

COUNCIL POLICY: TREE MANAGEMENT ON COUNCIL CONTROLLED LAND

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Date Amended:	<i>26 July 2011, 22 November 2011; 30 April 2013</i>
Contact officer:	<i>Coordinator Parks, Gardens & Cemeteries</i>
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Related Policies/Local Laws/Legislation:	<i>Scenic Rim Regional Council Free Tree Policy Vegetation Management Act 1999 Local Law No.4 (Local Government Controlled Areas, Facilities and Roads) 2011</i>
Related Documents:	<i>Attachment A - Tree Management on Council Controlled Land Guidelines Attachment B - Procedure High Risk Tree Management for Bunya Pines</i>

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are:

- To preserve a healthy, low risk, aesthetically attractive and ecologically diverse population of Council managed trees through quality arboricultural practices and considered tree removal practices.
- To benefit the natural environment by the strategic removal and replacement (where required) of declared or environmental weed tree species, as well as the selection for future planting of tree species that have limited environmental weed potential.
- To enhance the Council's tree assets through selection of appropriate and low maintenance species and through quality tree planting, replacement planting, establishment and maintenance.

Corporate Plan:	
Priority Area	<i>Environmental Management Our unique natural environment is proactively and responsibly managed in partnership with our community, to preserve and enhance it for future generations</i>
Strategy	<i>To achieve this outcome we will manage and enhance the region's significant biodiversity values, natural resources and ecological processes and minimise the impact of pest animal and plants</i>

POLICY STATEMENT

Council is committed to promoting, preserving and enhancing the heritage, landscape and environmental values of tree assets on Council controlled land.

Council will take a risk based approach to manage its tree assets.

Council will promote use of correct arboricultural practices and the natural services benefits of Council's tree assets.

Council is committed to working with other agencies to protect and expand areas which are free of environmental weed tree species.

SCOPE

This policy applies to trees naturally growing or planted on Scenic Rim Regional Council managed land. It does not apply to private land within Scenic Rim Region.

DEFINITIONS

Arboricultural practices - For the purpose of this policy they are those practices involved in the planting and care of trees that are recognised by the International Society of Arboriculture, stated in Australian Standard 4373 Pruning of Amenity Trees, Australian Standard 4970 Protection of Trees on Construction sites, and other relevant Council or recognised industry standards and practices.

Arborist - Person with training to Australian Qualifications Framework Level 4 in Arboriculture, or above, or with equivalent recognised and relevant experience.

Declared weed tree - Pest tree species targeted for control under state legislation that have or could have serious economic, environmental or social impacts.

Environmental weed tree - Those trees in addition to those classified as declared weeds that Council identifies as having high potential to have serious environmental impact within the Region.

Natural services benefits - Include shade, reduction of "green house gases", habitat, amenity, wind buffering effect, improved water and air quality, decreased effect of salinity, psychological benefits, lowering surface temperature particularly in the built environment and erosion control.

Significant trees - Trees that are rare, culturally or naturally important and/or add to the overall landscape of the area in a special way and have been formally assessed by a Council authorised person.

Tree - For the purposes of this policy, a tree is defined as long-lived perennial plant with single or multiple self-supporting woody stem(s).

RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy Author	Coordinator Parks, Gardens and Cemeteries
Policy Owner	Manager Property and Operations
Guidelines and procedures - <i>Attachment A: Tree Management on Council Controlled Land Guidelines</i>	Coordinator Parks, Gardens and Cemeteries

Approved By:

SCENIC RIM REGIONAL COUNCIL
30 April 2013

ATTACHMENT A: TREE MANAGEMENT ON COUNCIL CONTROLLED LAND GUIDELINES

1.0 Pruning and tree removal practices

Council is committed to using proven occupational health and safety compliant, reputable, tree contractors and arborists who have extensive experience in correct arboricultural practices quality pruning and tree removal.

Accepted arboricultural practices are to be adhered to no matter who is paying for the work, commissioning the work or doing the work. This will assist in alleviating pruning practices that compromise the health and structure of the tree.

2.0 Lopping/Topping of trees

As indicated in the Australian Standard 4373 pruning of amenity trees, lopping or topping of trees is an unacceptable practice that leads to unsafe trees and is contrary to arboricultural practices.

The resultant epicormic growth from lopping or topping is vigorous, generally vertical, weakly attached and dense. The end result is a tree with an unnatural habit that is predisposed to decay and storm damage.

The only exception where lopping may be considered is if a Council qualified and duly authorised officer assesses a hazardous tree as being suitable for long term retention as a habitat tree or the tree is required to be retained to prevent land slip or erosion. This then requires the heavy pruning of the hazardous material back to stable low risk branch stubs and or trunk and if not dead the application of herbicide to prevent inappropriate regrowth.

3.0 Customer request management

With the exception of severe risk situations that require immediate attention because of imminent failure, requests for tree work need to be submitted to Council by completing a "Request for Tree Work/Removal (Council Managed Land)" form.

Risk associated with a tree will be gauged by examining tree health, tree characteristics, site conditions, target, tree defects, likelihood and consequences of failure, and other relevant information. Should a Council officer be uncertain as to the risk and/or if a retained tree has potential high risk, then a second opinion will be sought from a reputable, qualified and experienced arborist.

In the situation of requests with regard to Council tree management, the Council Manager for the land in question or delegated officer is to be responsible for determining the requirement for tree hazard reduction and the priority which it is to be allocated based on the associated risk.

