

Tree Pruning Assessment and Ground Operations

Business Name:		ABN:
Business Address:		
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	



RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			Elimination Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	Substitution Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	Engineering Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
4A	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
3H	Review and approve additional controls for the task parts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
2M	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
1L	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
Catastrophic	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
Major	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
Moderate	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
Minor	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
Insignificant	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. Governance, Legal Compliance and WHS Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a documented WHS management system covering arboricultural and tree pruning operations Failure to identify and comply with WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulation and relevant Codes of Practice (e.g. Managing the Risk of Falls, Hazardous Manual Tasks, Managing the Risk of Plant) No clear due diligence processes by Officers to ensure safe management of tree pruning and ground operations Inadequate consultation with workers, contractors and PCBUs sharing the work environment (e.g. councils, utilities, principal contractors) Poor integration of tree risk assessment outcomes into organisational risk registers and decision-making No formal review of WHS performance data specific to tree work (incidents, near misses, non-conformances) 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and maintain a certified or aligned WHS management system (e.g. ISO 45001) that specifically addresses tree pruning assessment and ground operations Develop and maintain a WHS legal register capturing applicable WHS legislation, Australian Standards and industry guidance for arboriculture and ensure annual review Establish and document due diligence processes including regular WHS reporting, site safety walks and review of tree operations non-conformances Create a consultation procedure requiring worker HSR involvement and stakeholder consultation prior to significant changes to tree work methods or equipment Integrate tree-related risk assessments and complex tree risk findings into the organisational risk register with defined review cycles Conduct periodic internal WHS audits and management reviews focused on arboricultural activities, with corrective action tracking to closure 	2M
2. Competency, Licensing and Training for Arboricultural Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers undertaking complex pollarding, crown reduction and complex pruning tasks without appropriate nationally recognised qualifications Inadequate competency in complex tree risk assessment methodologies and aerial eucalypt identification leading to misclassification of hazardous trees Lack of recognition of prior learning and competency verification for external contractors and labour hire workers Insufficient training in specific techniques such as trunk injection, root pruning, target pruning, treating tree wounds and removal of infected trees Inadequate verification of licences for plant operation (e.g. EWPs, chainsaws, 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a competency framework aligned to Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels for arboriculture, specifying minimum units for each task type (e.g. complex tree risk assessments, veteran tree work) Require and document verification of competency (VOC) for all operators undertaking specialised tasks including trunk injection treatments, root pruning, aerial rescue and tree risk assessment Maintain a training and licence register with expiry monitoring and automatic reminders for high risk work licences, EWP operation, traffic control and first aid Engage only arborists with minimum AQF Level 3 (or higher for complex assessments) for tasks such as identifying hazardous, veteran and historic trees and designing pruning specifications Schedule formal refresher training at defined intervals (e.g. every 2–3 years) for critical skills including chainsaw operations, emergency response, complex rigging and tree risk assessment methodologies Prequalify contractors through a documented process that verifies qualifications, training records, insurance, WHS systems and relevant experience in comparable arboricultural works 	2M

