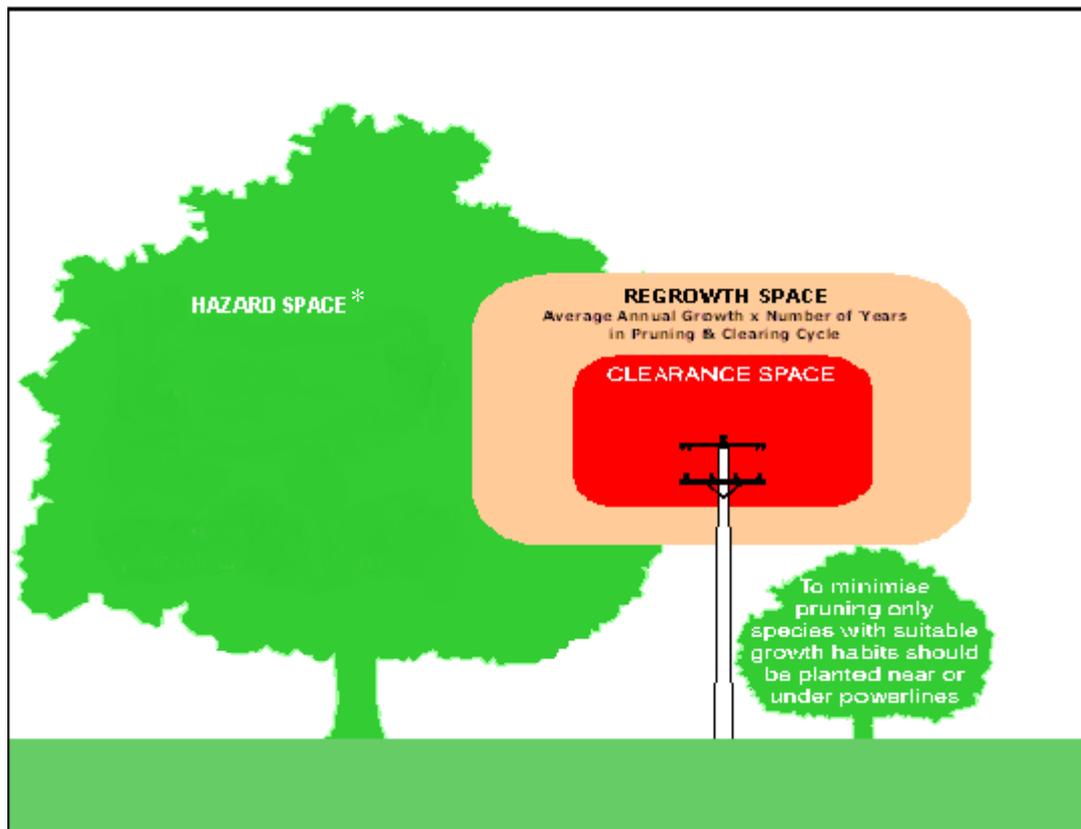
Vertical dimensions of the *Clearance Space* below a still Distribution Powerline Conductor – Other than *Aerial Bundled Cable and Insulated Service Cable*.

Type of Powerline and Conductor	Clearance Spaces / Mid Span							
	At Pole	Span Length						
	Column 1 All spans	Column 2 Span <40m	Column 3 Span <60m	Column 4 Span <80m	Column 5 Span <100m	Column 6 Span <125m	Column 7 Span <150m	Column 8 Span >150m
Bare LV <sup>2</sup> : All	1.0m	1.0m	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	2.0m
Bare HV: Small <sup>3</sup>	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	2.0m	2.0m	2.0m	2.0m	2.5m
Medium	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	2.0m	2.0m	2.5m	2.5m	2.5m
Large	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	2.0m	2.5m	2.5m	2.5m	2.5m

<sup>2</sup> LV means low voltage, HV means high voltage.

<sup>3</sup> See definition of *conductor size* in Chapter 14 for explanation of ‘Small’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Large’.

**Figure 3: Low Fire Risk Areas**



\*Sound limbs in the *hazard space* may grow over the *clearance space* for powerlines up to 11 kV provided the tree does not provide ready access to the powerline. Trees shall not be removed without prior consultation and agreement.

