

ITEM 8 POST EXHIBITION - TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND CUSTOMER GUIDE

Council endorsed the Urban Greening Strategy 2017 – 2037 to increase the tree canopy cover in priority suburbs to 35% by 2046 and to increase the quality and quantity of all vegetation and open green space in urban settings. Trees and vegetation located on private and public lands are currently managed under three separate Council policies. A draft Tree Management Council Policy was developed to consolidate three (3) tree policies to provide a consistent approach for the management of trees on both private and Council owned land.

On 7 November 2022, Council resolved to exhibit the draft Tree Management Council Policy, draft customer guide and the draft Development Control Plan (DCP) Chapters for a minimum of 28 days.

This report proposes the consolidation of three (3) tree policies into one (1) draft Tree Management Council Policy to consistently guide the management of trees on both private and Council owned land, supported by a customer guide. A separate report has been prepared for Council to consider relating to the exhibited draft updated Wollongong DCP 2009 Chapters - E17: Preservation and Management of Trees and Vegetation, E18: Native Biodiversity Impact Assessment, B6: Development in the Illawarra Escarpment, Appendix 4: Definitions.

RECOMMENDATION

The following updated documents be adopted:

- 1 Tree Management Policy
- 2 Managing Trees in Wollongong – A customer guide

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Paul Tracey, Manager Open Space + Environmental Services
Authorised by: Joanne Page, Director Infrastructure + Works

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Tree Management Policy (revised draft)
- 2 Managing trees in Wollongong - A customer guide (revised draft)
- 3 Summary of submissions - Tree Management Policy and Guideline

BACKGROUND

Council endorsed the Urban Greening Strategy 2017 - 2037 to increase the tree canopy cover in priority suburbs to 35% by 2046 and to increase the quality and quantity of all vegetation and open green space in urban settings.

Wollongong's ageing urban forest is under pressure from shrinking urban lot sizes and increasing urban consolidation and without ongoing new tree plantings on both public and private land, the tree canopy will decrease below the current average of 17% across Wollongong. The impact of current and future tree loss will most likely be realised on private land which makes up 75% of the urban forest estate.

To deliver on the goals of the Urban Greening Strategy – Grow, Manage, Improve and Engage – five (5) key pinch points (drivers for the review of the tree management framework) needed to be addressed in the updated Policy:

1. Managing trees within the powerline network and the conflict with Endeavour Energy's tree pruning practices and Endeavour's preference for no vegetation under the power network.
2. The ongoing vandalism of trees which has been largely reactive, costly, difficult to manage, and divides the community
3. The community has challenged proposed tree planting on high need foreshore reserves, when private views are perceived to be negatively impacted

4. The current Tree Permit process on private land is overly prescriptive, and often draws strong community response particularly that it creates a negative burden and is not consistent with Council's approach to reviewing its own planting of trees.
5. Sourcing appropriate Tree stock for new plantings in the nursery industry has been challenging due to unprecedented demand from other state and local government greening programs and the opportunity of refocussing our own Botanic Gardens nursery to meet this demand.

A draft Tree Management Policy, which consolidated the three (3) policies and addressed each of the five (5) pinch points was considered by Council on 7 November 2022. Council resolved to exhibit the draft Tree Management Council Policy, associated draft customer guide and the draft Development Control Plan (DCP) Chapters for a minimum of 28 days.

The customer focussed guide was introduced to make it easier for the community to understand tree management controls on public and private land.

Concurrent with the revision of the policy framework the relevant chapters of the Development Control Plan 2009 were amended to reflect the new policy direction.

Council resolved unanimously -

- 1 The following proposed draft documents be placed on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days and concurrently with the recently endorsed review of the Vegetation Chapters of the Wollongong Development Control Plan 2009:
 - a Tree Management Policy
 - b Managing trees in Wollongong – A customer guide
- 2 Following the exhibition period, a report outlining the submissions received during the exhibition period be prepared for Council to consider including any post exhibition revised amendment for adoption.

On 17 October 2022 Council considered a report proposing house-keeping amendments to three Chapters of Wollongong DCP 2009 that contain controls for the management of vegetation and resolved to exhibit the updated draft Chapters. Council resolved -

- 1 The following updated draft chapters of the Wollongong DCP 2009 be exhibited for a minimum period of 28 days –
 - a Chapter E17: Preservation and Management of Trees and Vegetation.
 - b Chapter E18: Native Biodiversity Impact Assessment.
 - c Chapter B6: Development in the Illawarra Escarpment.
 - d Appendix 4: Definitions.
- 2 Following the exhibition period, a report outlining the submissions received during the exhibition period be prepared for Council to consider concurrently with the Tree Management Policy, including any post exhibition revised amendments for adoption.

PROPOSAL

This report addresses the consistent themes raised in submissions on the draft Tree Management Policy and Managing trees in Wollongong – A customer guide. There was general support for the overall policy direction and change in approach from the 44 submissions received during the exhibition period, and from verbal feedback received from the Neighbourhood Forums and hosted sessions.

Respondents supported:

- bringing tree management controls and services into one policy,
- allowing some self-service for tree management on private property,
- the community focussed customer guideline,
- the right tree/right place principle aligned with urban greening objectives.

The Community feedback on the five pinch points which were the drivers for the policy change is shown in the table below.

Pinch-point	Feedback
Powerline Management	Electricity Network Provider support for risk-based approach under wires
Vandalism	Support for additional measures and broader engagement approach
Tree Permit Procedures	Support for self-service and Right tree/Right place
Tree Supply	Support for native tree first approach
Views	Support for guiding principles

There were a number of additional tree-related themes raised during the consultation, which are shown in the table below.

Theme	Council response	Addressed by Policy
Powerline Management	Wollongong's current Electricity Network Supplier supports the proposed risk-based approach. This will realise appropriate trees planted under wires and prevent negative vegetation management outcomes for new trees under the network.	Yes
Vegetation management to improve solar access	Council will not prune trees for the sole purpose of improving solar access. The onus is on the property owner to assess the viability of solar solutions based on site constraints - which include other buildings, hill shade, local infrastructure, and trees.	Yes
Biodiversity protection and enhancement	Right tree/right place approach allows for selection of local natives, natives, and limited exotics in places where they are best suited.	Yes
Habitat protection and creation	Urban greening will realise some additional habitat and environmental connections. Focus of the policy is that tree management functions are aligned with growing tree canopy. Habitat protection is covered by environmental laws referenced in the policy which inform existing and proposed tree management operations.	Not within the scope of this Policy.
Ecosystems and ecosystem function	Wetland ecology, riparian ecosystems, water quality, lowland biodiversity, bee, and pollinator ecology are outside the scope of this policy review. Habitat loss associated with individual tree pruning or removal is managed as part of the tree assessment process, including environmental and ecological assessments. Vegetation Management Plans (VMPs) are employed in natural areas to guide vegetation management works. Many coastal processes are managed through the Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP), Dune Management Strategy and Estuary Management Plans. A coastal management program is being prepared in accordance with the Coastal Management Act 2016. A coastal management program already exists for Lake Illawarra.	Not within the scope of this Policy.

Theme	Council response	Addressed by Policy
Small trees (under 5m) also have value – biodiversity, habitat, ecological function	Policy recognises all trees have value, but larger trees which provide significantly more benefits to people, have the most protection. Small trees with biodiversity value are protected where environmental regulatory requirements referenced in the policy apply. The draft Policy does make it easier to remove small trees, when they are the wrong tree in the wrong place.	Yes
Removing exotic trees	Some exotic species play an important role in the urban forest – providing shade where natives won't thrive. All trees that are removed must satisfy the reasons for removal outlined in the policy.	Yes
Weed management and emerging weed species	Policy framework considers 'Unsuitable species in location' as a reason for tree removal. The <i>South-East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2023-2027 – Priority Weeds</i> lists species for targeted containment and control.	Yes
Trees fit for future climate	Right tree/right place considers future climate suitability.	Yes
Dangerous trees	Council uses an internationally accepted risk management approach for tree management. The Tree Permit Procedure considers the risk an individual tree poses to harm people or substantial property.	Yes
Tree management controls associated with Development	See feedback and responses in the concurrent report – <i>Post Exhibition – Review of various DCP chapters relating to management of vegetation</i>	No
Views	Trees not pruned or removed to improve views on private land. View assessment procedure to manage tree plantings on public land.	Yes
Historic Views (including Lake Illawarra)	Restoration and management of historic views cannot be considered under the proposed policy where environmental legislation applies to vegetation, because tree management operations must not contravene those requirements. It is unlawful for Council to carry out vegetation management works at sites where regulatory requirements prohibit those activities. No amendment to the policy can override environmental regulatory requirements that are in effect. The restoration of historic views is contrary to the intent of the policy and Urban Greening Strategy 2017-2037 – which aims to increase tree canopy across Wollongong.	No. Policy cannot override legislation.
Increased community consultation on public tree planting	Controls in place to select and position trees to deliver maximum benefit to the community and prevent devastating impacts on private views.	Yes