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	<p>stump grinders) and high risk work where applicable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No refresher training program leading to skill fade, outdated practices and poor understanding of current standards and ecology considerations 			
3. Tree Risk Assessment, Planning and Work Authorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate or inconsistent tree risk assessment processes for hazardous, veteran, historic and infected trees Failure to properly identify target zones, occupancy patterns and consequences of failure during assessments No standard method for aerial eucalypt identification leading to inappropriate pruning or removal decisions Lack of clear criteria and procedures for determining when coppicing, pollarding, crown reduction, root pruning or removal is appropriate Poor quality documentation of assessments, leading to ambiguous work instructions and uncontrolled variations on site Absence of peer review or escalation pathways for complex tree risk assessments with high potential for catastrophic failure 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a standardised tree risk assessment procedure using recognised frameworks (e.g. QTRA, TRAQ or equivalent) adapted to organisational needs and Australian conditions Require written tree assessment reports for higher risk activities such as complex tree risk assessments, veteran/historic tree works and removal of infected or structurally compromised trees Develop decision-making guidelines for selecting pruning systems (coppicing, pollarding, crown reduction, formative and target pruning) based on species, age, condition, ecological value and site use Standard identification and recording of targets, occupancy levels and potential consequences for each assessed tree, integrating results into work orders and job safety plans Establish an escalation and peer review process for high-consequence or contentious decisions, including review by a senior AQF Level 5 arborist for complex cases Use a digital tree asset and risk management system to store assessments, photographs, GIS locations and work histories, ensuring traceability and version control 	2M
4. Environmental and Site Context Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to adequately assess ground conditions (e.g. unstable soil around roots, concealed services, contaminated land) before tree works Inadequate identification of above-ground and underground utilities impacting root pruning, trunk injection and removal of infected trees No systematic consideration of fauna habitat, protected species or biosecurity constraints impacting pruning and removal decisions 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient planning for work near traffic, schools, public parks, hospitals or other sensitive receptors • Inadequate assessment of slope, access, watercourses and drainage impacting machine stability and ground operations • Lack of systematic approach to weather conditions (wind, heat, lightning, bushfire risk) influencing aerial and ground-based activities 		[REDACTED]	
5. Contractor, Subcontractor and Labour Hire Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of contractors for tree pruning and removal without adequate WHS system verification • Poor control over subcontracting chains leading to unqualified or under-resourced crews on site • Inadequate communication of client and principal contractor WHS requirements to arboricultural contractors • No standardised induction for external crews covering site-specific risks, complex operations and emergency arrangements • Lack of performance monitoring of contractors, including failure to review incident records and non-conformances • Commercial pressure and scoped contracts encouraging unsafe shortcuts or inadequate resourcing 	4	[REDACTED]	2M
6. Plant, Equipment and Tool Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate procurement standards for chainsaws, chippers, stump grinders, EWP, trucks and injection equipment used in tree works • Lack of regular inspections, preventative maintenance and tagging for critical plant • Use of non-standard or incompatible components in rigging systems and pruning tools 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly managed calibration and maintenance of trunk injection systems and chemical dosing equipment Absence of pre-start and post-use inspection systems for plant used in aerial pruning and ground operations Uncontrolled modification of plant (e.g. guarding removal, non-approved attachments) to suit specific pruning tasks 		[REDACTED]	
7. Work at Height and Aerial Access Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate organisational procedures for selection between climbing, EWP use or crane-assisted methods for pruning and removal Failure to enforce competency, rescue planning and equipment inspection for climbers and EWP operators Poor system for monitoring anchor point suitability and load management in complex tree canopies Insufficient controls for aerial works during crown reduction, target pruning, removal of infected trees, live traffic and public access Lack of documented aerial rescue plans and practice for all climbers engaged in higher risk works Inadequate inspection, management and retirement criteria for climbing ropes, harnesses and fall protection equipment 		[REDACTED]	2M
8. Traffic, Public Interface and Site Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient planning and control of interactions between tree operations and live traffic (vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians) Inadequate exclusion zones and public access controls around tree pruning, felling and chipping activities Poor integration of traffic management requirements into job planning and resourcing 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of coordination with local councils, road authorities or principal contractors about lane closures and detours Inconsistent signage, lighting and barrier systems, especially for works near schools, shopping areas or public events No procedure for managing unplanned public interference or aggressive behaviour at work sites 		[REDACTED]	
9. Hazardous Substances, Biological Agents and Tree Diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor management of chemicals used in trunk injection treatments, stump treatments and tree wound care products Lack of documented procedures for handling, mixing, application and disposal of pesticides, fungicides or growth regulators Inadequate control of biological risks associated with infected trees, fungal pathogens, sap, dusts and decaying material Failure to manage biosecurity risks when moving between sites with known tree pests or diseases Insufficient storage, labelling and segregation of hazardous substances in vehicles, depots and at temporary sites Inadequate worker health monitoring for repeated exposure to chemicals, allergens and biological agents from tree material 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
10. Manual Tasks, Ergonomics and Fatigue Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systemic reliance on manual handling for moving logs, branches, chippers and equipment without mechanical aids Lack of job design to manage repetitive pruning, overhead work and awkward postures for ground crews and climbers Inadequate fatigue management, especially during extended emergency 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> storm response or large-scale tree removal programs Poor rostering and break scheduling during periods of high demand or adverse weather operations Limited consideration of individual capability, pre-existing injuries and restricted duties in task allocation No formal process for reporting, early intervention and managing musculoskeletal discomfort among tree care handlers 		[REDACTED]	
11. Communication, Consultation and Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate pre-job briefings leading to misunderstanding of tree risk assessments, pruning objectives and site constraints Poor communication between aerial and ground crews, especially during complex rigging, crown reduction or removal activities Lack of reliable communication systems in remote or heavily vegetated areas impacting emergency response Insufficient worker consultation on the practicality and effectiveness of established procedures and controls Fragmented information management leading to loss of critical records of tree assessments, permits, incidents and near misses 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
12. Emergency Preparedness, Rescue and Incident Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of formal emergency response plans for incidents involving climbers, falling branches, plant entrapment or public injury Inadequate rescue capability and equipment on site for aerial incidents during pruning, crown reduction or removal No systematic process for incident notification, investigation and corrective action specific to tree works 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient coordination with emergency services in remote or difficult-access locations Poor post-incident support and return-to-work planning for injured workers involved in traumatic tree-related events 		[REDACTED]	
13. Ecological, Heritage and Community Value Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to appropriately identify veteran, historic or culturally significant trees prior to pruning or removal Inadequate consideration of long-term tree health and structure when undertaking coppicing, pollarding, formative or crown reduction pruning Poor integration of arboricultural and ecological objectives, leading to unnecessary habitat loss or degradation Community dissatisfaction or legal challenge due to perceived inappropriate treatment or removal of high-value trees Lack of guidance on acceptable wound treatment, pruning cuts and retention strategies for veteran and habitat trees 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
14. WHS Monitoring, Audit and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No structured program for monitoring the effectiveness of WHS controls in tree pruning and ground operations Limited analysis of incident, near miss and defect data to identify systemic issues and trends Audit programs not tailored to the specific risks associated with aerial arboriculture and complex tree risk assessments Failure to close out corrective actions and improvement recommendations arising from incidents or audits Inadequate worker involvement in reviewing and refining practical control measures 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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SAMPLE

EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

Queensland & Australian Capital Territory

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Victoria

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

New South Wales

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

Western Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2020
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

Northern Territory

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Safe Work Australia Links

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

South Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

Model Codes of Practice

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

Tasmania

Work Health and Safety Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.