In determining what action (if any) will be taken in response to requests for tree work, the Manager or delegated officer will have regard to the content of any tree risk assessments, the health of the tree at the time of inspection, heritage or historic value, aesthetic or landscape value, environmental or wildlife value, alternatives to removal of the tree or part of the tree, site character, available budget and the nature of the perceived hazard.

Should a customer not be satisfied with the priority and timeframe allocated for required work to be performed, they may apply to Council in writing to have the work carried out at their own expense. Council will seek quotes from reputable, suitably qualified and insured arborists or tree contractors (who are registered with Council) and submit these to the customer. Once the customer's payment has been processed the work will be initiated by Council.

Should a customer not be satisfied with the decision resulting from a tree risk assessment they may obtain a risk report on the tree from an independent, reputable, suitably qualified arborist at their own expense and submit the report to Council for further consideration.

4.0 When Council will prune or remove a tree

The pruning or removal of a tree requires appropriate justification. Pruning of a tree places stress on the tree through direct injury, by reducing the photosynthetic potential and impacting overall vigour. When removal is considered, it is essential to take into account that trees take a long time to develop and they are not easily replaced especially in terms of size or canopy spread. Because of the many benefits associated with trees and their significant asset value, Council will generally not remove a healthy tree. However Council will typically remove a tree or part of a tree on Council managed land:

- that substantially obscures essential vision or obstructs access for traffic, pedestrians or essential maintenance vehicles;
- that is dead, burnt out or damaged and has a high associated risk;
- that is structurally unsound;
- that prevents construction and maintenance of essential assets and/or services (where there is no reasonable alternative); or
- that has a high associated risk.

With regard to a property owner constructing a fence on the property boundary with Council managed land where a tree or tree part needs to be removed, then a "Request for Tree Work/Removal (Council Managed Land)" form, needs to be submitted to Council for consideration. If permission to perform the tree work is granted, it is to be carried out at the property owner's expense. Council will seek quotes from reputable, suitably qualified and insured arborists or tree contractors and submit these to the customer. Once the customer's payment has been processed the work will be initiated by Council. Significant trees located on the property boundary will need to be retained and the fence located around the tree on the private property with no attachment or injury to the tree.

When a tree is assessed as requiring removal the following different levels of consultation apply:

- Significant trees within township precincts that are not assessed as imminently dangerous: Consultation will occur with Councillors, the community and/or affected neighbouring property owners.
- Significant trees with extreme or severe risk that are assessed as imminently dangerous: The tree will be removed as soon as possible with advice to the Divisional Councillor, community and/or affected neighbouring property owners.
- Trees within rural areas and/or that are classified as non-significant will be removed at the discretion of the suitably qualified and duly authorised officer.

5.0 When Council will not prune or remove a tree

With the exception of the clauses discussed previously, Council will not remove or approve removal of a tree or part of a tree on Council managed land:

- that is in good health;
- that has heritage, landscape or environmental value that outweighs associated risk;
- on the basis that it drops leaves, berries, twigs, needles, flowers, sap, fruit or nuts (with the exception of the of *Araucaria bidwillii*, bunya pine, which needs to have the large cones removed to prevent injury and damage);
- where the removal of part of the tree is considered to be a suitable alternative;
- to enhance views;
- to increase natural light;
- to improve street lighting of private property;
- to reduce animal droppings from being deposited on personal property;
- to address concerns that there is potential for damage to underground services (unless supported by written expert advice and only where reasonable alternatives are not feasible);
- for the reduction of bushfire risk (unless it is substantiated to the satisfaction of the Manager or delegated officer);
- because of minor lifting of driveways and paths; or
- because of the presence of white ants unless they have caused structural damage with a high associated risk.

6.0 Weed species removal

Priority will be given to the removal of class 1 weed trees declared within the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. Commensurate with resources, other classes of declared or environmental weed trees will be assessed for their environmental impact and considered for possible prioritised removal.

7.0 Protection of trees during construction

Council is committed to protecting and preserving trees during construction by adhering to accepted arboricultural practices, including Australian Standard 4970: Protection of Trees on Construction Sites.

Approved by:

SCENIC RIM REGIONAL COUNCIL
15 December 2009

ATTACHMENT B

PROCEDURE HIGH RISK TREE MANAGEMENT FOR BUNYA PINE TREES

- 1.0 Continue the practice of not propagating, stocking or selling bunya pines to the public and not approving their planting in parks or along roadsides.
- 2.0 If previously unidentified trees are found on parkland, assess options for managing them, which may include but not be exclusive to:
 - Mulching and planting up underneath trees to reduce the likelihood of occupancy of the area;
 - Outright removal of lower significance trees in known high risk areas or where small trees are able to be removed with minimal impact;
 - Erecting signage;
 - Annually inspecting and removing bunya cones;
 - Erecting engineered structural protection over pathways;
 - Reducing occupancy of the target zone; and
 - Moving infrastructure.
- 3.0 For those trees that are retained:
 - To ensure heightened seasonal awareness, erect danger signage on posts near retained trees at the beginning of November and take them down at the end of March.



- Monitor the trees from November onwards and de-cone trees (where recommended) when cones have developed to the stage where they are clearly visible.
 - Every two years (schedule through Dataworks) to have the retained bunya pines hazard assessed by an arborist with particular regard to the continued effectiveness of any recommended control measures that have been adopted.
- 4.0 Implement recommendations that come out of inspections by a qualified arborist.
 - 5.0 Preserve and protect the existing trees through standard arboricultural practices.

Approved by:

SCENIC RIM REGIONAL COUNCIL
26 July 2011