Theme	Council response	Addressed by Policy
Right Tree/Right Place considerations	Tree management procedures which are delivered consistent with the policy consider the context and constraints of the planting site. Context includes proximity to natural areas, heritage, environmental protections, and sensitivity to existing planting themes. Constraints include compacted soils, infrastructure above and below ground, available soil volumes, traffic signals and thoroughfares.	Yes
Damage to infrastructure from trees	Policy provides framework for tree pruning and removal consents. Tree removal considerations include 'unavoidable conflict between the tree and infrastructure'.	Yes
Enforcement, compliance, and fines	Policy approach consistent with the Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2022. Policy settings encourage the community to value and protect trees and new tree plantings.	Yes

Amendments to the draft Tree Management Policy and Customer Guide

Following the public exhibition feedback, the draft Tree Management Policy has been amended to include:

Two (2) new references in the list of regulatory instruments relevant to the policy:

Coastal Management Act 2016

State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021 (Chapter 2: Coastal Management)

The following paper as a reference for tree assessment and risk management:

Mattheck, C., & Breloer, H. (1994). Field Guide for Visual Tree Assessment (VTA). Arboricultural Journal, 18, 1-23.

A correction to the declared tree definition in the Tree Management Policy and Guideline to match correct definition in proposed DCP –

From:

'5 metres in height or greater and/or Trunk diameter of 30cm or greater (measured at ground level)'

To:

'5 metres or more in height; or

Have a diameter of 30cm (300mm) or more measured at ground level'

A statement has been added to the Tree Management Policy and Guide to address the consistent theme of solar access raised in submissions.

Council will not consent to tree pruning (public trees) for the sole purpose of improving solar access.

Minor spelling or grammatical errors have been corrected as per the marked-up copies of the Tree Management Policy and Guideline that are attached to this report.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The proposed Tree Management Policy and Managing Trees in Wollongong – A customer guide were placed on Public Exhibition for the period 14 November to 19 December 2022 – a total of 35 days. The documents were hosted on the Our Wollongong engagement page for the duration of the exhibition.

A media release was posted during the public exhibition on 2 December 2022.

Social media was used as follows: Facebook posts promoting the exhibition were published on 21 November and 14 December 2022, as well as an Instagram post on 21 November 2022.

During the exhibition a total of 3 social media posts were released to further inform the community about the exhibition. Facebook posts occurred on 21 November, 22 November and 14 December and an Instagram post occurred on 21 November.

During the engagement period we contacted 3000 people registered on the Our Wollongong page to let them know a draft Tree Management Policy, Customer Guide and revised DCP chapters were on public exhibition. Of those 3000 people – 966 people went to the Our Wollongong webpage to see the information about the policy – 305 people downloaded content from the site and 44 people / groups read through the policy and DCP documents and provided a considered written submission. The 44 written submissions were received from 33 individuals and 11 community organisations / business groups.

During the exhibition staff also hosted 2 online information sessions with 17 participants. Staff attended all the active Neighbourhood Forums (NF1, NF7, NF5, NF4, NF8) at their November/December meetings to present the proposed policy/DCP and answer questions. Council staff attended an information day at the Botanic Gardens Greenplan sale on 18 November 2022 to distribute information, answer questions and encourage people to make a submission.

The Engagement Plan for the public exhibition of the draft tree Management Policy and associated DCP Chapters was as follows:

Stakeholder	Engagement Methods
Individuals, groups, or organisations with an interest in the project.	Briefings; letterbox drops, EHQ page, EHQ tools
Private landowners	Media (including social media), library information EHQ page, feedback form
Residents	Media (including social media), library information EHQ page, feedback form
Environment/conservation groups	Email, EHQ page, feedback form
Bushcare groups	Email, EHQ page, feedback form
Register of interest – environment	E-newsletter, EHQ page, feedback form
Neighbourhood Forums & NIRAG	Email, EHQ page, feedback form
Arboriculture Industry – Local service providers	Direct engagement with Consultants, Email, EHQ page, feedback form
Endeavour Energy	Email, EHQ page, feedback form

Copies of the suite of documents were made available at -

- All Council libraries;
- Council's Customer Service Centre, Ground Floor Administration Building, 41 Burelli Street Wollongong; and
- Council's website www.our.wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Relevant Divisions within Council were also advised of the exhibition.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong Our Future 2032 – Community Strategic Plan Goals. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan 2032	
Strategy	
Goal 1: We value and protect our environment.	
1.1	The community is actively involved in the expansion, improvement and preservation of our waterways, green corridors and other natural areas connecting the escarpment to the sea.
1.2	Manage and effectively improve the cleanliness, health, biodiversity of land and water including creeks, lakes, waterways and oceans.
1.3	Increase our resilience to natural disasters and a changing climate to protect life, property and the environment.
Goal 5: We have a healthy community in a liveable city.	
5.2	Urban areas are created and maintained to provide a healthy and safe living environment for our community.
5.4	Provide a variety of quality and accessible public places and opportunities for sport, play, leisure, recreation, learning and cultural activities in the community.
5.7	Provide an appropriate range of active and passive open spaces and facilities to cater for traditional and emerging recreational pursuits.
5.12	Plan and deliver an accessible, safe, clean and inviting public domain.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The proposed changes will support the efficient delivery of the Urban Greening Strategy key goal to increase canopy cover in our urban areas to support increased community wellbeing and access and transport.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Reputational risk –This customer focussed draft Policy framework aims to ensure consistency in Council's management of trees across public and private land. The increased opportunity for property owners to self-manage minor tree issues without the need for a permit will support a greater customer response, and broader response mechanisms to tree vandalism which will allow Council officers to support community sentiment for loss of tree canopy.

Risk to members of the public – remains low through effective tree management practices being applied consistently to the urban forest.

Operational risk - reduced through consistent, clear guidelines and procedures for Council officers.

Property and Financial risks - reduced through effective tree management practices applied consistently to the urban forest. The potential impacts from trees on infrastructure are minimised through a right tree right place approach.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The changes have been considered within the context of existing operational funding.

If the Policy is adopted, the proposed change to the tree permit system where a resident who chooses not to replant a tree on their property and can pay a fee to plant a tree on public land to compensate loss of tree canopy will be updated for Council consideration as part of the draft fees and charges for 2023-24.

CONCLUSION

A review of the tree management policy framework has been conducted to enhance the delivery of the Urban Greening Strategy and improve customer experience in relation to tree management in Wollongong.

It is recommended that Council resolve to adopt the updated Tree Management Policy and Managing Trees in Wollongong – A customer guide concurrently with the updated Wollongong DCP 2009 Chapters - E17: Preservation and Management of Trees and Vegetation; E18: Native Biodiversity Impact Assessment; B6: Development in the Illawarra Escarpment; and Appendix 4: Definitions.

Council staff will provide a feedback summary to each of the 44 people / groups who made submissions and to the neighbourhood forums.



ADOPTED BY COUNCIL: : [TO BE COMPLETED BY GOVERNANCE]

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to guide Wollongong City Council's ongoing commitment to the planting, protection, and management of the urban forest.

This policy supports Council's tree management goals set out in the Urban Greening Strategy 2017-37 and provides a consistent approach to managing public and privately-owned trees.

POLICY INTENT

The main objectives of this policy are to:

- Increase tree canopy cover in urban areas using effective tree management practices.
- Engage the community to plant, value and protect trees in Wollongong using a customer focussed approach
- Support greening, environmental and place-making objectives set out in the Urban Greening Strategy 2017-37 and the Our Wollongong Our Future 2032 Community Strategic Plan
- Establish clear and consistent guidelines for the management of public and privately owned trees, including tree risk management
- Enable and enforce controls which limit tree canopy loss, consistent with Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2022.
- Increase community participation in greening activities, reduce the amount of tree vandalism and grow community stewardship of trees on public and private land.
- Embed a community consultation approach for view management which mitigates the impact on residents and maximises benefits for the community.

WOLLONGONG 2032 OBJECTIVES

Our Wollongong Our Future 2032 outlines the community's main priorities for the future and includes strategies for achieving them. This policy specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan	Delivery Program 2022 – 2026
Goal	Actions
Goal 1: We Value and Protect our Environment.	<p>1.1 The community is actively involved in the expansion, improvement and preservation of our waterways, green corridors and other natural areas connecting the escarpment to the sea.</p> <p>1.2 Manage and effectively improve the cleanliness, health, biodiversity of land and water including creeks, lakes, waterways and oceans.</p> <p>1.3 Increase our resilience to natural disasters and a changing climate to protect life, property, and the environment.</p>
Goal 5: We have a healthy community in a liveable city.	<p>5.2 Urban areas are created and maintained to provide a healthy and safe living environment for our community.</p> <p>5.4 Provide a variety of quality and accessible public places and opportunities for sport, play, leisure, recreation, learning and cultural activities in the community.</p>

TREE MANAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

5.7 Provide an appropriate range of active and passive open spaces and facilities to cater for traditional and emerging recreational pursuits.

