

Staff Only

Strathbogie Shire Council

Tree Management Policy

November 2023



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Responsible Officer	Director Sustainable Infrastructure

PART 1 POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction for the planting and continued management of trees located on Council managed land, streets, roads, reserves and public open space.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Council is responsible for over 15,000 that are located in Council managed roadsides, streets, parks and open spaces.

Council's green infrastructure including its trees, is highly valued by the community and contributes greatly to the amenity of the built environment within the Shire, enhancing liveability, landscape character and biodiversity.

Trees are also widely recognised for their contribution to reducing the impacts of climate change, improving water conservation and for their shade which can significantly reduce daytime temperatures. It is acknowledged that despite their benefits, the presence of trees in public areas can create a degree of risk to people, property and services through loss of limbs or from total tree failure.

Tree management comes at a considerable cost in terms of plantings and maintenance, and can have significant impacts on infrastructure including drainage, construction projects, roads and footpaths.

3. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

The Strathbogie Shire Tree Management Plan: Urban and Rural Strategies (the Plan) will provide the framework for the maintenance, renewal and risk management of all tree assets growing on Council owned and managed land. This includes trees within designated roads and other reserves in Strathbogie Shire (the Shire).

This Plan will document the management strategies that Strathbogie Shire Council has in place to ensure the longevity and quality of trees within the Shire's urban environments, as well as the risk management framework that will be applied to mitigate risk to the community as much as is reasonable and practicable.

The Plan will document inspection intervals and response times are identified as part of our risk management framework, which includes:

- A robust risk rating framework and methodology for tree assessment and hazards which then link into maintenance and inspection programs
- Maintenance scheduling

Inspection timeframes and requirements, including a rolling five-year program of regular condition and hazards inspections.

3.1 Urban Trees

Strathbogie Shire will undertake proactive inspection, assessment, and action with respect to the trees within its urban areas including recreational and public spaces to mitigate the risk to the community through loss of limbs or from total failure which can result in property damage, injury or loss of life.

Whilst both tree pruning and removal may be a last resort, the safety of the public takes priority and risk must be reduced to a level that is reasonable and consistent. Trees may not be

removed unless approved by a Council arborist or relevant manager with reference to the relevant legislation and exemptions.

All tree works (including pruning, removal and replacement at end of life) carried out by Council will be prioritised based on several factors such as risk, benefit to the community and procurement efficiency. Works in any one year will be determined by the funding available for either capital works or ongoing maintenance.

Due to the specialised nature of tree works, only trained Council staff and or approved contractors are to undertake any physical works on Council trees.

All tree pruning is to be completed in accordance with AS 4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees as well as per the requirement of Electrical Line Clearing via Energy Safe Victoria.

3.2 Rural Trees

Rural areas begin at the 80km/h (or 100km/h if there is no 80km/h) speed zone signs on roads leading out of Urban areas. In the rural areas, if a tree from the road reserve, or from a private property falls or leans into the road maintenance envelope, Council may act in the interests of public safety to clear all or part of the tree. However, Council has no responsibility or liability for any tree outside of the road maintenance envelope as defined in Strathbogrie Shire Road Management Plan.

Any fallen or unstable trees or limbs (greater than 300mm diameter) removed from the road maintenance envelope may be relocated to the road reserve outside of the road maintenance envelope for biodiversity and habitat.

Should infrastructure damage be attributed to the roots of a Council tree within the road maintenance envelope, an appropriate remedial solution will be sought.

If such trees fall onto private fences or across private driveways, it is the owner's responsibility to remove them.

3.3 Risk Assessment

Trees have an inherent risk which must be managed effectively. The risk associated with the trees may be a combination of the health and/or structure of the tree and the potential targets within the drop zone of the tree. Council has a duty of care to reduce the level of risk to the public and potential financial burden on ratepayers. Council must also balance this risk against the need to retain and maintain healthy trees and canopy cover for the benefit of the local ecosystem and global environment.

A formal risk assessment of all situations where trees exist needs to be undertaken to accurately identify the risks, determine appropriate actions and assign priorities. Risk assessments/potential should be the overriding factor in determining priority for works and allocating resources.

To effectively identify and manage risks Council will amongst other considerations as detailed in the Tree Management Plan: Urban and Rural Strategies:

- Implement a formal risk assessment program in general conformity with the process set out in AS/NZS 31000:2009 be undertaken on the tree asset group
- Adopt tree management practices and procedures as laid out in AS/NZS 31000:2009
- Adopt the use of the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment system (QTRA) which quantifies three components of the tree failure risk:

- Target
- Impact potential, and
- Probability of failure.

The product of these component probabilities is referred to as the 'Risk of Significant Harm'.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Adherence to the policy will be overseen by the Director Sustainable Infrastructure.

Role	Responsibilities
Officers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager Assets • Manager Operations • Coordinator Projects and Works (Trees) • Other officers as identified 	Apply the policy and plan to ensure that Councils tree assets are managed appropriately.

5. DEFINITIONS

Open Space	Refers to land that is publicly accessible and provided for community benefit.
Reserve	Includes bushland, parks, gardens, reserves, playgrounds, ovals, and other areas such as water retention locations.
Road	Means a public or private street, road or thoroughfare to which public access is available on a continuous or substantially continuous basis to vehicles or pedestrians or both and includes a bridge, viaduct or subway, or an alley, laneway or walkway.
Roadside	Means any land that is within the boundaries of a road (other than the shoulders of the road) which is not a roadway or a pathway; includes the land on which any vehicle crossing or pathway which connects from a roadway or pathway on a road to other land has been constructed. (Example : Any nature strip ,forest , grassland or landscaped area within the road reserve would be roadside).
Street Tree	Means a tree located within an urban area that has at least a half of its base located within a road verge/road reserve and less than a half in private property and/or that is located on a road reserve within the 60 kms or less speed limit zones.
Tree	Means a woody plant more than five (5) m tall (at maturity), usually with a single stem.

6. RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

The following Council, State, regional and national plans and policies are relevant to this policy

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Road Management Act 2004 (VIC)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (VIC)*
- *Flora and Fauna Act 1988*

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992*
- *Heritage Act 1995*
- *Electricity Safety Act 1998*
- Electric Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015 (and 2020 update)
- *Rail Safety Act 2006*
- *Fences Act 1968*

7. POLICY REVIEW

Council may review this policy at any time and at least two years from the date of adoption. The first scheduled date for review will be 12 months from its date of adoption.

8. CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006 AND THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT 2010

The Council acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values that include freedom, respect, equality and dignity.