

Tree Management Policy

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Responsible Division	Infrastructure
Related Documents	Alexandrina Council By-law No.2 – Local Government Land Australian Standard 4970 & 4973 Alexandrina Council Community Strategic Plan Environmental Action Plan Land Division Guidelines National Trust Significant Tree Register Tree Management Procedure Tree Canopy Baseline Study (2022)
Applicable Legislation	<i>Local Government Act 1999, section 221(2)(e)</i> <i>Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016 (SA)</i> <i>Electricity Act 1996 (SA)</i> <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)</i> <i>Heritage Places Act 1993 (SA)</i> <i>Highways Act 1926 (SA)</i> <i>Local Government Act 1999 (SA)</i> <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (SA)</i> <i>Native Vegetation Act 1991 (SA)</i> <i>Natural Resources Management Act 2004 (SA)</i> <i>Road Traffic Act 1961 (SA)</i> <i>Water Industry Act (SA)</i>

1. Purpose

Council recognises its responsibility to plant and manage trees on Council land effectively in order to minimise risks and maximise benefits on behalf of our community.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a guiding framework for the planting, maintenance, conservation and removal of trees on Council land including parks and gardens, urban biodiversity reserves, rural reserves, urban streets and rural roads.

This Policy applies to all trees under the care, control and management of Council to ensure that Council's approach to tree management across the Council district is:

- undertaken in a consistent and transparent manner;
- fair, equitable and achieves the best possible outcomes for the community; and
- consistent with Council's legislative obligations and with Council's strategic, corporate and financial directions

This Policy should be read and utilised in conjunction with Council's Tree Management Procedure, which provides more detailed guidance regarding tree-related activities and requests. Relevant information, including application forms, will be published on Council's website.

2. Definitions

In this Policy, unless the contrary intention appears, these words have the following meaning:

‘Council’ means Alexandrina Council and includes any member of Council staff or volunteer acting under delegation.

‘Council land’ means any land owned by Council or which is under Council’s care, control and management including community land, road reserves, and land that is excluded from community land classification.

‘Extreme Nuisance’ means effects caused by the presence of a tree that a party considers unreasonable but is not deemed unacceptable by Council Staff.

‘Individual’ means any person and includes contractors, Elected Members, employees, ratepayers, residents and volunteers of Alexandrina Council.

‘Pest tree’ means any plant declared for control under the Natural Resources Management Act 1994 or any tree or plant listed as a pest tree in Council’s Tree Management Standard Operating Procedure.

‘Pre-European Landscape’ means the tree species and landscape character that prevailed prior to European settlement.

‘Roadside’ means the strip of land between the road formation and the boundary of the road reserve.

‘Significant Impact’ means the effects on a party that are either a culmination of minor factors over time or a major impact at a particular time, that causes unacceptable personal or financial hardship to parties affected.

‘Tree’ means a perennial woody plant with a defined canopy greater than two and a half metres (2.5 m) in height at optimum maturity.

‘Verge’ means the area of land located between the roadside kerb and the footpath.

3. The Value of Trees

Alexandrina Council recognises that trees are valuable community resources with many economic, social and environmental benefits. Council is therefore committed to maintaining and increasing, in collaboration with our community, the number of trees across our district so as to “green” our townships, contribute to community wellbeing and enhance biodiversity. In recognition of these benefits, Alexandrina assigns a monetary value to its trees according to the method outlined in the Tree Management Procedure.

4. Enhancing Biodiversity

Where consistent with the function, character and amenity of the land in question, Council’s tree management activities will place emphasis on enhancing biodiversity by giving consideration to species selection, landscape connectivity, habitat availability and the use of local provenance plantings with reference to the district’s pre-European Landscape. In accordance with Council’s commitment to “greening” our townships (KPI

1.1 of A2040), non-indigenous trees will be planted and retained where they are consistent with the landscape character of the area and are valued for their shading, aesthetic and/or historical values. Council will support the removal of pest trees through ongoing pest tree control programs, and by favourably viewing applications from individuals and organisations who wish to remove pest trees from Council land.

Within new subdivisions, veteran trees, habitat trees, remnant native vegetation and other sites of high biodiversity should be protected and incorporated into appropriately designed open space allocations. If no such areas exist, developers will be encouraged to create new natural landscapes or habitat areas as part of their open space allocation.

5. Protecting Cultural Heritage

Council's tree management policies will continue to be sympathetic to the historical, cultural and scientific value of certain trees. The Ngarrindjeri and European cultural heritage and scientific value of trees will inform tree management activities undertaken pursuant to this policy and the Tree Management Procedure.

A register of Trees of Local Importance will be established and maintained to record the trees that have a significant cultural or community heritage.

6. Risk Management and Resource Availability

Appropriate resources will be allocated to tree planting and management so that Council can meet its strategic and legislative obligations. Risk management principles and practices and Council's commitment to urban greening will inform our approach to tree management to ensure that available resources are used effectively and efficiently to reasonably manage trees across the Council landscape in a manner that minimises risk to Council and the community.