POLICY

1. Where does the tree management policy apply?

This Policy applies to trees on public and private land across the Wollongong City Council Local Government Area.

Tree management controls on private land and the issue of Tree Permits through the Tree Permit Procedure are enabled by the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021* and provisions in the Wollongong Development Control Plan.

2. Council's tree management approach – minimum intervention, maximum benefits

Trees are a vital ingredient for quality living conditions around our homes, commercial places, and our shared open spaces. Trees provide us with significant benefits (see our [Greening your suburb](#) page) which are most abundant when trees are large and mature. Larger trees provide the most benefits which makes them valuable to us and worthy of careful species selection, location planning and protection. All trees in the Wollongong Local Government Area make up our urban forest and contribute to an enhanced quality of life for the community.

Wollongong has an average canopy cover of 17% in the places where people live. It's easy to see the forested escarpment overlooking our city and think we have enough trees. Most of the benefits trees provide can't be realised at a distance like shade, cooling, air quality and local amenity. It's important to grow tree canopy in the town centres and suburbs to ensure these benefits are realised by everyone.

More than 50% of trees in Wollongong's urban forest are mature and delivering maximum benefits right now. As these trees age and decline the pool of benefits they provide for the community will diminish. To ensure the community realises tree benefits for years to come, these trees will need to be replaced with new tree plantings. This policy requires that trees removed from the urban forest are replaced with one or more trees to retain and grow canopy.

The best trees in the urban forest are often the ones we leave alone but this is rarely appropriate or realistic in the urban setting. Tree management is often about choosing the least-worst option to minimise the impact on the tree and action a specific safety, conflict or nuisance issue for the community. Taking this approach is why we protect trees ~~first and foremost~~^{first} and exhaust all management options (~~least-worst~~^{least worst} to worst) before considering tree removal. Tree removal will always be considered as the last resort when no other intervention will deliver an appropriate outcome for the community.

To get the maximum benefit from our trees, they will require some management throughout their lifetimes to ensure trees improve (and not degrade) the places where we live, work and play. The right tree in the right place with the right management inputs at the right time will realise its maximum benefit to the community.

To achieve maximum benefits from our urban forest, management practices described in this policy need to:

- be consistently applied to all trees to ensure a quality urban forest for everyone in Wollongong.
- adhere to best practise established in urban forestry (the discipline of managing all the trees in a defined urban area like a Local Government Area) and arboriculture, technical guidelines, and Australian Standards.
- be applied to the right tree in the right place - recognising that the wrong tree in the wrong place can create unreasonable problems, conflict, and risk.
- be the minimum intervention required to mitigate a conflict, nuisance or risk and minimise any negative impact on the tree over time

TREE MANAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

- be delivered within timeframes which consider the level of risk to people and substantial property and by suitably qualified Council staff
- provide means for the community to carry out some routine tree maintenance on private property of the sort which keeps trees and infrastructure in good condition.
- satisfy the greening expectations and aspirations of the Wollongong community and encourages people to plant trees.

To ensure the urban forest continues to grow and provide benefits to the community, trees within it require protection. Preventing loss of larger canopy trees is addressed through the Tree Permit process and Council tree maintenance programs.

Council is committed to protecting trees on public and private land using multiple approaches, including but not limited to, community engagement programs and compliance and enforcement measures.

3. Policy Statement

• Tree Pruning and Removal

For the purposes of this policy, a prescribed tree is defined **on privately-owned land** as follows:

- 5 metres in height or greater; ~~and/or~~
- Trunk diameter of 30cm or greater (measured at ground level).

This section should be read in conjunction with Chapter E17: Management of Trees and Vegetation of the Wollongong Development Control Plan 2009.

Two processes have been established to deal with the assessment and approval for tree pruning/removal on **private land**:

- Tree Management Permit (generally for individual/small scale tree removal and pruning in urban areas).
- Development consent via either Complying Development or Development application (for the removal or pruning of trees on a site that is subject of a proposed development). Refer to Chapter E17: Management of Trees and Vegetation of the Wollongong Development Control Plan 2009.

One process applies on **public land** for tree pruning/removal:

- a Tree Assessment (VTA) is the minimum assessment undertaken by qualified Arborist to determine management actions including pruning or removal of trees.

All trees removed on public land are listed on Council's website and detail the reason for removal.

• Reasons for tree removal

The reasons for the removal of trees must meet one of the following criteria:

Land to which criteria applies:	Reason:
Public and Private Land	Emergency tree works
Public and Private Land	Mitigate a risk to people or substantial property
Public and Private Land	Dead or dying tree
Public and Private Land	Unavoidable conflict between the tree and infrastructure
Public Land Only	Asset renewal program
Private Land Only	Exempt tree species
Public and Private Land	Unsuitable species in location

TREE MANAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

A Tree Permit is generally required to remove a tree on private land and the property owner should check before commencing any works on the tree.

Public trees are assessed by qualified Arborists via our customer request process.

- **Non-Actionable reasons for tree removal**

Functions which are part of the normal biological cycle of trees are not actionable reasons for tree removal. These include shedding of leaves, bark, flowers, fruit, foraging insects, birds, bats, and small sticks.

Overhanging limbs and other nuisance issues will be assessed through the Tree Permit process on private property or the Customer Request process if the tree is on public land.

The pruning or removal of trees on private property to improve or create private views will not be approved. The management of public views is assessed and actioned on a site-specific basis.

Unsubstantiated claims about conflicts with infrastructure will be followed up with requests for evidence. The onus is on the property owner to demonstrate (by providing evidence) that a public tree is causing damage to substantial private property. Property owners are also expected to provide evidence to support claims about substantial property being negatively impacted by a privately owned tree.

- **Tree Risk Management**

Council manages trees to minimise the risk to our community. Council's tree assessment process uses the internationally recognised tree risk assessment framework – Visual Tree Assessment (Mattheck and Breloar, (1994)). Tree management actions are informed by evidence-based decision making and determined by expert arborists. Council's arborists have the experience and qualifications to perform the required tree inspection or risk assessment to accepted industry standards and best practise.

Council will manage trees to achieve a level of risk that is As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). Council will maintain electronic records of evidence collected and management actions which relate to risk management of trees.

Risks are identified, prioritised, and actioned in consideration of Council's risk management framework and available operational resources.

- **Tree Maintenance**

Trees require maintenance throughout their lifetime so that people will realise the benefits trees provide and to maximise trees useful life expectancy. Council maintains public trees to ensure they deliver the maximum benefit to the community throughout their lifetime.

Council will continue to record tree attributes in the electronic tree inventory, prioritise tree works using a risk-management approach and implement a proactive tree maintenance program across the city.

Council will not consent to tree pruning for the sole purpose of improving solar access.

The community is encouraged to do some limited tree maintenance on private property (Trees on your property - customer guide) to maintain tree canopy in the urban forest. Council supports the use of qualified arborists to maintain trees on private property.

- **Tree Replacement**

Council's Urban Greening Strategy and Climate Change Adaptation/Mitigation Plans are drivers behind Council programs which are realising thousands of new trees being planted and established in our urban forest. A sustained tree planting effort over years, timely maintenance and ongoing protection will ensure that trees provide benefits for us that will increase significantly as they grow and mature.

Employing tree management practices that are proactive ensures the longest possible yield of benefits (Useful Tree Life). Trees selected for planting should be the largest tree species which are compatible with the growing space and surrounding infrastructure.

TREE MANAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

Tree replacement for trees removed on private land is mandatory and consistent with the replacement practice on public land. As part of the tree permit process, customers will receive a voucher for a replacement tree from Council's Greenplan Nursery. In circumstances where a tree can't be replaced on privately-owned property, An additional fee is payable as part of the tree permit application and will be used to fund tree planting on public land where the tree can be maintained throughout its life by Council.

• Tree Planting

Tree planting is a continuous process to ensure an even distribution of tree age over time, which will deliver a resilient urban forest and build canopy cover towards the 35% target by 2046. Council will work to a minimum 2 x new trees for every 1x tree removed on public land and will develop tree planting programs that work toward increasing this ratio to the desired 8 x new trees for every 1 x tree removed.

Species selections are made following the right tree / right place principle and we aim to use a majority species palette of Australian Native and Local Native species to create forest connectivity and biodiversity outcomes. Council will also continue to plant exotic species in certain situations that meet the right tree / right place approach and contribute to species diversification creating a more resilient Urban Forest.

