



Chair: Malcolm Hackett OAM

Presenter: Dr Justin Leonard

Justin Leonard

A 10/50 rule is allowed in a BMO, and a 10/30 rule is allowed in a BPA. The 10 refers to the distance, in metres, that you can clear trees for the purposes of bushfire safety from the boundary of your house. And the 50 refers to the clearing of shrubs and surface scrubby fuels as a function of distance from your house in metres. So, you can just see that where the fire may arrive with far more severity, you need a greater clearance of undergrowth under those trees to present a lesser threat to your structure.

Now, those clearance options alone do not remove all the threats that your house may face in a bushfire, but it starts to reduce the intensity of fire arrival and helps that approach a more manageable level.

Chair

What defines a shrub in the 10/50 rule? Is there a maximum diameter size of the trunk? What actually is the definition?

Justin Leonard

That's a good question. I don't have a scientific answer for you, and that would be straight to the regulations in the T's and C's to see what's allowed.

Chair

I have an idea about what a shrub is but they can get pretty big. Now, I've got a question here from someone who says that they're in a BMO. What's the starting point for measuring the 50m?

Justin Leonard

I'd suggest they use the closer distance to the bush between your eave and your wall. But I would certainly also check the T's and C's of the regulations before you head off and start cutting away.

Chair

I think your slides were pretty convincing in terms of the dangers of tree-fall. And there's a question here about being in a BMO with 40m Manna Gums outside the 10m limit. So, within striking distance of the house. Where does that leave a land-holder?

Justin

At high risk of tree strike. I was actually speaking to a person in another jurisdiction, I think it Shoalhaven in New South Wales. And they have an alternative measure, which is a 45-degree rule. So, if you imagine looking from the base of your structure out on a 45-degree trajectory, your tree clearance opportunities are governed by whether that tree falls within that 45-degree incline. So, that obviously deals with a 40m Manna Gum at 10m. I think it's worth thinking and possibly

pitching alternate enhancements to a 10/30 or a 10/50 rule to account for those scenarios. I certainly feel for that circumstance.

Chair

And I guess in later webinars, we'll be able to quiz some of the council people about how you would deal with that particular issue.

Justin Leonard

And it's certainly encouraged. The next thing you can do is harvest reports and whatnot to carefully assess those trees to see if they're in a particular state that would make them vulnerable in the event of a fire. So are they already scarred? Do they have weak aspects to their branches and tree trunks that would put them at risk of being the ones that can fall? So, an informed arborist can actually help to identify where the highest risk trees are.

Chair

And if someone's surrounded by unmanaged bush and they've got slopes down to the north and the northwest, how effective is that 50m scrub removal when you've got that much bush and it's downhill to the north and the northwest?

Justin Leonard

The particular issue there is what is the slope under the vegetation beyond 50m or 30m - beyond the clearance point. The slope under the vegetation beyond that point is going to be the slope that supports or enhances the fire spread up to your property.

And, as a general rule, the fire will move with twice the speed and therefore twice the severity up a slope for every 10 degrees increase in slope up towards your property, and conversely 10 degrees slower and less severe 10 degrees down slope. It's not so much the slope between the edge of the bush and you but what's beyond. And that's a nuance where the 10/50 and the 10/30 rule isn't sensitive to slope, and I would be very careful and cautious about other measures and being particularly focused on house design and other measures when you're facing a significant upslope fire-approach.