

## Strategic policy

### Tree and Native Vegetation Management (Council controlled land)

Corporate Plan reference:	3.2 Well-managed and maintained open space, waterways and foreshore assets  3.2.5 Develop a Tree and Native Vegetation Policy to enhance the region's urban forest and implement a street tree planting program
Endorsed by Council on:	<Insert Ordinary Meeting Date>
Manager responsible for policy:	Manager Parks and Gardens, Infrastructure Services

The Sunshine Coast's character, identity and lifestyle is created by its geography, vegetation and built form. Trees and vegetation, whether located in the urban forest or in natural plant communities, help shape the region through the provision of environmental, social, health and economic benefits. They are a major component of the natural capital that makes up the region. There is increasing pressure both globally and locally to manage vegetation including trees as valuable community assets.

Council's vision to be Australia's most sustainable region - vibrant, green, diverse - entails an obligation to manage and preserve trees and native vegetation on council controlled land in an efficient, sustainable and safe manner, while preserving the unique character of the region for current and future generations.

### Policy purpose

This policy provides a framework for the management of trees and native vegetation on council controlled land and should be read in conjunction with the associated guidelines and supporting documents.

### Policy outcome

The effective management of trees across the Sunshine Coast region, as evidenced by:

- Trees and native vegetation are recognised and managed as important assets.
- Predominance of locally native species in the built and natural landscape.
- Natural and constructed assets are compatible with, and accommodate each other.
- Trees primarily managed from a public risk management perspective.
- Higher rates of retention and protection of trees and native vegetation.

- Minimum of no net loss of trees and native vegetation on council controlled land.

## Policy scope

This policy applies to any activity involving or with the potential to affect trees and native vegetation on council controlled land.

This policy does not replace requirements determined by legislation and associated regulations, local laws or planning scheme requirements.

This policy does not apply to:

- The removal of regrowth where it can be demonstrated as necessary to maintain the functionality and condition of infrastructure as per the original design or purpose (e.g. constructed drains or existing fire breaks).
- Removal of trees and native vegetation under a permit or approval where offset planting must be provided as a condition of that approval.
- Declared pest plants.

## Policy statement

Council recognises and seeks to sustain the contribution that trees and native vegetation make to the region, and seeks to promote compatibility with infrastructure through sound planning and management practices. These practices are based on the concept of ensuring the 'right tree in the right place' and a 'no net loss' approach.

Trees are predominantly managed from a risk management perspective. Native vegetation is managed predominantly from an ecological perspective. However, some flexibility should be considered in circumstances where an alternative management approach is supported by, and of greater benefit to, the wider community.

## Guiding principles

This policy and its implementation are guided by the following principles:

- A risk management approach that places public safety as the primary consideration in assessing trees.
- Well planned design and future management considerations for maximum benefits.
- Protection and retention of existing trees and native vegetation.
- No net loss.
- Preference for locally native species.
- A consultative approach.
- An informed and engaged community.

## Tree Management Activities

The tree management framework to be applied at Sunshine Coast Council comprises four key activities. The specific requirements of each situation will dictate the type of activity to be applied. Each activity will be informed by the appropriate level of consultation.

The decision making parameters are set out here and the decision making process is set out in the associated guidelines. While the decisions generally rest with the relevant Manager or Director, where necessary, the Chief Executive Officer or council can provide resolution on more complex matters.

### ***Assessment and Maintenance***

Tree assessment and maintenance will be conducted on a risk management priority basis, with the emphasis on both risk to public safety and property. A range of risk management strategies may be applied in different circumstances, all of which should be balanced against the retention value of the tree or vegetation. Maintenance will generally not be conducted for non-risk management based reasons, however it is acknowledged that retaining existing scenic amenity/views may be a community priority.

Tree assessment and subsequent maintenance will be conducted by council's arboricultural staff and/or approved contractors.

### ***Removal & Offsets***

Trees and native vegetation will be retained, protected and enhanced where possible and removed only as a last resort option, predominately based on risk management. Damage, removal or death of trees or native vegetation will be compensated through replacement, enhancement or offsets of an equivalent value or better.

Offset planting is required to compensate for the loss of trees or native vegetation that has been removed, killed or irreparably damaged through man-made causes. Offsets will be located to achieve the best possible benefit, such as to enhance wildlife corridors in urban environments, increase the street tree population or to enhance environmentally strategic locations.

Offset plantings are to be planned and managed to replace the value lost within the shortest practical time. Costs associated with the provision of an offset management plan and associated offset plantings and maintenance are the responsibility of the person or entity requiring or causing the removal. Where the cause of death or failure of the tree is natural or unknown, the asset custodian will be responsible for providing the offset planting.

### ***Planting / New Works***

Works are to be planned, designed, constructed and maintained in a manner that accounts for the full lifecycle requirements and ensures the longevity, sustainability and compatibility of trees and native vegetation, and other infrastructure. A balance is to be achieved between competing needs including public safety, amenity and character, environment and infrastructure.

All plantings (including offsets and replacements) should give preference to locally native species where these species are suitable and fit for the purpose and location. Existing view lines shall be preserved (as referenced in the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014, Theme 6 – Community identity, character and social inclusion, 38.1 (d)).

Current viewsheds should be preserved, this can be measured by global positional systems. In the event of loss of trees and vegetation due to natural events, pre-existing views will be taken into account when conducting revegetation works.