Council planting programs are designed to grow canopy and provide the maximum benefits to the community. Objectives of tree planting include optimising canopy cover, activating spaces, increasing active transport, providing shade / heat mitigation, and increasing public amenity.

Council will assess the broader community benefit of tree planting programs against the impacts tree planting may have on views. Tree planting in public spaces provides shade benefit to many, and whilst effort will be made to reduce any impact on private views through a view assessment process, Council's focus is delivering tree canopy to benefit the wider community.

The communities need for trees and the benefits they provide will be given the primary consideration, with a risk-based approach to view management ensuring that private property owners are duly considered.

• Trees on public land and Views

Council has developed a risk-based approach to view management. A View Assessment will determine the impacts on views from public tree planting projects.

Council will determine the community benefit that tree planting in public reserves will provide to the broader community and assess this against the potential impact tree planting will have on surrounding views.

Impacts on views will be determined using a digital-twin model of the location and surrounding properties. The digital-twin environment will enable investigation of the impacts of planting trees based on the proposed landscape plan.

The view assessment will determine the impact of tree planting and their predicted size at time of planting (0 years), after 10 years of growth (10 years) and at their mature size (40 years).

Using these model trees, sightlines from 3D models of surrounding residential properties will be investigated to determine the immediate, mid, and long-term impact on surrounding views.

If the impact of the proposed tree planting is severe, the impact can be reduced using controls including:

- Changing the spacing of the trees.
- Changing the number of trees.
- Substituting tree species.
- Changing the position of trees.

Using this assessment process, Council can determine the best layout for the tree planting which delivers benefits to the community and minimises view impact on surrounding properties.

Once the planting plan has been developed, Council will consult with the community as per the existing notification and consultation processes.

This process will only apply to tree planting proposal on public land.

TREE MANAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

• Trees and Powerlines

Council owns trees on public land and consent is required to work on a Council tree.

Electricity Network Providers operate under the Electricity Supply Act 1995 and do not require Council consent to prune Council trees or remove trees presenting a hazardous threat to the power network.

Utility Energy Providers provide public notification of upcoming planned maintenance pruning and publish pruning standards and clearance zones around powerlines – separate to this policy.

Council will continue to plant new trees within the network using the right tree / right place methodology and a risk-based approach. A small tree guide has been developed for this purpose to ensure species do not grow into the powerline clearance zone, while smaller trees deliver less benefits, they will still provide greening benefits for the community.

Council will continue to work with the Electricity Network Provider to improve the management of trees within the power network including pruning practices. Where possible, Council's preference is to ask Electricity Network Provider to relocate infrastructure away from trees, or to undertake Aerial Bundled Cabling, the process where powerlines are bundled into a single line and insulated the result is a significantly reduced powerline clearance zone for tree pruning.

• Tree and Vegetation Vandalism

Council will respond firmly to unlawful acts of tree vandalism.

Council recognises:

- the value of trees for our community now and into the future.
- Acts of tree vandalism rob the community of benefits both immediate and unrealised.

Council has response procedures in place to address tree vandalism proactively and reactively. Council will use a range of methods to prevent, minimise and discourage vandalism to public trees.

In high profile foreshore parks and reserves, new trees will also have discreet signage placed onto tree guards that highlight how Council will respond to act of vandalism.

Incident Impact	Response process	Additional measures
Low	Education, Warning, Formal Caution or Issue a fine.	Proactive signage about the value of trees, replacement of damaged trees, Respond to customer request with the outcome.
Medium	Issue notice of intent to serve an order, Voluntary undertaking to remedy the damage (including replacement planting), Issue a fine.	Proactive signage about the value of trees, Limited community engagement and Community Response signage, Respond to customer request with the outcome.
High	Commence legal proceedings for court action, Issue a fine.	Councillor and community consultation, Media and social media campaigns, tree stencil installs, shipping container installs - where vandalism is view-driven, Community response signage.

Warnings, cautions, the installation of CCTV and educational responses will be delivered at Council's discretion depending on circumstances surrounding the incident.

Council will pursue enforcement actions consistent with the *Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2022*.

TREE MANAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

Where sufficient evidence is available, council will consider legal options from the issuing Penalty Infringement Notices up to prosecution in the Land & Environment Court depending on the significance of the damage caused by act of vandalism

- **Vegetation Management in Natural Environments**

Management of vegetation in natural environments will often require additional protections and permissions for tree management activities – including a Tree Permit, always check with Council prior to undertaking any work in natural areas.

4. Policy framework

The Tree Management Council Policy is consistent with Council's Corporate Policy Framework.

~~Figure 1 shows the relationship between the Tree Management Council Policy, relevant Planning instruments and key documents.~~

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The following regulatory instruments are relevant to this Policy:

- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021*
- *Wollongong Local Environment Plan 2009*
- *Wollongong Development Control – Chapter E17 Vegetation, Chapter E18 Biodiversity*
- *Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2022*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*
- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth)*
- *Biosecurity Act 2015*
- *Fisheries Management Act 1994*
- *Crown Land Management Act 2016*
- *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*
- *Heritage Act 1977*
- *Rural Fires Act 1997*
- *Roads Act 1993*
- *Electricity Supply Act 1995*
- *Civil Liability Act 2002*
- 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice for New South Wales
- Coastal Management Act 2016
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021 (Chapter 2: Coastal Management)

TREE MANAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every two years from the date of each adoption of the policy, or more frequently as required.

REPORTING

No external reporting is required under this policy.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Manager Open Space and Environmental Services is responsible for reviewing and updating the Policy.

Parks and Open Spaces Manager is responsible for:

- Overseeing ~~tree~~ planting, ~~tree~~ assessments, and maintenance of the urban forest.
- Maintaining the tree inventory.
- Responding to requests from the community.

Environment and Conservation Manager is responsible for overseeing the assessment and administration of the tree permits and tree replacements on private land.

Manager Regulation & Enforcement is responsible for determining the appropriate compliance action.

REFERENCES

Mattheck, C., & Breloer, H. (1994). *Field Guide For Visual Tree Assessment (VTA)*. Arboricultural Journal, 18, 1-23.

RELATED PROCEDURES

- Managing Trees in Wollongong – A Customer Guide
- Public Tree Management Procedure
- Tree Permit Procedure
- Tree Assessment Procedure
- Tree Replacement Procedure
- Tree Vandalism Procedure
- View Assessment Procedure

APPROVAL AND REVIEW	
Responsible Division	Open Space and Environmental Services (Infrastructure + Works)
Date adopted by Council	
Date/s of previous adoptions	
Date of next review	



Managing Trees in Wollongong

A Customer Guide



Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our city is built, Dharawal Country. We recognise and appreciate their deep connection to this land, waters and the greater community.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and those emerging and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call this city home.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people to live in the area. We respect their living cultures and recognise the positive contribution their voices, traditions and histories make to the city.

Photo: Aunty Sharryalyn Robinson at Bulli Park. Photographer Tad Souden.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Contents

What is this document about?	4
Get help	4
Customer requests.....	4
Tree work Do you need permission?.....	5
7-step checklist.....	5
Why trees are important for everyone	8
We need more trees in the right places.....	8
How can I get involved?	9
Protecting Trees	10
Vandalism	10
Development	13
Planting trees	14
I want to plant a tree on my property.....	14
I want to plant a tree in front of my property.....	15
I want to see more trees planted in public spaces.....	15
Managing trees.....	16
What to do in an emergency.....	16
Risk management	16
Bushfire risk	17
Regular maintenance	17
I want to prune or remove a tree.....	18
I have a question about a Tree Permit.....	22
Trees and views	23
Powerlines and other utilities	25
Removing trees.....	26
Replacing trees	30
Replacing trees on private property	30
Replacing trees on public land	31
Appendix A: Example view assessment approach	32
Appendix B: Suburbs with low canopy cover	35
List of useful links	36

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



What is this document about?

- Trees in Wollongong are controlled under Council's Tree Management Policy.
- This document talks about two types of land: 'public land' and 'private land'. Public land is called Council land.
- We want to improve the way trees are looked after in Wollongong.
- We want to make it easier for residents to look after trees on their property.
- We want to help more trees get planted across Wollongong and protect the healthy trees we have.
- We want to hear what you think of the changes in these documents.
- You can tell us your thoughts online at:
our.wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Get help

Ask a friend, family or support person to help you read this, or contact Council. You can find links to online information at the end of this document.

Customer requests

If you have a question or concern about trees, you can send us a Customer Request. You can do this by calling our Customer Service team on (02) 4277 7111, or by filling out a [Customer Request](#) online.

Contact Council

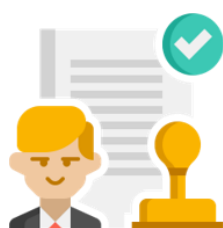
Phone	(02) 4227 7111
Email	council@wollongong.nsw.gov.au
Address	41 Burelli Street, Wollongong
Website	wollongong.nsw.gov.au

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Tree work

Do you need permission?



Did you know you need permission to cut, trim or remove most trees? Even on your own property.

Before you cut or remove a tree you will need to:

- find out who owns the tree
- check what is needed to be done and how
- check if you need permission before you do anything

Check out the 7 Step checklist below to understand your situation.

7-step checklist

I want to prune tree branches or remove a tree

1 Are there any Heritage or Environmental or other agency restraints on the tree? (eg. Local Land Services, NSW Rural Fire Service)	✓ Yes Please contact Council.	✗ No ↓ Go to the next step.
<i>Learn more on page 19.</i>		
2 Is the tree pruning or removal required as part of a Development Consent?	✓ Yes Contact Council. Conditions for the pruning will be considered as part of the development consent.	✗ No ↓ Go to the next step
<i>Learn more on page 19.</i>		

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



<p>3 Is the tree located on your property or your neighbour's property?</p> <p><i>Learn more on page 18.</i></p>	<p>✓ Yes</p> <p>⇓ Go to the next step.</p>	<p>✗ No</p> <p>The tree is on Council or other land.</p> <p>Please lodge a Council Customer Request or call us.</p>
<p>4 Is the tree species the same as a species listed on the Exempt list?</p> <p><i>Learn more on page 19.</i></p>	<p>✓ Yes</p> <p>If the tree is on your property and is a species listed on the exempt list you have permission to remove it.</p> <p>If the tree is on your neighbour's property, please see page 18 on Trees and Neighbours.</p>	<p>✗ No</p> <p>⇓ Go to the next step.</p>
<p>5 Is the tree more than 5 metres in height and/or 30 centimetres in diameter measured at ground level?</p> <p><i>Learn more on page 20.</i></p>	<p>✓ Yes</p> <p>⇓ Go to the next step.</p>	<p>✗ No</p> <p>You can prune branches or remove the tree without consent.</p> <p>Contact Council if you are not sure.</p>
<p>6 Is the tree a palm?</p> <p><i>Learn more on page 21.</i></p>	<p>✓ Yes</p> <p>You may remove dead fronds/leaves and flower spikes/fruit only. We recommend you use a qualified arborist.</p> <p>You will need a tree permit to cut live fronds/leaves.</p>	<p>✗ No</p> <p>⇓ Go to the next step</p>

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



7 Pruning:

✓ Yes

✗ No

Do you want to prune branches that are more than 10cm in diameter where they meet the trunk?

You will need to apply for a Tree Permit from Council to request permission to prune or remove your tree.

If the branches on your tree are less than 10 centimetres in diameter where they meet the trunk, you have permission to prune the tree without applying for a Tree Permit.

Removal:

Do you want to remove the tree?

We recommend you use a qualified arborist to carry out this work.

Learn more on page 20.

If you are unsure about any of the questions or advice in this guide, please contact our **Customer Service Team on (02) 4227 7111** or visit wollongong.nsw.gov.au.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Why trees are important for everyone

Did you know, suburbs of Wollongong have some of the lowest tree canopy cover in all of NSW?

The average canopy cover in Wollongong is 17%. Our goal is to increase this to be closer to 35%.

Trees are important for our outdoor spaces and for creating a healthy place for everyone to live in. Trees help to make great places, improve mental health, and increase the number of people being active. This includes riding bikes, walking, running, and playing sport. It can also mean people use cars, busses, and trains less often. Planting more trees and better trees means our city is better for everyone.

The loss of fully grown trees has a big impact on the health of our suburbs. This is because trees take a long time to grow to a size where they can provide the most benefits. We have controls in place to limit the loss of good trees.

More than 50% of trees in Wollongong's urban forest are mature and delivering benefits right now. As these trees age and decline, benefits for the community will decrease. To ensure benefits are provided to the community for years to come, these trees will need to be replaced over time with new trees.

This is why trees around Wollongong need permission from Council or another agency before they are cut or removed.

We need more trees in the right places

Council is working hard to plant more trees and grow tree canopy in Wollongong's suburbs. We call this our urban forest.

It's not easy for everyone to make sure the right tree is chosen for the right place and planted at the right time. That's why we're working with our community to get the right trees in the ground, year after year.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



How can I get involved?



Everyone has a role to play in creating a more liveable future.

There are lots of ways you can help in greening our city,
especially on your own property.

Learn more about [greening your suburb](#) on our website.



[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Protecting Trees



We protect all trees growing in Wollongong to ensure the community gets all the benefits trees provide. Trees over 5 metres in height or 30cm diameter at the ground are protected. Trees give us shade, make us feel better and help us be more active in our outdoor spaces.

Trees growing on Council land are maintained by Council. You are not allowed to cut, trim or remove a Council owned tree.

If you think a tree in a public space needs to be checked or trimmed, please lodge a customer request or call (02) 4227 7111.

If the tree is on your property, you will need to check if you need permission to cut, trim or remove it (see page 18 under the 'Managing Trees' section).

Vandalism (including tree work without permission)



Making changes to a tree without permission on your property, on your neighbour's property, or on Council land is vandalism.

This includes removing large branches (lopping), intentional destruction, lighting fires, poisoning and ringbarking.

All these actions are:

- **Illegal.** Fines apply and high-impact acts of vandalism may be prosecuted in a court of law.
- **Costly.** They reduce Council's ability to provide other services and grow the urban forest.
- **Shameful.** They rob the whole community of the benefits trees provide – now and into the future.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Report it

Trees are for the benefit of the whole community and the planet. This is why we're calling on the community to help us protect trees.



If you've seen something, report it to Council on (02) 4277 7111 or the Police on 131 444.

You can tell us about tree pruning, tree removal or vegetation clearing you think might not have been approved. We can't issue fines without supporting evidence, so make sure you provide as much proof as you can.

What will Council do about tree vandalism?

We want to work with our community to reduce the amount of vandalism.

Prevention

We will speak with you about tree planting projects, involve you in projects where possible, use signs to show important information, and protect young trees through good design. We'll use closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV) as appropriate. We won't use rewards because research shows these haven't been very effective for other Councils.



Instead, we're working with the community to value our trees and to help us protect trees. We do this by using different ways to learn about why trees are important, and to respond to vandalism in the right way as a community when it does happen.

Investigation

We will investigate every report of vandalism using the information provided to us. We will contact you if there is not enough proof for us to be able to issue a fine, warning or other measure. This will all be done through a Customer Request.



[<< Go back to the contents page](#)

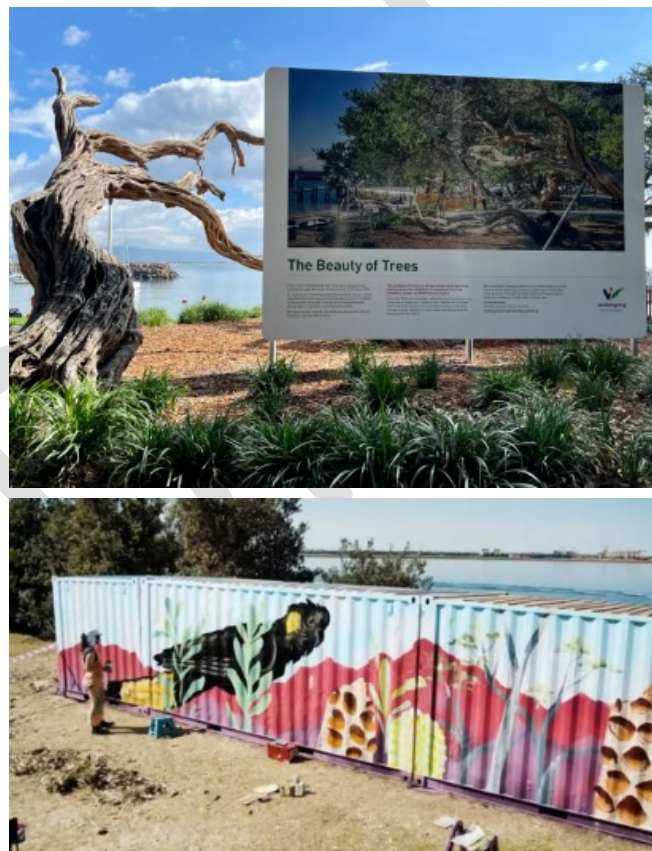


If there is enough evidence, we will issue fines. For high-impact vandalism, we will take the matter to court to seek a prosecution. We will do this as part of our Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2022.

Response

Where tree vandalism sadly does happen, we will look at all the options and decide on the best response.

On Council land this could include: installing large signs or shipping containers (for view related vandalism), creating community feedback signage (using artwork and messages like in Belmore Basin and Towradgi), or tree stencilling to show a tree that has been poisoned.



[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Development

We protect trees during development on Council land. Tree protection on private land is managed through the Tree Permit or Development Application process (where trees are associated with a proposed development).

The **Australian Standard AS4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites** guides us when we make plans to build something. This makes sure we look after our existing canopy trees during the construction of new things.

This means we check the trees on a development site before construction. We also put plans in place to protect these trees.

Sometimes a tree won't survive in a new development. When this happens, we will plant replacement trees on the site to make sure we still have tree canopy. We make every effort to protect existing trees. This means trees will only be removed as a last resort.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Planting trees

Every tree planted helps to create a better future.

I want to plant a tree on my property

Great!

Did you know 75% of all land in Wollongong is private property? This is why we need your help in greening our suburbs by planting more trees on your property.

Choosing the right tree for your property is an important decision. The right type of tree in the right place can add value to your property and increase your wellbeing.

We can help you make this decision so you can get the most out of your new tree. We have plenty of resources to help guide your tree planting adventure.

- Greening your suburb and home
- Adopt a tree
- Advice and assistance
- Wollongong Botanic Garden's Greenplan Plant Sales
- Growing Illawarra Natives - plant finder and articles

Visit our website to find out more about [greening your suburb](#).

If you can't find what you are looking for, please get in touch with us on (02) 4227 7111.



I want to plant a tree in front of my property

You can ask us to plant a tree in the area in front of your home, which is Council land. We call this the verge. We will get in touch with you to discuss which tree species is best for your location.

>> [Request a free street tree online](#), or call us on (02) 4227 7111.

You can also plant smaller plants (up to 700mm high) without approval as part of your Verge Garden. Just follow the guidelines.

>> [Verge Garden Guidelines](#)

I want to see more trees planted in public spaces

You can ask us to plant a tree in a public space, such as a park.

>> [Submit a customer request](#), or call us on (02) 4227 7111.

If you prefer to get hands on, why not join a local group like Bushcare, Dunecare, Friends of Wollongong Botanic Garden, a community garden, Landcare or other environmental group.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Managing trees

Our role is to manage trees in our suburbs so the community can enjoy all the benefits trees provide.

What to do in an emergency



If a tree on your property has become dangerous to people or substantial property, you can make it safe without permission. First, make sure you understand what you can and can't do with a dangerous tree on this [Trees on Your Property](#) page. In an emergency, contact SES on 132 500 for assistance.

You will need to take photos of the tree before the emergency works and keep them as a record. This will be required to prevent receiving a fine due to your actions.

If you notice a tree in a public space that could cause an immediate risk, please contact customer service on (02) 4227 7111.

Risk management



We work within a risk management framework. This guides the way we make decisions about trees which might cause danger.

We use internationally recognised procedures for doing risk assessments on trees. Qualified arborists inspect trees and carry out tree work.

We are guided by standards so that all our tree reports and assessments are consistent and technically accurate.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Bushfire risk

Council uses a Bushfire Risk Management Plan (BFRMP) to reduce the risk that bushfires may have on the community.

Tree work is carried out for bush fire management or fire reduction. Before this happens, we will do an environmental assessment. Based on this assessment Council works in bushfire prone areas to prune or remove hazardous trees identified by the Rural Fire Service (RFS).

Find out about [preparing for Bushfires](#) in Wollongong.

On private property owners should seek further information from RFS about preparing for Bushfires.



Regular maintenance

We're constantly collecting information about our trees in our city. We keep this in our electronic tree inventory.

We use this information to make a plan and schedule for maintaining trees, helping us plan for the future.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



I want to prune or remove a tree

Before you cut or remove a tree, there are a few things you need to check. You may need permission first.

Who does the tree belong to?

Different rules apply depending on where the tree is growing.

It's my tree



- ✓ the tree is growing within the boundary of your property.
- ✓ the tree is on the shared boundary of your property and someone else's AND most of the trunk at ground level is on *your* property.

It's my neighbour's tree

- ✓ the tree is growing within the boundary of their property.
- ✓ the tree is on the shared boundary of your property and theirs AND most of the trunk at ground level is on *their* property.

Find out what you can do with a [neighbour's tree](#).

It belongs to Council



Trees which are growing on Council land are maintained by Council. You are not allowed to cut, trim or remove a Council owned tree. If you feel that a tree needs an inspection or some trimming, please lodge a customer request or call (02) 4227 7111.



I don't know who the tree belongs to, or if I need permission

If you don't know who owns the tree, or if you need permission, please contact Customer Service on (02) 4227 7111.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Is the tree protected for heritage or environmental reasons?

Heritage protection or environmental laws may apply to the tree depending on its location. If so, this may override any existing Council permissions for your tree.

You can check your property status using Council's [Interactive Maps \(Intramaps\)](#) or contact Customer Service on (02) 4227 7111.

Is the tree part of a proposed development?

Are you planning to build on your property - a house, house extension, garage, swimming pool or granny flat?

✓ Yes

You can get permission to cut, trim or remove your tree as part of a Development Application.

If you have questions, call us on (02) 4227 7111.

✗ No

Check if the tree meets any of the criteria below.

Is the tree on the exempt tree list?

✓ Yes

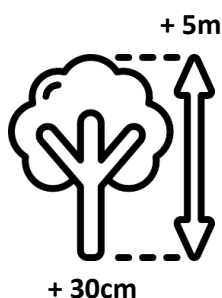
You can cut, trim or remove trees on your property if they are on this [Exempt Trees List](#). In some situations, these rules may not apply.

✗ No

Check if the tree meets any of the following criteria.



[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Is the tree taller than 5 metres or thicker than 30 centimetres at the ground?

✓ Yes

You will need to [apply for a Tree Permit](#) if you plan to remove the tree. If you wish to cut or trim your tree, please see the following section.

✗ No

You do not need permission to cut, trim or remove your tree.

What type of tree is it?

Tree

What you can do depends on how thick the branches you'd like to cut are.

Are the branches more than 10cm thick where they meet the tree trunk?

✓ Yes

You need Council permission to cut or trim those branches.
[Apply for a Tree Permit](#) to cut these branches.

✗ No

You don't need permission. You can organise to cut or trim these branches using a [qualified arborist](#).





Palm Tree

What you can do depends on what parts you want to remove.

Are you cutting live fronds or removing a live palm?

✓ Yes

Cutting live fronds can have a negative impact on palm health. [Apply for a Tree Permit](#) to cut live fronds or to remove a live palm.

✗ No

If you want to remove dead fronds, flower spikes or fruit, you don't need permission. You can organise to do this using a [qualified arborist](#).



Hedge

What you can do depends on the size of the hedge.

Has the tree been trimmed as a hedge from the time planted and kept at under 5 meters?

✓ Yes

You don't need permission. You can organise to cut or trim these branches yourself, or use a [qualified arborist](#). You can keep the hedge below 5m in height.

✗ No

You need Council permission to cut or trim those branches. [Apply for a Tree Permit](#) to cut these branches.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



I have a question about a Tree Permit

Want to check where your application is up to, ask a question before you apply, or see if permission has been given for tree work?

Use our [online form](#) to ask a question, or call us on (02) 4227 7111.

You can also visit our [Tree Permit FAQs](#) page for answers to some common questions about pruning or removing trees.

I don't agree with Council's decision about my tree

You can ask for a review, by submitting an '[Application for Review of Tree Management Permit Determination Form](#)' to us within three (3) months from the date of issue on the original determination letter. Fees apply.

Any review needs to be supported by documents from an appropriately qualified consultant such as an Arborist and/or Structural Engineer, depending on the reasons for your request. You will also need to include any additional reasons to support your request.

You can also appeal to the Land and Environment Court within three (3) months of Council's refusal. Contact the Land and Environment Court for information on how to do this.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Trees and views

Wollongong stretches along the coast and many suburbs have views of the ocean or escarpment. Trees are part of the view, and we will make sure we are increasing tree canopy in our parks to ensure the community gets all the benefits trees provide.

We understand that growing our urban forest may have some impact on views from time to time. However, this minor impact is far outweighed by the benefits the right trees provide when planted in the right place.

We will plant trees in parks based on evidence. To decide if there is a need for trees by the community, we will assess the broader benefit of trees to the community and consider this against any potential impact on surrounding views. Meeting the needs of the wider community is always the most important outcome.

Existing views at public locations (like lookouts on the escarpment) will still be maintained to make sure the public benefit provided at those sites continues.

Views from private property



Council won't prune or remove good trees to create or improve views from private property.

Seeing trees from your home can improve your quality of life and mental health. It is also proven that homes in leafy suburbs have higher property values. Having good quality parkland means more people can enjoy the great outdoors more often.

If you've asked us to plant a tree in front of your house, we will contact you and discuss the best options.

