

**Consultation on the review of the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations
2003**

Submitter details:

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Submission:

Introduction

1. Recreation Aotearoa is a professional association and industry body responsible for providing leadership, advocacy and professional development opportunities for those involved in the broader recreation sector. We work at an agency, industry and professional level to build capability, develop partnerships, and equip individuals and organisations with the skills they need to deliver high quality recreation experiences that engage participants.
2. Recreation Aotearoa's membership includes recreation policy makers, territorial local authorities, voluntary organisations, regional sports trusts, outdoor recreation businesses, and others involved in the delivery of recreation throughout New Zealand. Many of our members are employed to create, manage, and maintain parks and open spaces, across New Zealand.
3. Our role is to champion high-quality recreation for the benefit of New Zealand.
4. Our vision is that New Zealand will have a strong recreation industry that meets the needs of current and future participants, so that through recreation, New Zealanders are active, healthy, and connected.

General Comments:

5. Recreation Aotearoa is acutely aware of the important role that trees play in places and spaces in which New Zealanders undertake active recreation. Trees are an integral part of New Zealand's natural heritage and an essential component of our recreational landscape.
6. Trees are a living asset. They provide shade, shelter, and aesthetic beauty to our outdoor spaces, making them more inviting and enjoyable for people to use. In addition, trees also offer numerous health benefits, including improving air quality, reducing noise pollution, and providing a natural source of stress relief. These benefits are particularly important in urban areas, where access to green spaces can be limited, and the stress of city life can take a toll on one's mental and physical health.
7. Trees also play a critical role in maintaining New Zealand's biodiversity. They provide habitat and food for a wide range of native fauna, including birds, insects, and mammals, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. Trees also help to protect our waterways and prevent erosion, which is essential for the health of our rivers, lakes, and oceans.

Commented [KS1]: Open with "Trees are a living asset..." which tautoko's feedback already received by MBIE

8. Perhaps most importantly, trees are an essential part of New Zealand's cultural identity. They are deeply woven into the fabric of our society and hold significant spiritual and cultural meaning for Māori.
9. A [recent report released by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment](#) outlined the vital importance of trees, particularly in urban green spaces. It noted that in recent decades that urban green space has been declining, with most of this loss occurring on private residential land.
10. Local Territorial Authorities have found it very difficult to increase tree cover in public green spaces, in a way that would mitigate against the loss of trees in private backyards and gardens.
11. At the same time, we recognize the importance of electricity lines and other utility infrastructure in maintaining essential services, supporting economic growth and being resilient to severe weather events. However, the co-location of trees and electricity lines can create challenges that need to be carefully managed to ensure that both the needs of the utility sector and the needs of recreation are balanced.
12. The proposals around the rights and responsibilities of vegetation owners and works owners represent an important step towards achieving this balance.

Questions:

1: Do you agree with our proposed approach? If not, why not?

13. In principle, Recreation Aotearoa supports the proposed approach to the management of vegetation risks outside the GLZ. Recreation Aotearoa submits that risk assessments should only be undertaken by qualified and certified arboriculturists or urban foresters. We recommend that national standards for tree protection and maintenance should be implemented across all the electricity distribution businesses (EDBs) to ensure the protection of tree assets. We would also pursue an extension to "Impact factors to consider" where the asset lifecycle of the infrastructure is taken into consideration and more robust renewals processes are explored (under ground as an example).

2: Do you agree with our assessment of the potential benefits and downsides of the risk-based notice power?

14. Recreation Aotearoa cautions that where Local territorial Authorities are responsible for the trees in question, their internal processes and approval systems may take up to 90 days to bring about the decision and resourcing to comply with the notice.

Commented [KS2]: Trying to highlight the difficulties that LA and RA have when going back to committees. Can be time consuming, between 1-2 months between meetings and can be challenged by local residents.

3: How long should a tree owner have to remove a tree after receiving a treefall hazard notice?

15. Recreation Aotearoa submits that a timeframe of 40 working days, would be reasonable expectation of a private citizen to remove a tree.

4: Are specific access arrangements required to carry out risk assessments?

16. Recreation Aotearoa accepts the reality that EDBs have to be able to enter private property to conduct risk assessments. However, we submit that a reasonable notice period must be given and reasonable conditions of entry must be adhered to. These conditions might include, for example, an agreed point and time of entry or compliance with site specific health and safety procedures).5: Is a transition period required for implementation?

17. Recreation Aotearoa submits that as this is a process change an implementation period of 90 days is reasonable.

6: Do you have any other comments on the common elements proposed across our options?

18. No.

7. Do you agree with our assessment of the potential benefits and downsides of the alternative risk-based notice power (likelihood OR impact)?

19. Yes.

8. Do you agree with our assessment of the potential benefits and downsides of the alternative mandatory assessment zone option?

20. Yes.

9. Do you have any comments on further matters that should be taken into consideration when designing amendments to the Regulations that reduce the risks of treefall outages, particularly during severe weather events, without imposing unreasonable costs on stakeholders and consumers?

21. No.