

Moira Shire Council

Tree Management Policy

Policy type	Council
Policy Number	OPS-02
Version Number	1.0
Responsible Director	Infrastructure Services
Responsible Officer	Manager Operations
Date adopted by Council	26 November 2025
Scheduled for review	This policy will be reviewed four years from the date of adoption, or sooner if required.

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Administrative changes do not materially alter the document (such as spelling/typographical errors, change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department). Administrative updates can be made in accordance with the Policy Framework Guidelines.

PURPOSE

This Policy sets Council's vision for urban tree canopy management to ensure the enduring amenity of Moira Shire's urban landscapes in a changing climate. It recognises that a planned landscape approach can elevate a town's identity, becoming a captivating attraction that vastly improves community and visitor experiences through colour, vertical texture, shade and habitat.

Council is committed to improving the appearance and amenity of Council's towns and implementing climate change resilience across its urban landscapes by maintaining and expanding a safe, diverse and healthy tree canopy.

This policy provides a framework for regulatory authorities, contractors, developers, community members and those working with Council to understand the requirements for the management of public trees and should be read in conjunction with Council's Urban Tree Canopy Plan.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the management of all urban trees growing on public land under the control or management of Moira Shire Council.

DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Public Tree	Trees Council are responsible for managing, located either on Council owned land or land managed by Council.
Mature Tree	A tree generally defined as a woody plant with a height greater than five (5) metres with a trunk diameter of 150mm or greater in diameter at a height of 1.4 metres above natural grade. Trees less than this are either young or considered to be shrubs.
Tree Protection Zone (TPZ)	A specified area above and below ground at a given distance from the trunk set aside for the protection of a tree's roots and crown to provide for the viability and stability of a tree to be retained where it is potentially subject to damage by development' (AS4970-2009)
Significant Tree	These trees provide value over and above that of an average street or park tree. Some trees may be remnants of original vegetation, whilst others sit prominently in the landscape and contribute local and cultural significance to streetscapes or the wider Shire area.
Urban Tree Canopy	Urban tree canopy is a measurement which encompasses the layer of leaves, branches and stems of trees that shelter the ground when viewed from above. This measurement is expressed as a percentage of ground area that is covered by tree crowns and relates to the branching spread of the trees in an urban forest.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Council objectives are to:

- Recognise and manage public trees as community and environment assets.
- Protect, preserve and enhance the benefits provided by trees.

POLICY STATEMENT

The ambition of this Policy is to improve the vibrancy and climate resilience of Council's urban landscapes to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors. Urban tree canopies play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life within towns through the provision of aesthetic, ecological, and health benefits. Council is committed to developing and maintaining thriving landscape aesthetics and proactively investing in climate change resilience for Council's urban communities.

Council is committed to enhancing the urban tree canopy through the strategic planting of 2,400 additional trees between 2025 and 2035, expanding canopy coverage by 15% beyond the existing 16,000 registered trees, to improve urban amenity, protect infrastructure, increase shade coverage, enhance species diversity, and reduce carbon emissions and urban heat through a planned landscape approach.

The development of landscape themes, careful species selection and mapping of existing and future canopy cover is required to adequately plan the future urban landscapes of Council. This planning will ensure the prioritised planting of new trees and the appropriate protection, maintenance, pruning and removal of existing trees.

To ensure consistency in Council's management of trees and achieve the best outcomes for the community, the *Tree Management Policy* refers to four key areas:

1. Tree Protection
2. Tree Retention and Removal
3. Canopy Expansion and Species Selection
4. Notifications and Consultation

1. Tree Protection

There are many 'Significant' trees across Council which require protection due to their aesthetic quality, historical, commemorative, social, cultural significance. It is important to protect all parts of these trees both above and below the ground.

