

OFFICIAL

Strathbogie Shire Council

Significant Tree Policy

October 2025



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Significant Tree Policy

Document ID:	SSCEDOC-43802981-431
Effective Date:	21 October 2025
Last Review:	New
Current Review:	September 2025
Date Adopted by Council:	21 October 2025
Next Scheduled Review Date:	September 2027
Responsible Officer:	Director Sustainable Infrastructure

PART 1: POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This policy aims to provide guidance on identification and protection of trees which have aesthetic, biological, community, cultural and/or historical significance within the Strathbogie Shire. Only trees on Council owned or managed lands are within the scope of this policy.

Significant trees are recognised by Council as valuable. These trees provide crucial environmental and ecological benefits including preserving biodiversity, protecting habitat for wildlife, and climate regulation by mitigating urban heat, storing carbon and improving air quality. Trees enhance the visual appeal and character of streetscapes and public spaces.

Significant trees can become a focal point for education, conservation efforts, and community pride. Some trees are linked to historical events, people or periods. Iconic trees can be a local landmark, contributing to community identity and sense of place. And some trees may hold a spiritual or cultural importance to First Nations communities.

A Significant Tree Policy and accompanying register provide an important framework to guide development and planning decisions. By identifying and recognising trees of environmental, cultural, and community value, the policy ensures that planning outcomes appropriately consider and minimise impacts on these significant natural assets. This approach supports balanced development while protecting the Shire's unique landscape, character and heritage. Additionally, by documenting these trees, conservation and protection efforts can be more effectively targeted to preserve important species and ecosystems.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Strathbogie Shire Council is committed to protecting significant trees within the Shire from the adverse effects of development or vandalism. This policy serves as a framework for evaluating and adding significant trees into a Significant Tree Register.

Protecting our significant trees helps Council to achieve one of the key priorities of Strathbogie Shire Council which is to minimise harmful impacts on our natural environment and reverse biodiversity decline. Additionally, this policy outlines how the Significant Tree Register will be maintained and made available to the public.

The development of a Significant Tree Register is an action in the Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2027.

3. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy shall only apply to trees located on council-owned or managed land within the Strathbogie Shire, including road reserves and recreational reserves.

This policy will not apply to trees that grow on privately-owned lands.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
Director Sustainable Infrastructure	Review and maintain the policy

5. SIGNIFICANT TREE DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy, a significant tree is a tree on Council owned or managed land that meets one or more of the following criteria.

A significant tree is defined as:

- Any tree of exceptional aesthetic quality
- Any tree notable for its height, trunk diameter, or canopy spread
- Any tree that is particularly old or venerable
- Any tree that plays a critical role in the landscape, streetscape, or townscape, including remnant vegetation and landmark trees
- Any tree linked to a notable public figure or cultural group
- Any tree commemorating an important historical event
- Any tree that is rare in the area or belongs to a rare species or variety, including endangered species
- Any tree exhibiting unusual growth forms or physical characteristics, including unique pruning styles
- Any tree of horticultural or genetic value that could serve as a source of propagating stock
- Any tree that is part of a recognized historic garden, park, or town.

These criteria are outlined in the checklist titled “Criteria – Significant Trees”.

6. SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER

A register of all identified Significant Trees will be available on Council's website.

All decisions regarding the inclusion or omission of trees in the Significant Tree Register, in accordance with the criteria, will be made by Council's Tree Project Officer and Arborist.

Members of the public, including Council staff, may submit a request for a tree to be assessed for inclusion in the Significant Tree Register, provided the tree is located on land owned or managed by Council.

7. SIGNIFICANT TREE PROTECTION

This Policy interacts with various existing state, regional and local laws and regulations, which must be considered in Council's decision-making process. In particular, state policies and legislation shall take precedence over this Policy, including, but not limited to

- *Environmental Protection Act 2017*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Strathbogie Planning Scheme*

As a Council asset, all significant trees will be managed in accordance with Council's Tree Management Policy and provided with additional care and protections when required and practicable.

In alignment with Strathbogie Shire Council Local Law Number 2, significant trees will be safeguarded against damage and vandalism. Specifically, Section 8.1 of the Local Law states:

"8.1 A person on Council land must not: (a) damage or interfere with that Council land, including any trees or vegetation located on it."

8. MAINTENANCE OF THE REGISTER

The Significant Tree Register will be maintained by Council's Tree Project Officer or Arborist and will be made available to the public via Council's GIS mapping system, *Pozi Public*.

The register will be updated on a regular basis and as needed.

9. RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

- Native Vegetation Act 1991
- Tree Management Policy, Strathbogie Shire Council 2022
- Tree Management Plan, Strathbogie Shire Council
- Road Management Plan, Strathbogie Shire Council 2021
- Open Space Plan, Strathbogie Shire Council 2014-2024
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Strathbogie Planning Scheme
- Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2027

10. POLICY REVIEW

Council may review this policy at any time and at least two years from the date of adoption.

Minor amendments to the policy may be authorised by the CEO at any time where such changes do not alter the substance of the policy (e.g. a change to the name of a related document, or a change in legislation).

11. HUMAN RIGHTS

Strathbogie Shire Council is dedicated to upholding the principles of human rights as outlined in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic). The Human Rights Checklist has been completed to ensure that this policy aligns with the Council's commitment to human rights principles.