

Council Managed Urban Tree Policy

1. Purpose

The Council Managed Urban Tree Policy outlines Council's approach to the protection, retention and management of Council controlled trees.

2. Scope and Applications

The provisions of this Policy are applicable to all trees located on streets, parks, sports grounds, other open space areas and Council owned properties in urban areas (including freehold land leased to other parties). For the purpose of this Policy, such trees shall be referred to as 'Council controlled trees'.

The Policy does not apply to trees located on private property, rural or rural residential roads and on land managed for biodiversity or environmental purposes.

3. Principles

- To support Council's vision to be the natural choice to live, work and play.
- To support Council's purpose to actively serve our community and plan for the future of the region.

4. Policy Objectives

The objectives of the Policy are to:

- Promote and recognise the role trees play in supporting and sustaining the environment, social fabric, and liveability of the Gympie region.
- Recognise Council controlled trees as important components of green infrastructure in the public realm.
- Improve the sustainability of Councils Tree resource through responsible custodianship and improved diversity of the tree age profile.
- Endeavour to maximise the retention of high value trees through organisational cooperation and innovative engineering solutions.
- Maintain and enhance the contribution to the urban tree resource by Council controlled trees across urban areas and townships.
- Establish a tree population suitable for urban areas and townships across the region that reflects the unique characteristics and heritage of each town, is adapted to regional environmental conditions and does not conflict with Council's biodiversity objectives.
- Encourage a strategic approach to tree planting that prioritises locations that provide measurable benefits in terms of aesthetics, urban design, shade, biodiversity and visual impact.
- Reduce the heat island effect by increasing tree canopy in urban areas.

5. Content

5.1 Council Vision

Council recognises that trees play an important role in defining the appearance and character of the Gympie region. Trees are important for our biodiversity, providing a range of habitats for a diverse range of species and make a significant contribution to the region's economy, liveability and identity by creating appealing spaces that attract tourists and visitors, help improve mental well-being and connect with the regions heritage. In a part of Australia that experiences hot summers, Gympie's trees play a major role, especially in urban areas, in providing shade and reducing heat stress.

This Policy aims to create beautiful streets and public spaces that contribute to health and wellbeing. Council seeks to be a steward and effective manager of a diverse and sustainable public tree population that reflects the unique characteristics of our urban areas and townships across the region.

5.2 Tree protection

To realise and maximise the benefits provided by Council controlled trees, their protection and retention is given a high priority during the assessment of development applications, maintenance and delivery of infrastructure, performing maintenance activities and when assessing community and event applications likely to cause adverse impact to those trees.

Issue:	Policy response:
Operational activities (undertaken by Council or external parties)	Council will safeguard trees during its operational and maintenance activities by following the guidelines outlined by <i>Australian Standard 4970 – 2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites</i> .
	Activities or works likely to cause harm to a Council controlled tree will be avoided or redesigned and/or managed to ensure the level of harm is mitigated (in the first instance) or reduced to minimise impacts.
	Where conflicts cannot be resolved through redesign and tree/s cannot be adequately protected from construction impacts and must be removed, tree replacements shall be funded as a part of the infrastructure project.
Development applications (including Operational Works applications)	Council will require that applicants provide all necessary information relating to the potential impact of development activities on Council controlled trees - including works within Tree Protection Zones (TPZ) and that the development is designed to avoid adverse impacts as far as possible. Council will apply tree protection and retention conditions (this may include a bond), as required, to ensure that development activities do not have negative impacts on either the long term health or structural integrity of a Council controlled tree over the period that development has taken place.
Management of Council controlled trees around overhead power lines, service installation	Council will engage with service providers to advocate for the protection of Council controlled trees. Where conflicts cannot be resolved through redesign and tree/s cannot be adequately protected from construction impacts and must be removed, tree offsets shall be funded as a part of the infrastructure project.
	Council will investigate options in partnership with service providers to relocate and redesign existing infrastructure away from Council controlled trees.
	Council will advocate that new services (above and underground) are not installed in close proximity to a Council controlled tree.
Local Laws	Council will apply this policy when considering applications for the removal or trimming of trees on public land and in accordance with Local Laws.

5.3 Tree Asset Management

Council is committed to managing its existing tree assets in a proactive and efficient manner to mitigate risk, maximise tree asset longevity, enhance amenity improve budget efficiency and achieve excellent tree health outcomes.

Issue:	Policy response:
Asset management	Council controlled trees are acknowledged as important community assets and components of the public realm
	Council will endeavour to achieve a no net loss of tree canopy in urban areas.

	Council will conduct its tree management activities in accordance with Councils Tree Management Procedure (2017), industry standards, current research and best practice guidelines.
	Council will develop a proactive tree inspection program to manage risk associated with the tree resource.
	Council will consider a range of factors in decision making around trees including tree value, Safe Useful Life Expectancy (SULE), replacement opportunities, infrastructure and budget implications for both proactive and reactive tree works.
	Council will engage appropriately qualified staff and seek to utilise the most effective technology and methods to improve the efficiency and outcomes achieved by its tree maintenance activities.