Council makes the following commitments relating to tree protection:

	Statement
Protecting trees	<p>1.1 Council will invest in the protection and maintenance of public trees as long-term community, environmental and landscape assets, in a strategic and risk-based manner. Where tree growth is damaging surrounding infrastructure the safety risk for infrastructure users will be the focus.</p> <p>1.2 Public trees will be protected from construction works and other activities that may affect tree health, stability or longevity through the application of tree protection requirements in line with Australian Standards (AS 4970-2009).</p> <p>1.3 'Significant' trees will be identified in a register with the contents of the register to be reviewed and endorsed Council within 12 months of a Council election.</p>
Development applications	<p>1.4 All public trees, including the corresponding Tree Protection Zone (TPZ), must be clearly identified on all submitted landscape or design plans.</p>
Pruning	<p>1.5 All public trees will be pruned in line with the Australian Standard for the Pruning of amenity trees (AS 4373-2007), with exceptions only approved by a Council Arborist and authorised by Director Infrastructure.</p>
Damage to public trees	<p>1.6 Where Council determines that damage has occurred to public trees through works undertaken by third parties this will be investigated, third party notified and enforcement for damages followed up where evidence is sufficient.</p>
Tree Valuation	<p>1.7 Where appropriate, Council will value the loss of public trees using a recognised industry approach which considers the costs of removal, reinstatement, amenity and ecological services.</p>
Asset Management	<p>1.8 Council will maintain records of public trees in their asset management systems to allow for informed decision making and resource prioritisation.</p> <p>1.9 Council will maintain an age and species diverse tree population resistant to pests, disease, and climate change implications.</p>

2. Tree Retention and Removal

It is acknowledged that trees may take decades to reach maturity, with benefits provided by a mature canopy tree far outweighing that of a new planting. However, it is also important to recognise that trees are living organisms with a finite life span that will need to be removed and replaced. It is also recognised that there will be instances where trees have outgrown their location or are an unsuitable species for the location and may need to be replaced with a more suitable species.

Council commits to the following statements around retention and removal:

	Statement
Removal/Retention	<p>2.1 Council will approach tree management decisions in a balanced and collaborative manner, with risks to people and property prioritised.</p> <p>2.2 Project designs will actively work to conserve trees where practical however where trees can't be retained a tree renewal plan will be required to replace any trees removed on a 2 for 1 basis.</p> <p>2.3 Public trees will not be pruned or removed based on issues associated with shading, tree debris/leaf litter, presence of animals/insects, obstruction of vistas/aerials/solar panels, allergies or unsubstantiated minor infrastructure claims.</p> <p>2.4 Public trees will only be removed where alternatives for the safe and effective management have been considered and deemed impractical due to significant cost increase (50%) or due to insurmountable design challenges.</p> <p>2.5 The removal of trees larger than 0.6m diameter at chest height must be approved by Director Infrastructure.</p>
Proactive management	<p>2.6 The condition of public trees in urban areas will be proactively managed using internationally recognised risk management practices.</p> <p>2.7 A proactive pruning program will ensure acceptable clearance and safety requirements are met.</p> <p>2.8 Council commits to the development of a 10-year strategy and landscape design plan to guide the expansion of the municipality's urban tree canopy</p>
Infrastructure conflicts	<p>2.9 Conflicts between tree roots and infrastructure will be managed through proactive selection and placement of future plantings.</p>

3. Canopy Expansion and Species Selection

Planting the right trees in the right locations is a long-term investment and ensures maintenance costs are kept to a minimum. Key drivers for tree planting and species selection will include existing site conditions, landscape context and climatic conditions.

The process of selecting, planting, maintaining and or removing trees will be consistent with Council's Urban Tree Canopy Management Plan and applicable Australian Standards as outlined in the plan.

Urban tree planting will be integrated into the overall urban design, enhancing the visual appeal of streetscapes, parks, and public spaces. Trees will be chosen for their suitability to local soil conditions, climate, and intended visual and cultural impact. A diverse selection of well-adapted species will be used to create visually engaging landscapes that reflect the region's natural heritage and foster biodiversity.

