

## What is the Free Tree Initiative?

Every year for the next three years, the NSW Government will provide a free tree for new homes approved under complying development in Western Sydney. Up to 5,000 trees will be provided each year; meaning a total of 15,000 will be made available over the life of the initiative. The Free Tree Initiative will help families in Western Sydney to establish a garden for their newly built home. This will improve the appearance of local neighbourhoods, lower energy bills by providing shade and reduced heat load, and providing habitat for native birds.

## What is the NSW Greenfield Housing Code?

The Government is committed to speeding up the delivery of new homes in greenfield areas to meet the needs of NSW's growing population and improve housing affordability. The proposed Greenfield Housing Code has been released for public comment.

It contains simplified and tailored standards to allow housing in greenfield areas to be carried out under the fast-tracked complying development approval pathway. Complying development is a much faster way for building approvals. It reduces costs and delays for homeowners, with savings of up to \$15,000 for new homes.

Homes in new release areas could be approved under complying development in 20 days compared to 71 days on average for a development application. As well as making it easier and cheaper for people to build homes that suit their lifestyles and incomes, we also want to make sure they benefit from a high-quality local environment.

The Greenfield Housing Code includes complying development standards such as building heights, setbacks and landscaping that have been tailored to new land release areas. Under the proposed Code, a tree is required to be planted in the front and rear yard of each new home approved under a complying development. Further information on the proposed Greenfield Housing Code is available on the Department's website.

## Why is the Government giving away trees?

Over the next 20 years, Sydney will require an additional 725,000 new homes to keep pace with demand. Many of these homes will be built in new land release (greenfield) areas. One of the emerging challenges in meeting this demand is to make sure that communities in new release areas benefit from good local amenity. Just like existing established suburbs, we want new areas to have trees and gardens that make them attractive and great places to live.

The landscaping requirements in the new Greenfield Housing Code will ensure new release areas are leafier and more environmentally friendly. New homes will need new trees planted. This will help to increase canopy coverage and reduce urban heat.

The 'Free Tree Initiative' is a way for the Government to kick-start the greening of new release areas. It will help families in Western Sydney establish a garden for their newly built home. This will improve the appearance of local neighbourhoods, reduce energy bills by providing shade and providing habitat for native birds.

## Will every new homeowner get a tree?

Over the next three years, the 'Free Tree Initiative' will provide a free tree for up to 5,000 Western Sydney homeowners each year who have their new dwelling approved under a complying development certificate. Over the three years, that means up to 15,000 trees will be provided. The

initiative focuses on Western Sydney because it has the strongest growth, and is where an investment in new trees will have greatest benefit.

The 'Free Tree Initiative' will be available in the following local government areas:

- Blacktown
- Camden
- Campbelltown
- Hawkesbury
- Liverpool
- Penrith
- The Hills
- Wollondilly.

## How will the giveaway be funded and how much will it cost?

The 'Free Tree Initiative' will be funded through the Metropolitan Greenspace Program. This Program aims to improve open spaces, parks, bushland, natural areas, waterway corridors and treelined streetscapes in a connected network.

The initiative is expected to cost \$200,000 a year for three years – approximately \$600,000 in total.

## When will people be able to get their tree?

The 'Free Tree Initiative' is planned to be up and running later this year. Information on how people can obtain their tree will be provided at that time.

## Will having more trees really make a difference in Western Sydney?

Yes. A recent project by Blacktown City Council ("Cool Streets") demonstrated the benefits of trees in tackling the urban heat island effect. That includes savings home electricity bills. Other research undertaken in Blacktown shows that even small increases in tree canopy can have positive benefits to property values.

## Planting a tree sounds great – but why isn't the Government doing more?

Making new release areas attractive places to live, work and play requires a range of actions. The 'Free Tree Initiative' for new homes is one important way to help families establish a garden and tackle the urban heat island effect.

The Department also intends to develop master planning and subdivision guidelines for greenfield areas to ensure they are designed from the beginning to create sustainable places for new communities.

These will ensure that the provision of connected green areas, including parks, creeks, cycleways and walking paths, is an upfront part of the new release area planning process, not an afterthought. Further information is available in the Background Paper – A Review of Complying Development in Greenfield Areas, which was on public exhibition in June 2017