

Penny Sharpe

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy,
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage

**Jenny Aitchison**

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

Media Release**Tree change: Mitchell Highway soon to be greener between Dubbo and Narromine**

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Property owners along the Mitchell Highway upgrade between Dubbo and Narromine will be offered native trees or shrubs to plant as part of environmental compensatory measures for the project.

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison said the NSW Government's \$32 million upgrade of the highway, which involves crucial safety and drainage upgrades such as audio tactile line marking and the construction of three new overtaking lanes to reduce travel times and improve safety, is progressing well.

"The safety upgrades started in February 2021 and the entire project is on track to be completed by the end of this year," Ms Aitchison said.

"From the earliest stages of the project development, Transport for NSW has focused on minimising and balancing the environmental impacts and, while some trees needed to be removed, local landowners now have the opportunity to plant native seedlings on their property.

"We are offering landowners along the project length the opportunity to accept up to 40 native plants to locate on their property.

"This is part of our broader commitment to the local environment and ensuring that losses from the removal of vegetation to enable the crucial safety improvements, including widening of the road and building new overtaking lanes, are balanced."

A variety of eight endemic tree species are available, including Angaphora, Eucalyptus and Casuarina varieties, these are colloquially known as rough-barked apple, river sheoak, fuzzy box and bullock.

In terms of shrubs, there will be seven choices in the Acacia, Melaleuca and Callistemon families such as river bottlebrush, pink honey myrtle and silver cassia.

Minister for the Environment Penny Sharpe welcomed the tree giveaway initiative, which she said will encourage native flora to flourish following the highway upgrade.

"Advice was sought from regional experts at Local Land Services who provided the recommended species of plants for this area," Ms Sharpe said.

“In addition to the community tree giveaway program, Transport for NSW will undertake further plantings in areas that will support the existing native plant communities over the long term. This includes the road corridor, travelling stock routes, nature reserves and areas close to the river.

All the trees and shrubs for this initiative have been sourced from local nurseries in Narromine and Dubbo. As well as supporting existing patches of native trees, the additional plantings will also help to improve wildlife corridors.”

Once landowners have registered their interest, Transport for NSW will organise suitable pick up of the trees and shrubs. Landowners can register their interest by contacting the project team on 1800 167 499 or via email western.projects@transport.nsw.gov.au while trees are available.

More information on the Mitchell Highway, Dubbo to Narromine upgrade can be found at <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/mitchell-highway-dubbo-to-narromine-upgrade>.