Council commits to the development of a 10-year strategy and landscape design plan to guide the expansion of Council's Urban tree canopy. These documents will define:

- Targets for canopy coverage in areas prone to heat pockets to ensure effective cooling and improved comfort for residents.
- Tree species that provide substantial shade and create cooling microclimates around key areas, including playgrounds, community centres, and recreation reserves.
- The planting of tree species that are resilient to changing climate conditions, including drought tolerance, heat resistance, and resistance to pests and diseases.

Council commits to the following statements regarding tree planting and selection:

	Statement
Trees and Character	3.1 Council will consider landscape character within each town or settlement when undertaking new plantings.
Species selection	3.2 Species selection will consider soil, environment and climate to ensure optimal performance and minimal maintenance. 3.3 Site constraints will be a key driver in the selection of the 'right' tree to minimise future infrastructure conflicts. 3.4 Future climate change implications will be considered throughout the tree planting and establishment process.
Location of plantings / future conflicts	3.5 The placement of new street trees will comply with guidance in the Code of Practice for Management of Infrastructure in Road Reserves and Council's Urban Tree Canopy Planting Plan, 10-year strategy and landscape design plans.
New Developments	3.6 At least one canopy tree will be planted per lot, preferably centred where practical. Where one tree per lot is not feasible, one tree will be planted at 15 metres intervals along the street.
Environmental and social benefits	3.7 Council will monitor tree planting opportunities to increase canopy coverage across the Shire. 3.8 Recognising the benefits provided by trees, the most appropriate tree will be planted in the space available. 3.9 Council will strengthen the resilience of its urban tree canopy through planting an appropriate diversity of plant species, genera, and families.
Installation and Maintenance	3.10 Council will source and plant stock in line with the Australian Standard, Tree Stock for Landscape Use (AS 2303-2015). 3.11 All new plantings of public trees will be maintained for at least two years to maximise establishment.

4. Notifications and Consultations

Council recognises that the management of public trees, including their removal and replacement, is important to the community. Appropriate community consultation will be undertaken as required. Engagement with community members in the planning and selection of tree species will be undertaken in the development of landscape plans.

Council makes the following commitments to keeping the community informed:

	Statement
Awareness	4.1 Council will raise awareness of the benefits of trees, and foster community pride and ownership of public trees through their website and social media networks.

Public notifications	4.2 Council will notify the key community stakeholders of public tree removal in accordance with its Community Engagement policy, with the level of engagement determined by the Director Infrastructure Services based on the location, prominence, size and significance of the tree.
Public Consultation	4.3 Council will consider community consultation prior to capital works, streetscape renewals or major tree related projects, based on the visual and cultural impact of proposed tree removal. 4.4 All consultation plans will be developed collaboratively in conjunction with the Council's asset manager(s).
Community Requests	4.5 Tree related requests will be efficiently managed via the internal Customer Request Management system and in accordance with the response/action timeframes set out in the Urban Tree Canopy Management Plan. 4.6 All requests will be prioritised by risk and incorporated into existing works programs where possible. 4.7 Council promotes tree planting and encourages residents to request that trees are planted by Council to maximise opportunities to expand the urban tree canopy. All plantings including tree types and locations will be undertaken in line with existing Council plans and strategies.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The location and condition of urban trees are audited on an annual basis and the data loaded into Council's asset management system to produce tree maintenance programs for Council's Tree Maintenance team. The policy process will be monitored by managers in the operations teams to ensure compliance.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Related Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

Electricity Safety Act 1998

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Road Management Act 2004

Subdivision Act 1988

Related Policies and Procedures

GOV-12 Risk Management Policy

ENG-05 Community Engagement Policy

References

Moira Shire Council: Urban Tree Canopy Management Plan 2024-2034

Moira Shire Council: Urban Tree Canopy Planting Plan 2024 -2029

USDA Forest Service, 2004, The Large Tree Argument

Road Management Plan 2021

Landscape Plan Guide Final 16-05-2017-2

ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines

DOCUMENT REVISIONS

Version	Summary of Changes	Approved by	Date
1	Original Policy adopted	Council	26/11/2025