5.4 Tree Planting

Council will plant the “right tree, for the right location” with consideration given to whole of life maintenance requirements and possible impacts on private and Council infrastructure. Tree planting throughout the region will be undertaken to support and enhance existing avenues, establish new avenues and increase canopy cover across the Open Space network.

Issue:	Policy response:
Tree planting	
General	Species selection will be based on careful consideration of the environmental, social, and historic character of individual urban areas and townships across the region.
	Plant selection to comply with the Gympie Regional Council Planning Scheme Policy S66.1.13 Landscape Plans and Plant Species.
	Council will endeavour to offset removed trees by planting at appropriate locations.
	In general, long lived species are to be used in plantings.
	High quality planting stock is to be used, improving life span of planted trees and reducing long term maintenance and aesthetic problems.
	Existing view lines, particularly in relation to foreshore areas, should be a consideration when selecting tree species for new plantings.
	Species selection for general street tree planting should be in accordance with Councils Draft Street Tree Policy.
Street Trees	Council approval is required to plant trees on road reserves.
	Council will consider growing characteristics of tree species for each site to reduce the potential for conflict with existing services (eg power, water and sewer) as well as other infrastructure (eg solar panels and trees). Council will locate plantings to maintain sight lines (eg intersections, property accesses and regulatory signage).
	Council will identify key locations (eg town entrances and high profile streets) to guide future themed plantings.
	Council will encourage innovation in delivering service infrastructure into new areas to minimise future conflicts between services and trees.
	Council will focus new tree plantings at locations that have sufficient space to accommodate effective tree development (i.e. space that is not constrained by infrastructure, narrow verges or established trees on private property that provide an effective cultural and aesthetic streetscape).

Issue:	Policy response:
	Tree planting within parks should promote shade and amenity at park user areas such as picnic nodes, playgrounds, spectator areas, car parks and along pathways as well as CPTED principles.
Park Trees	Design principles should aim to promote the planting of trees that will establish or reinforce the presence of a tree canopy within a park. Consistent with park design use and intent and Desired Standards of Service.
	Placement and grouping of trees should aim to minimise maintenance while achieving design outcomes and enhancing and protecting wildlife habitats.
	Community participation in park planting programs will be encouraged to promote ongoing stewardship.

5.5 Tree removal

When assessing tree removal applications and requests Council will explore all options for retention and preservation. Removing a valued, healthy and structurally sound tree is considered an undesirable outcome and an outcome of last resort. Unless undertaken by Council staff or approved Council contractors, trees can only be removed from Council land with written Council permission.

Issue:	Policy response:
Council controlled tree removal criteria	
Council will generally support tree removal in the following situations, following appropriate arboricultural assessment:	The tree is determined by an experienced and suitably qualified arborist to be presenting a hazard which cannot be mitigated through appropriate management without adverse effects to the tree.
	The tree is dead, dying or in decline (unless measurable benefits can be obtained by retaining the structure for habitat, environmental or amenity purposes) or structurally compromised as determined by a suitably qualified arborist.
	The tree is confirmed as causing significant damage to infrastructure or causing unmanageable damage to services and where all retention options have been investigated and exhausted.
	Where a Council capital works, infrastructure project or road safety audit/inspection requires tree removal(s) to facilitate the delivery of a safe outcome. In such instances compensatory tree planting will be required within a reasonable timeframe.
	The tree is a juvenile that has self-seeded or arisen as a sucker and is in an unsuitable location.
	The tree is recognised as a state declared pest plant species, poisonous or identified as an environmental weed within the Gympie region (unless heritage listed or included in Council's Significant Tree Register).
	The tree is a species which qualifies for removal under any written agreement between Council and Energex in relation to managing trees under or adjacent to power lines.

Issue:	Policy response:
Tree removal requests not supported by Council	
Council will not support tree removal in the following situations:	Where a tree is blocking a view (including views to advertising billboards), where the tree pre-existed the view line or billboard.
	To reduce leaf, bark and fruit drop and debris build-up.
	For unjustifiable claims of property damage, including sewer and water infrastructure.
	Property owner's preference is for a different tree species.
	To increase levels of solar and or sunlight access for pre-existing trees.
	To reduce or remove termite populations
	To achieve a secondary point of access to a property.
	For the installation of on and off-street car parking.
	To remove a source of habitat or shelter for wildlife.
	Where tree parts (leaf, seed, etc.) are effecting a swimming pool or filtration system.
Where minor allergies or health problems are being experienced such as hay fever, sinus etc.	
Tree removals - Development applications	
Issue:	Policy response:
Tree removal applications associated with a Development Application including an Operational Works Permit	Only in circumstances where the Development Permit or approval under the Local Law requires or approves the removal.