**Table 3: Low ~~to Moderate~~ and ~~High to Very~~ High Fire Risk Areas**

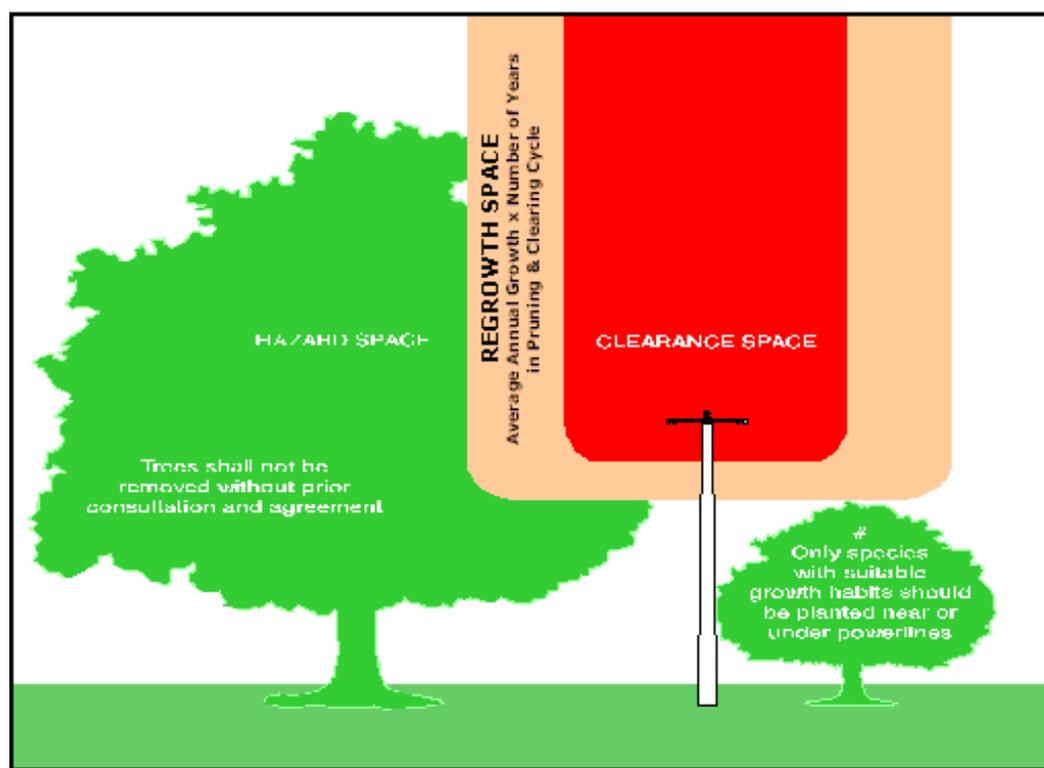
**Horizontal dimensions of the Clearance Space from a still Distribution Powerline Conductor – Other than Aerial Bundled Cable and Insulated Service Cable**

Type of Powerline and Conductor	Clearance Spaces / Mid Span								
	At Pole	Span Length							
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8	Column 9
	All spans	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span
		<40m	<60m	<80m	<100m	<125m	<150m	<175m	<200m
<b>Bare LV<sup>4</sup>:</b>									
<b>All</b>	1.0m	1.0m	1.5m	1.5m	2.5m	3.0m	3.5m		
<b>Bare HV:</b>									
<b>Small<sup>5</sup></b>	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	2.0m	2.0m	2.0m	2.0m	2.0m	2.5m
<b>Medium</b>	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	2.0m	2.0m	2.5m	3.0m	4.0m	4.5m
<b>Large</b>	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	2.0m	2.5m	3.0m	3.5m	4.5m	5.5m
Type of Powerline and Conductor	Clearance Spaces / Mid Span								
	Span Length								
	Column 10	Column 11	Column 12	Column 13	Column 14	Column 15	Column 16	Column 17	Column 18
	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span
	<225m	<250m	<275m	<300m	<325m	<350m	<375m	<400m	<425m
<b>Bare HV:</b>									
<b>Small</b>	3.0m	3.5m	4.0m	4.5m	4.5m	5.0m	5.5m	6.5m	7.0m
<b>Medium</b>	5.5m	6.5m	7.5m	9.0m	10.5m	11.5m	13.5m	15.0m	16.5m
<b>Large</b>	6.5m	8.0m	9.0m	10.5m	12.5m	14.0m	16.0m	18.0m	20.0m
Type of Powerline and Conductor	Clearance Spaces / Mid Span								
	Span Length								
	Column 19	Column 20	Column 21	Column 22	Column 23	Column 24	Column 25	Column 26	
	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	Span	
	<450m	<475m	<500m	<525m	<550m	<575m	<600m	>600m	
<b>Bare HV:</b>									
<b>Small</b>	7.5m	8.5m	9.0m	10.0m	11.0m	11.5m	12.5m	15.0m	
<b>Medium</b>	18.5m	20.5m	22.5m	25.0m	27.0m	29.5m	32.0m	35.0m	
<b>Large</b>	22.0m	24.5m	27.0m	29.5m	32.0m	35.0m	38.0m	45.0m	

<sup>4</sup> LV means low voltage, HV means high voltage.

