

Section 1:

#1 "When I walk through Ridgeview Park these days, the sun feels different. It presses down harder, sharper, almost angry. The dappled shade that once danced on the footpaths has faded, and with it, the gentle sound of rustling leaves that used to feel like nature whispering in your ear. Greenhollow—once one of the greenest corners of our city—is losing its trees."

Strengths: You create a strong emotional connection through sensory details that help readers feel the loss. Your use of personification with the sun feeling "angry" effectively conveys the emotional impact.

Weak transition between personal observation and factual statement → While your opening paragraph beautifully establishes the emotional tone, the shift from personal experience to the statement about Greenhollow losing trees feels abrupt. The connection between your personal observations and the broader issue could be more clearly bridged.

Exemplar: ***When I walk through Ridgeview Park these days, the sun feels different—harder, sharper, almost angry. The dappled shade that once danced on the footpaths has faded, and with it, the gentle sounds of rustling leaves. These changes reflect a troubling reality: Greenhollow—once one of the greenest corners of our city—is rapidly losing its trees.***

#2 "Some developers argue that growth is necessary and that tree removal is just part of progress. But progress doesn't have to mean destruction. 'We can design smarter,' says local architect Jenna Lin. 'It's entirely possible to build homes around trees instead of over them. In fact, developments that keep greenery tend to be more desirable and better for long-term value.'"

Strengths: You effectively present a counter-argument and then challenge it with expert opinion. The quote from the architect provides practical solutions rather than just criticising.

Limited development of alternative approaches → You introduce the important concept of building around trees rather than removing them, but don't explore specific examples or methods. Adding more detail about successful tree-preservation approaches would strengthen this argument and make it more persuasive.

Exemplar: ***"We can design smarter," says local architect Jenna Lin. "Developers in Greenhollow could use techniques like suspended foundations that minimise root damage, or incorporate existing trees as natural features in courtyards. These approaches have worked in suburbs like Westfield, where property values increased by 15% when mature trees were preserved."***

#3 "The fight to save Greenhollow's trees isn't just environmental—it's emotional. It's about the places we played as kids, the trees we sat under to read, and the shade we walked in on hot summer days. When we lose trees, we lose more than nature—we lose part of ourselves."

Strengths: You powerfully connect environmental concerns with personal identity and memory. The repetition of "it's" and "we lose" creates a strong rhythmic emphasis.

Missed opportunity for community connection → While you effectively highlight the emotional connection to trees, you could strengthen this section by connecting individual memories to shared community identity and values. This would help readers see tree preservation as a community responsibility rather than just personal sentiment.

Exemplar: ***The fight to save Greenhollow's trees isn't just environmental—it's about preserving our shared community story. These trees mark where generations of families have gathered for picnics, where community celebrations have been held for decades, and where newcomers first experience what makes Greenhollow special. When we lose trees, we don't just lose shade—we lose the living landmarks that connect us to each other and to our suburb's history.***

■ Your piece effectively raises awareness about an important environmental issue in Greenhollow. The statistics about tree loss and temperature increases add credibility to your argument. However, you could make your writing more impactful by addressing the economic benefits of tree preservation more directly. For example, you could mention how property values increase in leafy suburbs or how trees reduce energy costs by providing shade. Also, your article would benefit from including specific actions the council could take, such as implementing a "one tree removed, two planted" policy or creating tree protection zones. You might consider adding more voices from the community—perhaps a local business owner who benefits from tree-lined streets, or a healthcare worker who sees the health impacts of reduced green space. Try connecting the tree loss more explicitly to other issues residents care about, like property values or community pride. Finally, consider ending with a more specific call to action that gives readers clear next steps.

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**Score: 44/50**

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Section 2:

The Silent Fall of Greenhollow's Giants By Ayaan Talwar

#1 When I walk through Ridgeview Park these days, the sun feels different. It presses down harder, sharper, almost angry. The dappled shade that once danced on the footpaths has faded, and with it, the gentle sound of rustling leaves that used to feel like nature whispering in your ear. Greenhollow—once one of the greenest corners of our city—is losing its trees.

And we're not talking about a couple of backyard shrubs. We're talking about tall, old eucalypts and paperbarks that have stood for decades, holding up ecosystems and memories alike.

In the last two years alone, Greenhollow has lost over 12% of its urban tree canopy. This startling figure comes from the 2024 Greenhollow Urban Canopy Survey, and it's not just a statistic—it's a warning. As new apartment blocks rise and driveways widen, the leafy giants that gave our suburb its name are falling fast. If something doesn't change soon, Greenhollow could become just hollow—missing the green that made it special.

Dr. Lydia Kerr, an environmental scientist at the University of South Coast, explains the danger: "When mature native trees are cut down, it takes decades to replace what's lost—if it's even replaced at all. We're talking about a loss of biodiversity, carbon storage, and natural cooling. Trees are not decoration. They're essential infrastructure."

The consequences are already obvious. Last summer, Greenhollow experienced a record number of 'urban heat days,' with footpath temperatures reaching up to 52°C. That heat doesn't just feel uncomfortable—it's dangerous. And it's a direct result of having fewer trees to cool the streets.

But it's not just heat. Trees soak up rainwater during storms, helping prevent flash flooding. They host native wildlife, from buzzing bees to sleepy ringtail possums. They even improve mental health—studies show that people living near trees are less stressed and more connected to their community. Take them away, and we all feel the gap.

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Community voices are rising too. Local parent and volunteer, Marcus Dean, helped organise the recent Ridgeview Park planting day. "We had families out with gloves and shovels, planting tiny saplings that could one day be the next generation of shade trees. It was hopeful. But we need more than feel-good weekends—we need policy."

That's why residents are now calling on Greenhollow Council to take action. Stronger protections for mature trees, incentives for homeowners to keep green cover, and clearer rules for developers. We also need education—signs in parks, workshops in schools, and simple ways for people to report illegal removals. Change starts with awareness.

Of course, not everyone is on board. A few property owners argue that native trees are messy, block sunlight, or drop branches. These concerns are real, but they can be managed with proper pruning and thoughtful landscaping. What can't be managed is a suburb that's lost its identity to concrete.

#3 The fight to save Greenhollow's trees isn't just environmental—it's emotional. It's about the places we played as kids, the trees we sat under to read, and the shade we walked in on hot summer days. When we lose trees, we lose more than nature—we lose part of ourselves.

So what can we do? Speak up. Support tree-friendly policies. Join a planting group. Ask questions when a development goes up. Protect that old gumtree in your yard.

Because once a tree is gone, it doesn't grow back in time for the next generation. And the soul of a place, like Greenhollow, depends on the roots we protect today.