6 Responsibilities

Infrastructure Services

Manager Parks Operations

Responsible for:

- updating the Policy
- delegated officer to approve Council's removal of Council controlled tree(s) in the Gympie, Southside, Mary Valley and Gunalda urban areas
- determining the conditions for supported tree removal applications.

Parks Operations Branch

Responsible for:

- assisting the Manager of Parks Operations to maintain the Policy
- coordinating and undertaking reviews of the Policy
- monitoring implementation and adherence
- developing appropriate measures to evaluate the impact of tree loss in urban areas.

Manager Parks Design

Responsible for:

- implementing Policy in Parks Design projects.

Manager Roads Maintenance

Responsible for:

- working with the Manager of Parks Operations to maintain the Policy in coastal and western townships with the exception of rural and rural residential areas.

Manager Construction

Responsible for:

- ensuring tree protection measures are in place for construction projects in or around trees.

General Manager Design Services

Responsible for:

- ensuring design projects on roads, footpaths and parks give appropriate consideration and protection to trees in accordance with the Policy.

Planning and Development

Manager Development and Compliance

Responsible for:

- enforcing the Policy provision for development approvals

Manager Environmental Health and Regulatory Services

Responsible for:

- issuing permits and enforcing Local Laws relevant to trees on parks and road reserves.

Manager Planning Strategy and Major Projects

Responsible for:

- development and review of Planning Provisions for Trees and Council's Street Tree Policy

Coordinator Environmental Planning

Responsible for:

- Environmental Policy and trees in environmentally sensitive areas.

Community Services

Manager Property

Responsible for:

- implementing the Policy on Council owned and controlled land (excepting land in Council controlled open space network).

7 Relevant Laws

- *Local Law No. 1 (Administration) 2011*
- *subordinate Local Law No. 1 (Administration) 2011*
- *Local Law No. 3 (Community and Environmental Management) 2011*
- *Subordinate Local Law No. 3 (Community and Environmental Management) 2011*
- *Local Law No. 4 (Local Government Controlled Areas, Facilities and Roads) 2011*

Subordinate Local Law No.4 (Local Government Controlled Areas, Facilities and Roads) 2011

8 Related Policies/Documents

- Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Draft Gympie Street Tree Policy 2018
- Council Managed Trees Procedure 2017
- Environment Policy 2015
- Draft Street Tree Policy 2018
- Planning Scheme Policy S66.1.13 Landscape Plans and Plant Species.

9 Definitions

Arboriculture is the cultivation, management and study of individual woody plants/trees. It is both a practice and a science.

Arborist (internal or external) is a technical specialist in the cultivation and care of trees, including

tree surgery, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of tree diseases including the control of pests with a minimum qualification of AQF level 5, with a minimum three years consulting experience including tree hazard assessment and report, to a standard that satisfies Council.

Council controlled land is land under Council freehold ownership or trusteeship.

Council controlled trees are trees under the care and control of the Council, which are generally those growing in land designated as public roads and community land (i.e. most public parks, reserves, etc).

Declared pest plants are of a species that have, or could have serious economic, environmental or social impacts and are targeted for control under the *Biosecurity Act, 2014*.

Hazard is a source or a situation with a potential for harm in terms of human injury or ill-health, damage to property, damage to the environment, or a combination of these.

Habitat tree is a living or dead tree that provides of value habitat for wildlife.

Native vegetation in relation to this procedure, native vegetation is considered to be any local indigenous plant growing in its natural state whether self-sown or planted, but not including formal landscaped areas or gardens.

Nuisance is an unreasonable and ongoing interference with another person's right to the use and the enjoyment of their property.

Risk is the likelihood that a harmful consequence (death, injury or illness) might result when exposed to a hazard. Risk assessment will consider factors such as the level of use of the areas surrounding tree and the proximity of roads, buildings and other structures.

Road verge generally refers to the area between the private property boundary and the road kerb.

Significant tree (or stand of trees) are trees with aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present and future generations (Australian ICOMOS, 1999).

Safe Useful Life Expectancy ("SULE") is a classification for trees developed by Jeremy Barrell of Barrell Tree Consultancy, published in 1993, consisting of five categories: from SULE more than 40 years (1) to less than five years (4), as well as young or small trees.

Tree Protection Zone ("TPZ") is a specified area above and below ground and at a given distance from the trunk set aside for the protection of a tree's roots and crown to provide for the viability and stability of a tree to be retained where it is potentially subject to damage by development.

Weeds, under the general biosecurity obligation (GBO), have the following definitions for woody weeds. They are either prohibited invasive plants, restricted invasive plants or invasive plants.

- Prohibited invasive plants are to be actively controlled. Invasive plants will be removed if they are adjacent to an environmentally sensitive area, are relatively new to an area or are an isolated infestation.