<sup>5</sup> See definition of *conductor size* in Chapter 14 for explanation of ‘Small’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Large’.

**Figure 4: High Fire Risk Areas**



## 8A.4 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 8A.4.1 The Distribution Network Service Provider

The *Distribution Network Service Provider* is responsible for keeping vegetation clear of *distribution powerlines* and service lines:

- (a) in *safety and operational areas*;
- (b) on its *wayleaves* and easements; and
- ~~(c) in places where vegetation growing on private land may grow into the service line crossing the land for the purpose of supplying electricity to the contiguous (adjoining) land; and~~

~~(d)~~(c) in accordance with the requirements of this Chapter.

### 8A.4.2 The Customer

~~Clause 8.6.2(a)(9) of this Code requires that a~~ A *Distribution Network Service Provider* must ensure that the *tariff* or service and installation rules applicable to a *Customer* or an *individual contract* between a *Customer* and a *Distribution Network Service Provider* provides that a *Customer* must, at its own expense, maintain safe clearances between vegetation on the *Customer's* property and *electrical infrastructure* providing supply to the *Customer's* electrical installation.

For the purpose of this clause 8A.4.2, safe clearances between vegetation on the Customer's property and electrical infrastructure providing supply to the Customer's electrical installation must be consistent with the relevant clearance space prescribed in clause 8A.3.4 with the exception that Note 3 does not apply.

## **8A.5 ROLE OF THE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK SERVICE PROVIDER**

### **8A.5.1 Maintenance of the Clearance Space**

*A Distribution Network Service Provider should:*

- (a) implement a *management plan* that specifies an inspection cycle and/or *pruning and clearing cycle* which is designed to achieve, under normal growth conditions, the relevant *clearance space* prescribed in clause 8A.3.4. The *management plan* must include the Distribution Network Service Provider's risk assessment approach;
- (b) decide which method to adopt to ensure that the *clearance space* remains free of vegetation taking account of the potential risk to the public, *conservation* and other values and avoided costs associated with the alternatives;
- (c) if the method adopted is pruning or clearing, determine the *regrowth space*, *hazard space* and the *pruning and clearing cycle*;

#### **Notes**

- 1. Options available and matters for consideration when evaluating alternative methods are discussed in clause 8A.2.1.
  - 2. While the *Distribution Network Service Provider* should decide how to maintain the *clearance space* this does not preclude persons from negotiating conditions under which other solutions may be used.
  - 3. Factors influencing *regrowth space*, *hazard space* and the *pruning and clearing cycle* are discussed in clause 8A.2.2.
- (d) ensure that the pruning or clearing is done responsibly; and
  - (e) give special attention to how the *clearance space* is maintained at important locations (see clause 8A.2.5) and the sites of important vegetation (see clause 8A.2.4).

### 8A.5.2 Assistance to the Public with Vegetation Matters

A *Distribution Network Service Provider* should:

- (a) assist the public so that pruning or clearing activities near *distribution powerlines* can be undertaken safely; and

#### Note

This may require a *Distribution Network Service Provider* to de-energise *distribution powerlines* or do preliminary pruning to enable the clearance of vegetation safely.

- (b) assist the community, when requested, in:
  - (i) setting safe limits of approach to *distribution powerlines* for pruning or clearing activities;
  - (ii) de-energising *distribution powerlines* to provide safe access;
  - (iii) obtaining advice on vegetation species and their growth habits; and
  - (iv) finding information on suitable vegetation species for planting near *distribution powerlines*; and
- (c) inform affected persons on request of the *Distribution Network Service Provider's* processes for considering alternative arrangements to avoid or reduce the need for pruning or clearing and the conditions that will apply to such arrangements and provide a publicised contact point within the organisation on vegetation management issues.