7. Tree Planting

In urban streets, township parks and gardens, Council will plant trees in accordance with the outcomes of the Tree Canopy Baseline Study (2022), relevant Town Maintenance Themes, indigenous plant species as per Council's Trees Planting Species List, SA Power Networks Powerline Friendly Species List, and the Water Industry Regulation 13a and 13b (2012). Species selection will be guided by the existing or desired character and use of the area, climatic conditions, potential impacts on infrastructure and public safety and the minimisation of ongoing maintenance requirements. The tree planting species list will be made publically available on the Council's website. Council will consult the local community in circumstances where tree planting is likely to have a significant impact on residents, nearby business or advertisers in the area. Additional species will be considered, as appropriate, for trial to innovate, develop and secure tree canopy into the future of a changing climate.

Developers of new subdivisions must plant one street tree per allotment minimum, where practicable and will be responsible for maintaining all such trees for a minimum of 12 months, after which maintenance obligations will be handed over to Council. Further information on tree plantings for subdivisions are found in Council's Tree Management Procedure.

8. Tree Maintenance

Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of all trees on Council land, including those that have been planted by residents on Council verges. Residents and ratepayers are not authorised to plant, prune, remove or treat with chemicals, any trees on Council land without written approval or agreement of Council.

9. Roadside Vegetation

Tree trimming on rural roadsides is undertaken to ensure a safe and efficient road system. Any trimming, removal, or other maintenance of native vegetation on rural roads fall under the requirements of the Native Vegetation Act 1991. Native vegetation on roadsides is managed in accordance with Council's Roadside Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP). The RVMP will be regularly reviewed in accordance with legislative requirements under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991*.

10. Tree Removal

Council views the removal of healthy, established trees as undesirable but recognises it may be required on rare occasions. The removal of a living tree (other than pest trees) will be treated by Council as the option of last resort.

The removal of any tree on Council land without prior approval from Council is strictly prohibited and should be expected to result in penalties including prosecution.

Individuals or organisations seeking removal of a tree from Council land must submit a written application as prescribed in the Tree Management Procedure. Council will maintain a Tree Removal Register which will be available to the public on the Council website.

Removal of trees that are identified on the register of Trees of Local Importance will require a formal council approval.

11. Tree Replacement

Council will offset the removal of trees on Council land pursuant to this policy through its annual tree planting plan. The number of trees planted during the regular planting season will be not less than twice the number of established (greater than three years old) trees removed in the previous year. Except where the trees are pest plants removed as part of a management or removal program. Where reasonably practicable, Council will prioritise plantings in locations from where trees were originally removed and in accordance with the outcomes of the Tree Canopy Baseline Study (2022) and the Tree Planting Strategy that will be developed following the Tree Canopy Study.

Trees removed through capital development/projects on Council land will be replaced with a minimum of two trees for each tree removed as part of the project works. Where is it not practical to plant the additional trees at the project site, the balance of trees to be planted will be included in the Tree Planting Strategy.

12. Tree Vandalism

It is an offence to poison, prune, remove, deface or otherwise interfere with or cause unauthorised damage to trees on Council land. Proven non-compliance should be expected to result in penalties including prosecution.

13. Trees on Private Land

The management of trees located on private land, including the impacts of such trees on neighbouring property, are the responsibility of the land owner.

Council may require the owner or occupier of land to maintain vegetation encroaching onto Council land (such as a footpath, road or urban biodiversity reserve). If this is not undertaken in a timely manner, Council staff are authorised, under the Local Government Act 1999, to undertake the work and recover costs of such work from the owner or occupier of that land.

14. Plant, Seed, Flower and Fruit Collection

Native plants or parts of native plants including seeds, flowers or fruit must not be collected from trees or other vegetation on Council land (including parks, reserves, urban streets and rural roads) without prior written approval from Council and the relevant State government authority. Proven non-compliance should be expected to result in penalties including prosecution.

15. Roadside Timber

Public collection of roadside timber, whether it is dead, alive, fallen or standing, is not permitted. Council will not provide approval or issue permits for the collection of roadside timber. Proven non-compliance should be expected to result in penalties including prosecution.

16. Climate Change

In the face of a changing climate, Council recognises the beneficial effects of trees in ameliorating urban heat island effects, providing refuge for biodiversity and acting as vital carbon sinks. Council will adopt a proactive approach to climate change adaptation by regularly reviewing its tree management practices, species planting lists, and strategies to ensure the effects of climate change and extreme weather are considered.

17. Exemptions

The restrictions in this policy do not apply to a Council employee acting in the course and within the scope of their normal duties, or to a Council contractor or volunteer while performing work for Council and acting under the supervision of a Council employee.

18. Delegations

Council acknowledges that the Chief Executive Officer may sub-delegate matters related to this Policy to staff or other persons employed or engaged by council.



19. Documentation

To assist in demonstrating that the above processes are fair, transparent and accountable, cost effective and meet community needs, all requests, assessments and outcomes in relation to Council's tree management activities will be documented. A register of tree removal decisions, other than pest plants, will be made available to the public on the Council website.

20. Availability of Policy

This Policy will be available for inspection on the Council's website www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au. Copies can also be provided to interested members of the community upon payment of a fee in accordance with Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges.