



# **Blackall-Tambo** Regional Council

## **Public Tree Management Council Policy**

Policy Number: Stra 20	Effective Date: 15.11.2023
Version Number: 1.0	Review Date: 14.11.2027
Policy Compiled by: WHS	Pages: 8
Policy Approved by: Chief Executive Officer	

### **1. Policy Statement**

Council recognises the value and important role of trees across the landscape and aims to balance risks against the environmental social and economic benefits of public trees.

### **2. Purpose/Objectives**

The purpose of this policy is to provide:

- Commitment to the retention and effective management of the region's public trees.
- Strategic direction in relation to planting of new trees, continued maintenance, management and protection of trees located on Council controlled land.

### **3. Principles**

Trees on public land are fundamental to the Blackall-Tambo Regional Council (BTRC) region's biodiversity and ecological values, landscape character and amenity.

Trees form the aesthetic backdrop for the regions outstanding natural environmental values.

They also provide shade, cool and soften buildings, enhance streetscape amenity and provide habitat and food for wildlife. As such, trees have a significant value to BTRC and the community.

Council's activities and resources shall be prioritised upon the following order of principles:

1. Manage risks to public safety.
2. Manage risks to property or infrastructure.
3. Preserve and maintain the health and structural soundness of the BTRC region's public trees.
4. Improve the regions image, liveability and the wellbeing of the community by prioritising the integration of public trees.

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**4. Scope**

This policy applies to all the trees that Council has management responsibility for on Council controlled lands (roads reserves, parks, cemeteries and public open spaces). This tree management Policy is intended for use by:

- Council workers and contractors – as a guide for the provision and management of trees on Council controlled lands.
- Landholders and developers – to assist in the selection of tree species and understanding of Councils management of trees.
- The Community – to promote better understanding of tree management.

This policy does not apply to:

- Trees on private property.
- Trees in State controlled land and road reserves.
- Trees within council area where vegetation management is explicitly stated as the responsibility of the Lessee.
- Declared Plant species as listed in *Biosecurity Act 2014* and as identified in BTRC Local Area Biosecurity Plan.

**5. Objectives**

This Policy is underpinned by the following objectives:

- Increase and enhance the extent of tree canopy throughout the region through planting of appropriately selected trees in streets, public spaces and bushland areas.
- Where it is unavoidable that trees are to be removed from public land, Council will arrange an offset planting.
- Recognition of the importance of tree cover throughout the region.
- Trees are recognised and valued.
- Council will maintain a consistent approach to assessing risks and benefits posed by trees in accordance with defined criteria.
- Implement best practice safety processes and principles to minimise risks to the community from trees on Council controlled land.
- Enable effective, efficient and consistent communication with the community on Council's tree management approach and practices.
- Unauthorised interference with trees on Council land is prohibited and will be managed in accordance with local laws and relevant legislation.

**6. Content**

**6.1 Tree Planting**

Council will plant the “right tree, for the right location” with consideration given to their whole of life maintenance requirements and the possible impacts to private and Council infrastructure and public safety.

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.

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**Policy Statements:**

Objective	Policy Statements
Tree planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Species selection is based on careful consideration to the environmental, social and historic character of individual urban areas and townships across the region. An approved list of suitable species is in the Council Planning scheme.</li> <li>• Council prefers the planting of sizable and long-lived tree species, where environmental conditions, community support and site factors allow.</li> <li>• Council will consider the growing characteristics of tree species before they are planted to reduce the potential for conflict between services, infrastructure and trees.</li> <li>• All approved Public Tree removals will be offset by Offset Tree Plantings, which should achieve no net canopy loss within three (3) years of the approved Public Tree removal. The canopy area of the original Public Tree shall be used to determine the quantity of replacement trees required.</li> </ul>

**6.2 Tree Protection**

To realise the benefits provided by public trees, their protection and retention shall be given a high priority during the assessment of development applications, delivery of infrastructure, performing maintenance activities, and when assessing event applications likely to cause impact to public trees.