### 8A.5.3 Notification, Consultation and Negotiation

A *Distribution Network Service Provider* should:

- (a) notify the *occupiers* of land, giving reasonable notice, before starting programmed pruning or clearing which will not involve changes to established practice. Notices should be informative, explaining why compliance with this Chapter is necessary and stating the proposed time of the pruning and clearing. Where no one is in actual occupation of the land, notices to *owners* may be published in locally distributed newspapers;
- (b) consult with the *owner* of land when the proposed pruning or clearing will change from the established practice for that location and notify the *occupiers* of the land where the *owner* and the *occupiers* are not the same person;
- (c) when the proposed pruning or clearing will change from the established practice for that location, provide to the *owner* or, if not practical, the *occupiers*, a simple written explanation of the proposed method and extent of pruning or clearing which may include details of:

- (i) the use of chemicals;
- (ii) disposal of debris resulting from pruning or clearing;
- (iii) avoiding transfer of noxious *weeds* and diseases; or
- (iv) implementing measures to prevent bushfires from starting.

#### **Note**

When using chemicals due care should be observed to preserve public safety and quality assurance schemes such as Farm Quality Assurance Programs.

- (d) when the proposed pruning or clearing will change from the established practice for that location, make reasonable endeavours to negotiate with the *owner* satisfactory arrangements in relation to the matters covered in clause 8A.5.3(c); and
- (e) when the proposed pruning or clearing will change from the established practice for that location, consult with the *occupiers* or, if not practical, the *owner* of land, to make satisfactory arrangements for access to the *Distribution Network Service Provider's* assets.

#### **8A.5.4 Emergency Clearing**

In emergency situations, the *Distribution Network Service Provider* may remove vegetation which poses an immediate risk in accordance with powers under the Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995.

Under emergency circumstances, pruning may be undertaken without consultation, but the *Distribution Network Service Provider* should notify the *owner* or *occupiers* as soon as practicable after the removal of the vegetation.

#### **8A.5.5 Disputes**

Disputes with *owners* or *occupiers* may arise from decisions made by a *Distribution Network Service Provider* in carrying out vegetation management activities. The *Distribution Network Service Provider* should endeavour to resolve any dispute in accordance with the *Distribution Network Service Provider's* documented dispute resolution process.

A *Distribution Network Service Provider* should make its dispute resolution processes available to interested parties as a public document.

If this process fails to resolve the dispute, the matter may be referred to the *Ombudsman*.

Notwithstanding the nature of the dispute and the need to resolve the dispute in an amicable manner, the responsibility of the *Distribution Network Service Provider* to maintain the *clearance space* at all times cannot be compromised.

### **8A.5.6 Training**

A *Distribution Network Service Provider* should ensure that any of its employees undertaking vegetation management in the vicinity of its powerlines, and any contractors it engages to carry out vegetation management, are appropriately trained and competent for that task.

Such training should cover the following areas:

- plant and *weed* identification;
- arboriculture;
- disposal of vegetation waste;
- precautions to avoid spread of *weeds* and plant diseases; and
- safe working practices near powerlines.

A *Distribution Network Service Provider* should seek advice from the relevant authorities as to appropriate training for vegetation management, for example, a government approved vocational and educational training organisation.



## APPENDIX A - SAG AND SWAY IN DISTRIBUTION POWERLINES

### Sag

The sag of a *distribution powerline* conductor can vary greatly during the day.

The amount of sag in any span is dependent on the:

- span length;
- *distribution powerline* conductor material;
- *distribution powerline* conductor tension;
- *distribution powerline* conductor size; and
- temperature.

The temperature of a *distribution powerline* conductor can vary dramatically in a space of half an hour resulting in a large increase of sag. This change in temperature can be caused by the ambient air temperature, solar radiation heating the conductor, or the electrical *load* on the *distribution powerline* conductor. The variation of the *distribution powerline* conductor's temperature is not normally detectable by a person observing the conductor and can result in unsafe *distribution powerline* clearances.

Under normal operating conditions, variations in the sag of a *distribution powerline* conductor in a span of less than 50 metres can be as great as 1 metre. In longer spans the variation of sag can be as great as 2 metres and in very long spans the actual sag may be more than 10 metres.

### Sway

All *distribution powerline* conductors sway. In other words, *distribution powerline* conductors swing from side to side. The sway is often caused by wind passing over the *distribution powerline* conductor or by objects accidentally bumping the conductor or conductor supports. *Distribution powerline* conductors can sway greatly in light winds, which can set up resonant vibrations in the *distribution powerline*.

The possible amount of sway in any span is also dependent on the sag in that span of the *distribution powerline* at the time.

### Further Details

To obtain details on the actual amount of sag and sway for *distribution powerlines*, contact the relevant *Distribution Network Service Provider* in your area.