

# Lines drawn in power battle

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BUSHFIRE safety measures could mean trees are drastically pruned, following a state-wide review.

Bayside is classified as a low bushfire-risk area but an Energy Safe Victoria report released in June aims to increase precautions around electricity sources to reduce the chances of fire. The report aims to identify changes that can be made to reduce the risks of bushfire ignition from powerlines.

The review is based on a Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission finding that major fires during the 2009 Black Saturday disaster were exacerbated by electrical faults.

Low-voltage urban powerlines up to 70 metres must have a two-metre clearance. Powerlines longer than 70 metres require a 2.5-metre clearance. The clearance distance may vary according to whether an area is low risk or high risk.

Urban areas are often considered low risk, but the ESV review may alter the automatic classification.

The Municipal Association of Victoria said the report was significant because it could mean councils hand over tree-clearance responsibilities to electricity distributors.

MAV chief executive officer Rob Spence said the strict criteria for clearance around powerlines had led to reports of trees being hacked in some municipalities.

Bayside has not had any cases of uncontained fires, according to a council meeting on July 17.

Mr Spence said Bayside suburbs may not be affected by bushfires, but there were parkland areas where vegetation was abundant and this could be a concern.

Beaumaris Conservation Society wants Bayside protected from a proposed bushfire-risk upgrade that could lead to severe tree-pruning and over-clearing.

Society representative Heather Stewart said if the decisions on tree-clearing were left to energy companies, preservation would not be a priority.

Bayside council has until mid-August to respond to the review.



**GREEN PROTECTORS:** Beaumaris Conservation Society's Geoffrey Goode, Ron Morris, Adrian Cerbasi and Greg Mier want to save the trees