**Policy Statements:**

Objective	Policy Statements
Development applications & Operational works applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will require that applicants provide all necessary information relating to the potential impact of development activities on public trees.</li> <li>• Council will apply tree protection and retention conditions, as required, to ensure that development activities do not have negative impacts on either the long-term health or structural integrity of a public tree.</li> </ul>
Operational activities (undertaken by Council or external parties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will safeguard trees during its operational and maintenance activities by following the best practice guidelines.</li> <li>• Activities or works likely to cause harm to a public tree will be avoided or redesigned and/or managed to ensure the level of harm is eliminated (in the first instance) or reduced to an acceptable level.</li> </ul>
Management of Council controlled trees around overhead power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will engage with service providers to advocate for the protection of public trees.</li> </ul>



lines, service installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will investigate options in partnership with service providers to relocate and redesign existing infrastructure away from public trees.</li> <li>• Council will require that new services (above and underground) are not installed within close proximity to a public tree.</li> </ul>
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#### 6.4 Tree Pruning or Removal

Council regularly receives requests to remove part or all of trees on land under its control. Decisions as to whether to act on these requests will be made by Council's qualified staff and/or consultant arborists. Trees will only be removed or pruned after consideration of potential risks and benefits.

#### Policy Statements:

Objective	Policy Statements
Council tree pruning & removal considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council may agree to the following works if the risk presented outweighs the benefit:</li> <li>• Removal of trees that have been professionally assessed as presenting an unacceptable hazard.</li> <li>• Removal of trees in conflict with utilities and built structures if there are no other practicable solutions available.</li> <li>• Maintenance pruning to remove dead, dying, diseased or defective branches only where they present an unacceptable safety risk.</li> <li>• Selective pruning to remove branches causing conflict i.e., encroachment onto buildings.</li> <li>• Vegetation works above and below ground service connections (water/sewer/power/telecommunications).</li> <li>• Vegetation works to reduce unacceptable hazards to pedestrians or vehicular access.</li> <li>• Pruning for vehicle sight lines, public signage, and the requirements of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and the Australian Standard, the Queensland Guide to Temporary Traffic Management and Austroads.</li> <li>• Root pruning of trees to ameliorate damage to built or natural structures.</li> <li>• Minimal vegetation works to trees that are identified as providing habitat to specific species. Council will remove the minimum amount determined to make it safe, whilst still retaining habitat value (e.g., leaving a hollow stump for nesting birds, roost trees).</li> </ul>
Tree pruning & removal requests not supported by Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will not undertake the following works:</li> <li>• Removal or pruning of trees to provide benefit to private views.</li> <li>• Removal of trees for leaves, flower, fruit, minor branch or sap drop, or animal faeces.</li> </ul>



Objective	Policy Statements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of trees which are inhibiting grass growth, shading property, or shading solar panels.</li> <li>• Removal of trees which are claimed to be damaging buildings, water, or sewage pipes, unless certified evidence is provided that indicates that tree roots are the cause of the damage.</li> <li>• Removal of trees for private insurance purposes.</li> <li>• Removal of healthy and stable trees that do not present an unacceptable risk.</li> <li>• Removal of trees to facilitate private construction works including fences.</li> <li>• Pruning of trees for private and commercial signage.</li> <li>• Vegetation works that will cause the tree health to decline or die.</li> </ul>
<p>Management of public trees around overhead power lines, service installation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will engage with service providers to advocate for the protection of public trees.</li> <li>• Council will investigate options in partnership with service providers to relocate and redesign existing infrastructure away from public trees.</li> <li>• Council will require that new services (above and underground) are not installed within close proximity to a public tree.</li> </ul>

#### 6.4.1 Visual tree assessment

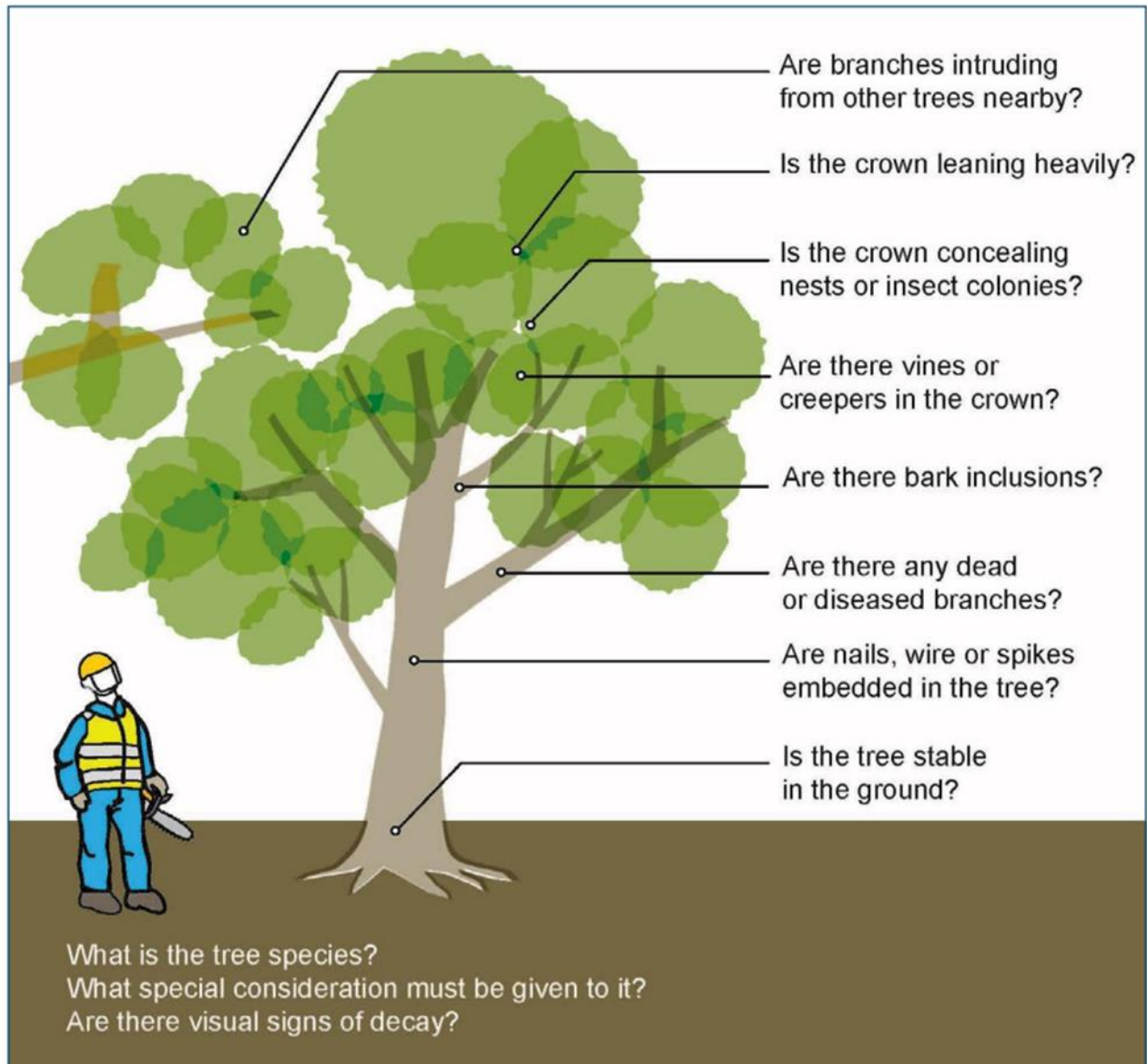
The integrity of a tree is critical to the safety of those working in, under and around it. Before working on or accessing a tree by any method, a thorough visual assessment of the tree should be carried out by a competent person.

The assessment should consider hazards, condition, wind loading, structural integrity and location. This assessment should form the basis of a site-specific risk assessment and decision-making on whether the tree is safe to access, the method chosen to access the tree and the safe systems of work to be used on the site.

Figure 1 shows many of the conditions which could result in serious risk if they are not identified prior to starting work.



**Figure 1** Tree hazards



**6.5 Unlawful Tree Removal:**

Council is committed to ensuring that trees on Council controlled land are protected from interference to maintain the regions biodiversity, conservation, scenic, amenity and cultural value.

**Policy Statements:**

Objective	Policy Statements
Undertake routine inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council will proactively inspect Council controlled land to detect and deter the interference with trees.</li> </ul>



Objective	Policy Statements
Investigate interference with trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will investigate all instances of interference with trees on public land and manage in accordance with Local Laws and relevant legislation.</li> </ul>
Management actions to be undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At all sites identified by council officers as being unlawfully cleared, a visible barrier (Para webbing) is to be erected immediately surrounding area with a sign stating unlawful vegetation removal has been detected in this area and is currently under investigation.</li> </ul>
Re-vegetate lands where interference/removal has occurred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council is authorised to revegetate in whatever manner seems appropriate and may erect shade cloth screens to the pre-existing vegetation height until the new vegetation is established.</li> <li>• Council may install billboard type signage to remain until vegetation is as tall as the height of the top of the signs. Other measures to block views such as shade cloth or other mechanisms may also be installed, in addition to or as an alternative to the billboard type signage.</li> <li>• Council will regularly provide information to landholders adjacent to or opposite council reserves and the broader public reminding them of the importance of vegetation and Councils objectives in managing that vegetation.</li> <li>• At any time and within resource constraints, Council may move to reclaim those areas of public land adjacent to private property that have been unlawfully cleared historically. Actions may include revegetating cleared and lawn areas using endemic native plants and removal of exotic species.</li> </ul>

## 7.0 Responsibilities

The Director of Works is responsible for ensuring this policy and any supporting standards, guidelines or procedures are understood by all council workers and contractors working on Council controlled land.

All council workers, managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to.

## 8.0 Definitions

- Arborist – means a specialist in the cultivation and care of trees, including tree surgery, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and management of tree diseases. Council considers an arborist to be an individual who has obtained a minimum of AQF level 3 in Arboriculture.
- Community – refers to the broader population of the BTRC region.
- Council – Blackall-Tambo Regional Council.
- Council Controlled Land – in this policy, refers to land under Council freehold ownership or Crown land managed by Council under trust. It also includes Council controlled road reserves and State controlled road reserves that are managed by Council under the Road Maintenance Performance Contract (RMPC).



- Delegated Officer – a suitably qualified person holding the power to provide approval on behalf of Council.
- Hazard – means any source of potential damage, harm or adverse health effects on something or someone.
- Public Tree – means any woody or perennial plant or any plant resembling a tree in form or size within the Local Government area that has part of its trunk growing from Council controlled land.
- Public Open Space – publicly accessible lands set aside for informal and formal community use.
- Road Reserve – areas of land set aside for road reserves extending from property boundary to property boundary.

Related forms, policies and procedures	
<i>Relevant legislation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i></li> <li>• <i>Electrical Safety Act 2002</i></li> <li>• <i>Environmental Protection Act 1994</i></li> <li>• <i>Local Government Act 2009</i></li> <li>• <i>Local Government Regulations 2012</i></li> <li>• <i>Planning Act 2016</i></li> <li>• <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i></li> <li>• <i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i></li> <li>• <i>Queensland Heritage Act 1992</i></li> <li>• <i>Vegetation Management Act 1999</i></li> <li>• <i>Neighbourhood Disputes (Dividing Fences and Trees) Act 2011</i></li> </ul>
Reference and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Standard 31000:2009 Risk Management</li> <li>• Australian Standard 31000:2009</li> <li>• Risk Management Principles</li> <li>• Australian Standard 4373:2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees</li> <li>• Australian Standard 4970:2009</li> <li>• <a href="http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au">Guide To Managing Risks of Tree Trimming and Removal Work (safeworkaustralia.gov.au)</a></li> </ul>