We will let you know if we plan to plant trees in your local park that might impact on an existing view. We will undertake a View Assessment Procedure to reduce the impact new tree planting might have on a view.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



View Assessment Procedure

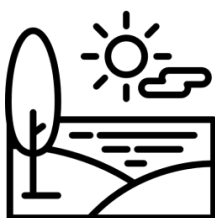
We've developed a new View Assessment Procedure to manage the risk of planting a tree in a spot which might impact existing views.

If we are planting trees in parks or outdoor spaces where a view might be impacted, we will use this new procedure to see what the impact will be.

If the impact is high, we will reduce the impact by changing the design of the planting. This could be by choosing a different type of tree, changing the space between trees, or not planting trees in some positions.

To see what this could look like, read the example provided in Appendix A.

Vegetation and views



The plant life in our natural environments provides many benefits. This includes playing an important ecological role, as well as adding to our urban forest canopy. State and Federal Governments have put laws in place to protect trees growing in natural environments.

Some trees in natural environments grow in environmental protection zones. These have the highest possible level of environmental protection there is and includes the Australian Government's Biodiversity Laws. That means Council must protect those trees no matter what reasons people might have for wanting to remove or prune them – including improving or creating a view.

Areas where public views provide a benefit will be identified, monitored and managed by Council where environmental protections allow.

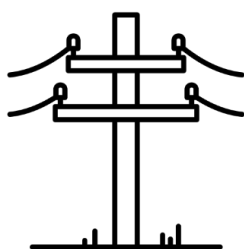
Find out more information about managing natural environments like [Lake Illawarra](#).

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Powerlines and other utilities

Council is the legal owner of trees on public land. That means Council permission (consent) is required to prune or remove these trees. When overhead powerlines or other utilities are involved, things are a bit different.



Above the ground

We are working with our local Electricity Network Provider to improve how trees are pruned around the power network.

Under the Electricity Supply Act 1995, these providers are allowed to cut trees to keep a safe space between tree branches and powerlines. This means they don't need permission from Council to prune those trees.

We will work with the electricity provider to move infrastructure away from trees where we can. This might mean we try to have the power cables bundled away from trees or find other ways of separating trees from the power network.

Trees still have an important place around the power network. All new trees we plant near powerlines are smaller so we can still have canopy cover, but with less maintenance.

On private land the property owner is responsible for maintaining clearances around service wires.

Find out more on the [Endeavour Energy](#) website.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Below the ground

Before we plant new trees, we check for underground pipes and drains. We won't plant trees where roots may cause harm.

Across the city there are some trees that were planted over underground services in the past. We will make every effort to protect these trees when minor repair works are needed. Sometimes a tree will need to be removed to fix a pipe or gas main. Council needs to be contacted by the utility provider to get permission before they do this. Any tree that needs to be removed will be replaced by two (2) suitable trees nearby.

Solar Panels and pruning

Trees are an important part of public infrastructure. We won't approve requests to prune a Council tree to improve solar efficiency.



Removing trees

Trees provide lots of benefits for people, wildlife and our planet. The number of trees in Wollongong has been declining for years and many of our trees are reaching the end of their life. This is why we protect trees and will only remove them if there is a good reason.

A tree losing its leaves, bark, flowers or fruit isn't a reason to remove them. This is normal for trees and the benefits we get from trees far outweigh these inconveniences.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



When can a tree be removed?

For a tree to be removed, it must meet one of the reasons below:



Reasons for removing trees		
Reason	Council land	Private land
To make the tree safe in an emergency	✓	✓
To reduce risk to people or substantial property	✓	✓
The tree is dead or dying	✓	✓
The tree is on the exempt tree list		✓
There is unavoidable conflict with infrastructure	✓	✓
The tree is not suitable for the location	✓	✓
The tree is part of an asset renewal program	✓	

For a tree to be removed, we must see evidence that shows how it meets one or more of these reasons. This is so we manage trees consistently and deliver a service that's fair for everyone.

Find out more about each of these reasons on the following pages.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



It's an emergency

Sometimes bad weather can damage good trees.

Emergency tree work can only be done on the part of the tree that is causing a risk. For example, the whole tree can't be removed if only one branch is causing a problem.

Find out more about [dangerous trees](#) on our website.

If you notice a tree that could cause an immediate risk, please contact customer service on (02) 4227 7111.



To reduce risk to people and substantial property

Council may give permission to remove a tree if it is a risk to people and substantial property. The tree would need to have major breaks or damage to the tree which can't be stopped by pruning or other ways.

A Council arborist will inspect the tree to determine if there is a defect in the tree.

For trees on Council land, if there is a defect, Council will work to fix the defect. If it can't be fixed, dangerous parts of the tree will be removed. Sometimes if the defect is in the roots or the trunk, we may need to remove the whole tree.



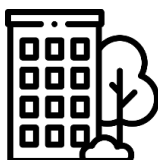
The tree is dead or dying

Permission may be given to remove a tree if it is already dead, or it is declining and can't be saved.

The tree is on the exempt tree list

You can remove trees on your property if they are on this [Exempt Trees List](#).

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Unavoidable conflict with infrastructure

Permission may be given to remove a tree if these two things can be proven:

- the tree and the surrounding infrastructure are going to cause problems; AND
- the infrastructure can't be fixed, changed or moved to save the tree.

The tree is not suitable for the location

A Council arborist will check the tree to see if it is in an unsuitable location. If the tree will always be a risk or problem where it is growing, we may give permission to remove it.

Another tree species may be suitable in the same spot.

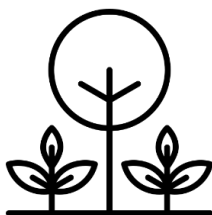
The tree is part of an asset renewal program

We manage trees on Council land in a similar way to other Council assets, like machinery, vehicles and footpaths.

Once a tree has reached the end of its useful life, it will be scheduled to be replaced.

As we deliver the Urban Greening Strategy we look for opportunities to align the lifespan of the tree with the lifespan of built assets, like a shared-cycleway. It makes sense to replace both assets at the same time in the future. This will reduce costs and minimise the impacts on the trees over time.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Replacing trees

We replace trees to ensure the number of trees in Wollongong grows, instead of declines over time.

We are working on planting even more trees in public spaces and areas that have a high need for trees.

We encourage you to plant additional trees on your property if you can.

Replacing trees on private property

When we give permission for a tree to be removed, a Tree Permit will be provided. All these permits will have a condition included that says you must plant a replacement tree.

This can be on your own private property, or on public land.

If you have obtained a valid Tree Permit from Council to remove a tree, you can present your permit at the Wollongong Botanic Garden Greenplan Nursery on a Plant Sale Day to receive one (1) tree to plant on your property.

If you live in a low tree canopy (high need) area you can collect two (2) trees, if you have room for them on your property.

We call suburbs with less than 17% of the land covered by tree canopy 'high need'. You can see the list of suburbs in Appendix B.

Our helpful staff at Greenplan Nursery can provide you with advice about what tree and where to place it on your property.

Find out more about the [Greenplan Nursery Plant Sales](#).



[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



What if there is no space on your property?

If you can't plant a replacement tree on your property as part of your Tree Permit, you can now choose to contribute to planting a tree on public land instead. We will plant and maintain a tree for you on public land, like a local park.

An additional fee will be charged to fund the purchase of a suitable semi-mature tree to be planted on public land.

Replacing trees on public land

For trees that need to be removed from public land, we plant the replacement trees in the same street or park where we can.

Our arborists (tree experts) try to select local native trees that will grow well in the area, or other trees species suited to site-specific constraints.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)

Appendix A: Example view assessment approach

The current situation

A park in Wollongong needs more trees to better meet the needs of the growing number of users and visitors.

There's a shared walk/cycle path that is in the hot sun all year. The park is near the beach so lots of people picnic there and there's not much shade. This makes it uncomfortable for people to stay very long.

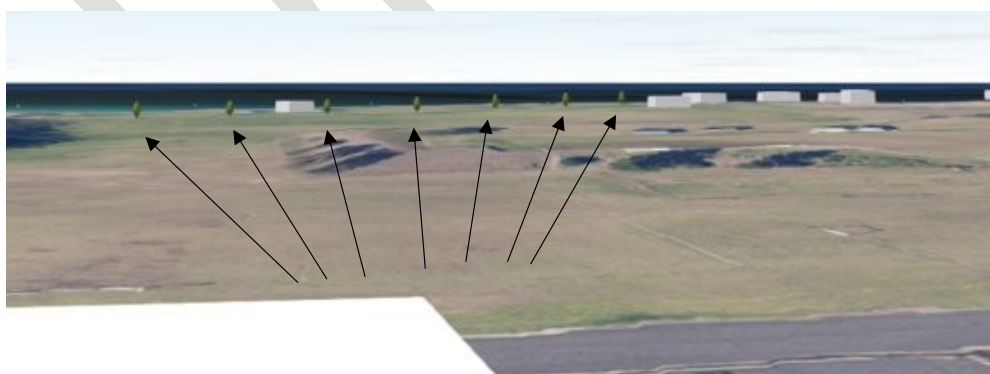
What could change

Council sees value for the community in planting some Norfolk Island Pine trees along the pathway. These trees grow well along the coast in Wollongong and have local cultural importance.

