



DRAFT TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

COUNCIL POLICY	
Doc ID:	495550
Effective Date:	TBA
Last Review:	March 2018
Current Review:	TBA
Adopted by Council:	TBA
Next Review Date:	TBA
Responsible Officer	Manager Assets

POLICY STATEMENT:

Strathbogie's trees are of immense environmental and aesthetical value to the Shire and its residents. Trees brighten up streets, increase civic pride, provide habitat for wildlife, act as the Shire's lungs and also help to reduce the rising temperatures caused by climate change.

Strathbogie Shire recognises that trees are a vital part of the shire's urban and rural areas, underpinning the character of the Shire and its natural ecosystems. It also recognises the expectation of the public that trees should not pose excessive threats to their safety and that of their property.

Strathbogie Shire is committed to conserving trees within its areas of responsibility. It will achieve this through new tree plantings and managing existing trees.

The purpose of this policy is to set the framework within which Council intends to manage the existing and future trees on Council owned or managed land within the urban and rural areas, including increasing the number of trees within the Shire, how the tree stock will be managed effectively and how the risk that trees may pose to the public will be minimised.

POLICY APPLICATION:

This policy applies to the management of all existing and future trees within parts of road reserves and Council owned and managed properties.

This policy does not cover management of trees on privately owned land or trees on rural roads other than those affecting safety and managed by Council in accordance with Council's Road Management Plan. Trees in private ownership are the responsibility of the private landowner.

GENERAL

Trees must be managed in a systematic manner, in accordance with Council's Asset Management Policy and general tree management principles and guidelines.

The following are the key principles that define the Strathbogie Shire Council's Tree Management Policy:

- This policy outlines Council's commitment to managing and caring for trees in line with public safety, conservation and tree health.
- This policy is based on the need to achieve a balance between the management of risk that Council is exposed to through the presence of trees in the Shire; the need to preserve, develop and improve the amenity of our urban areas and to enhance their natural environmental values and benefits.
- Council will manage its trees in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards, tree management principles and current best practices.
- Council will manage its trees to comply with all Federal, State and local legislative requirements.
- Council will keep residents informed about proposed works that directly affect them, and will consult with the community in regards to any major change in this policy.
- Best practice tree management will be maintained at all times.
- Council will respond to reported tree issues to manage the risk posed by trees to people and property.

- To manage risks associated with trees, Council will:
 - Deliver a reactive tree maintenance program (including tree roots) to assess and manage reported tree risks and public requests associated with tree management;
 - Deliver proactive tree maintenance programs for the purpose of delivering effective tree management while meeting the requirements of its Electric Line Clearance Plan and to meet the objectives of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan and the Municipal Fire Management Plan;
 - Provide guidance and instruction for residents and developers wishing to plant trees on nature strips; and
 - Undertake species selection, placement and planting of trees in accordance with this policy to reduce long term risk.
- Council will avoid tree removal where possible and will only consider removing a tree if one or more of the following criteria are met:
 - Tree is dead;
 - Tree poses a danger to the public;
 - Tree is infected with a disease where the recommended control is not applicable and removal is the recommended practice to prevent transmission of the disease;
 - Tree is dying or performing poorly;
 - Tree has been vandalised and structurally damaged;
 - Tree has been severely damaged by a storm;
 - Tree is inappropriate species for the location;
 - Tree is interfering with the health or structure of “higher value neighbouring” tree(s);
 - Tree is substantially affecting public or private infrastructure and there are no other appropriate management options;
 - Council arranges and meets legislated offset requirements.
- In accordance with the Strathbogie Shire Planning Scheme, Council will consider existing trees when considering applications for new development. Where appropriate, trees will be protected from development and other activities that threaten their health or (subject to conditions) may be considered for removal to facilitate the proposed development.
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- All public requests for tree removal, maintenance, management and/or planting must have approval prior to the works being undertaken.
- Trees provide both environmental and aesthetic benefits to the community. Council will consider and promote opportunities to increase the number of trees within the urban areas. Tree Planting Programs, including Precinct and Park plans, will be developed to provide the direction to future planting programs.
- Planting programs will be developed with community and stakeholder consultation. As appropriate, planting programs will consider a number of factors including, but not limited to, preservation of the historic character of particular areas, strengthening of existing themes and the introduction of more contemporary landscaping.
- A diverse range of native and exotic tree species appropriate to the Shire’s urban areas will be maintained.
- The urban tree canopy will be increased with the implementation of a strategic replacement program.

- Tree species will be selected for planting after consideration of a number of factors including:
 - Risk management
 - Physical management requirements
 - Potential for attack by pests or disease
 - Suitability and appropriateness for the proposed planting site
 - Potential to contribute to the landscape
 - Tree behavioural characteristics (including leaf fall volume and propensity to drop limbs)
 - Potential effect on existing Council and private assets (including footpaths and fences, kerb and channel, stormwater drainage and road surface).
- Council will regularly review and monitor its tree data base.
- Council will develop and implement a five (5) yearly program of tree inspections in streets, parklands, urban roadsides and other Council facilities to satisfy Council's risk management responsibilities and protection of assets.
- To protect Council's existing community infrastructure assets, Council will consider a number of options including the relocation or reconfiguration of the infrastructure or the removal of a tree to reduce the need for regular excessive pruning that could damage the structure of the tree.
- Historically significant trees will be managed as far as practical to ensure preservation.
- Catchment management principles will be considered in the management of remnant urban bushland.
- The nature of works may change in response to environmental conditions, community priorities, government policy and best practice management.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:

Council will develop the *Shire of Strathbogie Tree Management Guidelines* which will specify how Council will implement this policy and for the strategic and operational management of trees.

The implementation of actions and initiatives resulting from the *Shire of Strathbogie Tree Management Policy* and the *Shire of Strathbogie Tree Management Guidelines* will be subject to future budget considerations and allocations.

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.