### ***Unauthorised Interference***

Interference with and/or damage to trees and native vegetation is prohibited and will be managed in accordance with the local laws and relevant legislation. Among other things, council may seek cost recovery and compensation for any trees or vegetation damaged as a result of unauthorised actions.

Replacement plantings will be required and should be conducted at or nearby the site of the damaged trees or vegetation, which may require protective screenings to preserve the new plantings and replace the original view line constraints as considered appropriate by council.

## **Consultation**

The council custodian with management responsibility for trees or native vegetation is to be consulted about proposed works that involves the trees or vegetation under their management.

Improved council and community awareness of trees and native vegetation as assets and their management requirements, is critical to their sustainable management. Council will promote responsible arboriculture and provide arboricultural advice to residents and property owners concerning trees on council controlled land.

The community and/or relevant councillors will be consulted prior to proposed tree works in accordance with council's Community Engagement Framework.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

All staff within council, involved in planning, design, construction or maintenance works that may involve or affect trees or native vegetation on council controlled land are responsible for consulting with the branch with custodianship for those trees or native vegetation.

Community Response is responsible for investigating unauthorised vegetation removal or damage and implementing the appropriate enforcement action in consultation with the Manager, Parks and Gardens and/or the Manager, Environmental Operations.

The Manager, Parks and Gardens and the Manager, Environmental Operations are responsible for providing advice in relation to tree and native vegetation management; and for the development, implementation and review of documents to support the implementation of this policy within their areas of responsibility.

Management Responsibility for Trees and Native Vegetation					
Type of Open Space		Management and Maintenance		Offset Method Determination	
		Trees	Native Vegetation	Trees	Native Vegetation
Open Space / Community Land	Formalised Open Space – Parks, Amenity Reserves, Precincts	Parks & Gardens	Parks & Gardens	Parks & Gardens	Parks & Gardens
	Natural Areas - Bushland Reserves, Dunal Areas	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations
	Community Facilities - Leased	As per lease conditions		Parks & Gardens	Environmental Operations
	- Council Managed	Parks & Gardens	Environmental Operations	Parks & Gardens	Environmental Operations
Road Reserve	Urban Road	Parks & Gardens	Environmental Operations	Parks & Gardens	Parks & Gardens
	Rural Road - ** low / medium conservation value	Parks & Gardens	Environmental Operations	Parks & Gardens	Environmental Operations
	Rural Road - ** high / very high conservation value	Parks & Gardens	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations
	Unformed Road Reserve	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations	Environmental Operations

\* Please note legislative requirements may apply and take precedence. Refer to IS Environment Officers for advice.

\*\* Guidelines for Rural Road Reserves - reference chart for works within rural road reserves of the Shunshine Coast.

The Branch Manager with responsibility for managing the trees and native vegetation and the Branch Manager responsible for the proposed works are responsible for resolving disputes regarding the application of this policy.

The Chief Executive Officer or council is responsible for making a final determination in situations where a consensus cannot be reached. Council is responsible for the endorsement in principle of this policy.

## Measurement of success

- No reduction in the overall population and canopy cover of trees and native vegetation on council controlled land.
- Clear allocation of responsibility for establishment and management of offsets.
- Offsets are identified and established for all council works that involve tree or vegetation removal.
- Offsets are identified and established for unlawful interference or removal activities.
- A reduction in damage and mortality of trees and native vegetation during and following construction activities.
- An increase in the proportion of locally native species used in all works.
- Assessments of requests for tree removal or modification are carried out utilising a risk management approach that places public safety as the primary consideration.

## Definitions

Interference in relation to trees or vegetation	to engage in any activity damaging or leading to the death, disfigurement or mutilation of vegetation (as per Local Law No. 4).
Native Vegetation	in relation to this policy, 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.
Offset	<p>planting undertaken to counterbalance the impact caused by a loss of trees or native vegetation from a particular location and/or the landscape.</p> <p><b>Environmental offsets are established at a minimum ratio of 1 for 1</b> (predominantly stands of native vegetation managed by Environmental Operations Branch, where all types and layers of vegetation within the proposed affected area require offsetting i.e. from ground covers through to trees).</p> <p><b>Amenity offsets are established in accordance with the Tree Retention Value – Priority Matrix (refer to appendix B, Tree Management Guideline).</b> (predominantly a tree or stand of trees in a landscaped area such as a park or road reserve, managed by Parks and Gardens Branch.</p>
Risk	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 trees and the proximity of roads, buildings and other structures.
Tree	long lived woody perennial plant with one or relatively few main stems or trunks, usually greater than 5 metres in height on maturity.

## Related policies and legislation

Parks and Gardens Branch Guideline – Tree Management

Infrastructure Services Departmental Guideline – Environmental Offset Provision & Management

Local Law No. 1 (Administration) 2011

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

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Nature Conservation Act 1992

Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006 and Management Program 2006-2016

Queensland Heritage Act 1992

Vegetation Management Act 1999

South East Queensland Ecological Restoration Framework

Version control:

Version	Reason/ Trigger	Change (Y/N)	Endorsed/ Reviewed by	Date
---------	-----------------	--------------	-----------------------	------

1.0	e.g. Create new			DD/MM/YYYY
	e.g. Review			

© Sunshine Coast Regional Council 2009-current. Sunshine Coast Council™ is a registered trademark of Sunshine Coast Regional Council.