Local residents are contacted about the plan. They realise there might be some impact on water views.

How we would use the View Assessment Procedure

Council shows the affected residents how big the tree species will be when they are planted (0 years) and what that impact looks like using images.



View of proposed Norfolk Island Pines from resident's home at planting date

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)

Council then shows what the impact will be in 10 years time and 40 years time when the Norfolk Island Pine Trees are mature:



Norfolk Island Pines at 10 years from planting



Norfolk Island Pines at 40 years from planting

The spacing of the trees provides filtered views of the ocean, but the trees do not completely block the view. This spacing could be increased or different shaped trees can be used to increase the view.

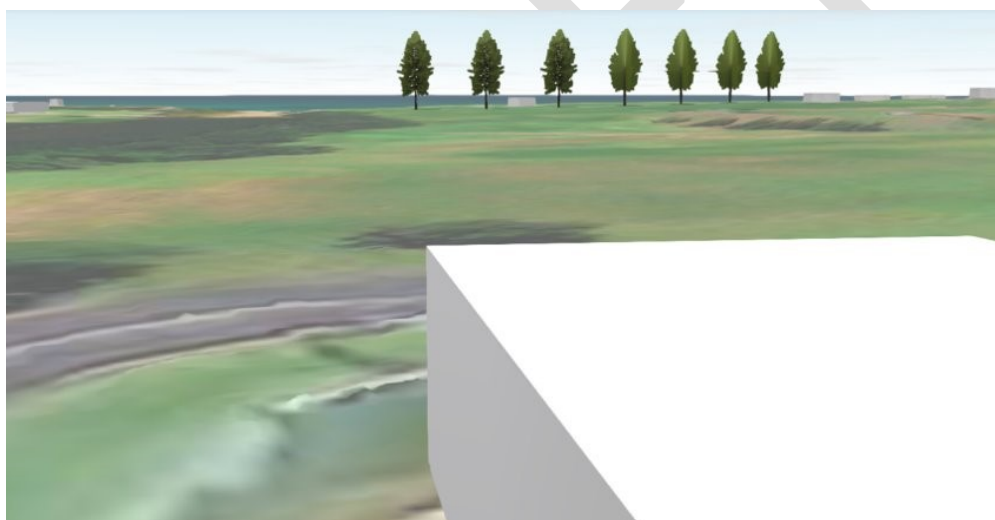
The Norfolk Island Trees at their mature size are preferred because they can be crown-lifted (lower branches removed). This means users of the shared path can walk below in the shade and see the ocean. It also opens up the view to nearby residents.

These images are created from Council's impact visualisation tool which can show how trees and buildings are affected by light and other changes in 3D.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



See the shade on the path? This is based on the midday sun.



These are the trees after 40 years of growth, viewed from a private residence. The resident can still see views of the ocean, but the trees have also given 40 years of benefit to all park users.

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)

Appendix B: Suburbs with low canopy cover

Wollongong suburbs with low canopy cover		
Avondale	Dombarton	Port Kembla
Bellambi	Fairy Meadow	Unanderra
Berkeley	Haywards Bay	Warrawong
Brownsville	Horsley	Wollongong
Cleveland	Huntley	Wongawilli
Corrimal	Kanahooka	Woonona
Dapto	Marshall Mount	

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



List of useful links

Arborists

(how to hire a qualified tree worker)

<https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/hiring-tree-work-contractors-fact-sheet>

Bushfires

(Get ready)

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/bush-fires

Customer Requests

(Online services)

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/online-services

Endeavour Energy

(Vegetation management on private property)

<https://www.endeavourenergy.com.au/safety/vegetation-management/vegetation-management-on-private-property>

Exempt Trees List

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/trees

Greening your suburb

(verge garden guidelines, request a street tree, helpful resources and more)

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/greening

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)



Lake Illawarra

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/lake-illawarra

Maps (interactive)

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/development/maps

Our Wollongong

(share your feedback)

our.wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Plant Sales

(Botanic Garden Greenplan Nursery)

wollongongbotanicgarden.com.au/plantsales

Trees on your property

(including tree permits and reviews, pruning and removal information, exempt trees, bush fires, dangerous trees, neighbours trees, FAQs and more)

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/trees

Wollongong Council

wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Icons used in this document are from Flaticon.com

[<< Go back to the contents page](#)

Council Report 3 April 2023 – Responses to community feedback summary – Consistent themes raised about proposed Tree Management Policy and Guideline

Theme	Council response	Addressed by Policy
Powerline Management	Wollongong's current Electricity Network Supplier supports the proposed risk-based approach. This will realise appropriate trees planted under wires and prevent negative vegetation management outcomes for new trees under the network.	Yes
Vegetation management to improve solar access	Council will not prune trees for the sole purpose of improving solar access. The onus is on the property owner to assess the viability of solar solutions based on site constraints - which include other buildings, hill shade, local infrastructure and trees.	Yes
Biodiversity protection and enhancement	Right tree/right place approach allows for selection of local natives, natives, and limited exotics in places where they are best suited.	Yes
Habitat protection and creation	Urban greening will realise some additional habitat and environmental connections. Focus of the policy is tree management functions aligned with growing tree canopy. Habitat protection is covered by environmental laws referenced in the policy which inform existing and proposed tree management operations. Habitat creation at scale may be a consideration of a future DCP review.	No
Ecosystems and ecosystem function	Wetland ecology, riparian ecosystems, water quality, lowland biodiversity, bee, and pollinator ecology are outside the scope of this policy review. Habitat loss associated with individual tree pruning or removal is managed as part of the tree assessment process, including environmental and ecological assessments. Vegetation Management Plans (VMPs) are employed in natural areas to guide vegetation management works. Many coastal processes are managed through the Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP), Dune Management Strategy and Estuary Management Plans. A coastal management program is being prepared in accordance with the Coastal Management Act 2016. A coastal management program already exists for Lake Illawarra.	No
Small trees (under 5m) also have value – biodiversity, habitat, ecological function	Policy recognises all trees have value but larger trees, which provide significantly more benefits to people, have the most protection. Small trees with biodiversity value are protected where environmental laws referenced in the policy apply. Policy does make it easier to remove small trees when they are the wrong tree in the wrong place.	Yes
Removing exotic trees	Some exotic species play an important role in the urban forest – providing shade where natives won't thrive. All	Yes

	trees that are removed must satisfy the reasons for removal outlined in the policy.	
Weed management and emerging weed species	Policy framework considers 'Unsuitable species in location' as a reason for tree removal. The <i>South-East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2023-2027 – Priority Weeds</i> lists species for targeted containment and control.	Yes
Trees fit for future climate	Right tree/right place considers future climate suitability.	Yes
Dangerous trees	Council uses an internationally accepted risk management approach for tree management. The Tree Permit Procedure considers the risk as individual tree poses to harm people or substantial property.	Yes
Tree management controls associated with Development	See feedback and responses in the concurrent report – <i>Post Exhibition – Review of various DCP chapters relating to management of vegetation</i>	No
Views	Trees not pruned or removed to improve views on private land. View assessment procedure to manage tree planting on public land.	Yes
Historic Views (including Lake Illawarra)	Restoration and management of historic views cannot be considered under the proposed policy. Where environmental legislation applies to vegetation, tree management operations must not contravene those laws. It is unlawful for Council to carry out vegetation management works at sites where laws prohibit those activities. No amendment to the policy can override an environmental law that is in effect. The restoration of historic views is contrary to the intent of the policy and Urban Greening Strategy 2017-2037 – which aims to increase tree canopy across Wollongong.	No
Increased community consultation on public tree planting	Controls in place to select and position trees to deliver maximum benefit to the community and prevent devastating impacts on private views.	Yes
Right Tree/Right Place considerations	Tree management procedures which are delivered consistent with the policy consider the context and constraints of the planting site. Context includes proximity to natural areas, heritage, environmental protections, and sensitivity to existing planting themes. Constraints include compacted soils, infrastructure above and below ground, available soil volumes, traffic signals and thoroughfares.	Yes
Damage to infrastructure from trees	Policy provides framework for tree pruning and removal consents. Tree removal considerations include 'unavoidable conflict between the tree and infrastructure'.	Yes
Enforcement, compliance, and fines	Policy approach consistent with the Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2022. Policy settings encourage the community to value and protect trees and new tree plantings.	Yes

