

THE BAROSSA COUNCIL

Tree Management Policy



1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1 Establish a commitment to the retention and effective safe management of public trees within The Barossa Council.
- 1.2 Provide strategic direction and decision-making framework for planting, maintenance, removals, management, and protection of trees on Council-controlled land.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all trees managed by The Barossa Council on public lands, including road reserves, parks, cemeteries, and other open spaces. It is intended for use by:

- 2.1 Council staff, Elected Members and contractors for managing public trees.
- 2.2 Landholders, residents and developers for understanding tree management practices.
- 2.3 The community to promote awareness and understanding of tree management.

3 Policy Statement

The Barossa Council acknowledges the essential role of trees in enhancing the environment, providing social benefits, and supporting economic values. The Council is committed to the responsible management, preservation, and enhancement of public trees, ensuring a balance between community safety and the ecological benefits of trees. Effective risk management underpins all tree-related activities, with the primary aim of safeguarding public safety while maximising environmental value.

3.1 The Council's activities and resources shall be prioritised based on the following principles:

- 3.1.1 Public Safety: Minimise risks associated with trees through proactive risk assessment, mitigation measures, and regular monitoring.
- 3.1.2 Property and Infrastructure Protection: Protect property and infrastructure from potential damage caused by trees.
- 3.1.3 Health and Structural Integrity: Maintain the health and structural integrity of public trees through regular inspections and care.
- 3.1.4 Regional Enhancement: Enhance the region's image, liveability, and community well-being through strategic tree planting and management.
- 3.1.5 Biodiversity and Ecology: Promote biodiversity and the ecological benefits of trees.
- 3.1.6 Community Engagement: Involve the community in tree management decisions and practices.

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3.2 The policy aims to:

- 3.2.1 Continue to increase overall tree canopy coverage across the region through the strategic planting of appropriate species, ensuring a sustained net gain in tree numbers and canopy extent.
- 3.2.2 Offset the removal of trees by planting new trees in suitable locations.
- 3.2.3 Recognise and value the importance of tree cover for environmental sustainability.
- 3.2.4 Maintain a consistent approach to risk and benefit assessment of trees.
- 3.2.5 Foster partnerships with local organisations, community groups, residents and developers to support tree management initiatives.

3.3 Roles and Responsibilities for tree management decision making involve:

Council Staff

- 3.3.1 Carry out planting, pruning, maintenance, and removals based on guidance from Supervisor.
- 3.3.2 Assist in ensuring tree safety by managing growth that may impact pathways, utilities, or infrastructure.
- 3.3.3 Conduct visual assessments of trees identifying and report any obvious defects which may impact the health of trees or pose a risk to the public or property.
- 3.3.4 Council Tree Management Officer
- 3.3.5 Assess tree health and conduct risk assessment to evaluate potential hazards posed by the tree, including risks to public safety or property damage.
- 3.3.6 Recommend actions for tree maintenance or removal based on risk assessment outcomes.
- 3.3.7 Develop mitigation plans and ensure proper documentation of risk assessment processes.
- 3.3.8 Monitor adherence to relevant laws, policies, and regulations, particularly regarding the protection of locally and culturally important trees and native vegetation.
- 3.3.9 Engage and oversee tree contractors conducting maintenance and removal operations, ensuring public safety and compliance with regulations and standards.

Council Management

- 3.3.10 Develop and review tree management policies and procedures, incorporating effective risk assessment and management measures to ensure community safety.
- 3.3.11 Set strategic direction for tree preservation, safety practices, and increased urban tree canopy cover.
- 3.3.12 Ensure appropriate resource is in place to effectively oversee the retention and management of Council trees.

Elected Members

- 3.3.13 Ensure transparency in the decision-making process for tree removals, particularly those involving locally and culturally important trees.
- 3.3.14 Represent community interests by considering feedback and advocating for balanced decisions that appropriately weigh tree preservation and public safety in accordance with this policy.

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- 3.3.15 Participate in consultation and approve removals where trees present significant risks to public safety or property, ensuring community concerns are taken into consideration in accordance with this policy.

Residents

- 3.3.16 Report hazardous trees or potential risks to Council.
3.3.17 Participate in consultation for tree related matters.

Volunteers

- 3.3.18 Support maintenance activities such as planting, mulching and pruning of trees in line with Council policies and procedures.

3.4 The Council's tree maintenance programmes will focus on:

- 3.4.1 Sustainability: Promoting long-term tree health and environmental benefits.
- Pruning and Trimming: Remove dead, damaged, or hazardous branches. Tree Pruning is in accordance with AS-4373-2007 whilst balancing maintenance needs aligned with the Council Roadside Vegetation Management Plan
 - Pest and Disease Treatment: Address significant pest infestation and disease to maintain tree viability.
 - Soil Management: Implement soil management practices to support proper root growth and ensure tree stability.
 - Mulching and Watering: Apply mulch and provide adequate watering, especially for the first 3 – 4 years after trees have been planted and during dry periods, to sustain tree health.
- 3.4.2 Biodiversity: Conserving native species and promoting ecological diversity.
- 3.4.3 Risk Management: Regularly inspecting and assessing trees to manage public safety risks, with increased frequency for high-risk areas based on occupancy including the needs of our locally culturally and important trees.
- 3.4.4 Community Amenity: Enhancing the aesthetic value of public spaces through well-maintained trees.
- 3.4.5 Infrastructure Compatibility: Ensuring that trees do not adversely affect public infrastructure, including roads, footpaths, and utilities.
- 3.4.6 Pedestrian Safety: Ensuring trees do not obstruct pathways or create hazards for pedestrians.

3.5 Tree planting will consider:

- 3.5.1 Environmental Suitability: Selecting tree species that are suitable for local soil and climatic conditions.
- 3.5.2 Aesthetic Considerations: Enhancing streetscapes and public spaces with aesthetically pleasing tree species. Consideration should be given to tree selection to match scale and character and local heritage of surrounding areas.
- 3.5.3 Species Diversity: Promoting a mix of native and exotic species to enhance biodiversity.
- 3.5.4 Functional Benefits: Selecting species that provide shade, windbreaks, and other functional benefits.
- 3.5.5 Community Preferences: Considering the preferences of local residents and stakeholders regarding tree species and placement.

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Risk Management: Trees should be selected and positioned based on their long-term suitability for the specific location. Planting locations must be chosen to minimise interference with overhead or underground utilities, ensuring minimal risk to infrastructure over time.

3.6 Tree Removal will be considered when:

Safety Risks: Trees that pose an unacceptable risk to public safety, as determined through comprehensive assessment, will be considered for removal if the risk cannot be mitigated by other means. Risk Assessment factors shall include – value of target, occupancy of the target area, Likelihood of an incident and how that impacts the target balanced against the consequence.

3.6.1 Health and Stability: Trees are dead, dying, or structurally unstable and where habitat pruning is not a suitable option.

3.6.2 Public Infrastructure Impact: Trees are causing or are likely to cause significant damage to infrastructure, and where all other management solutions have been exhausted.

Private Property Impact: Trees are causing or are likely to cause significant damage to private property, and where all other management solutions have been exhausted.

Alleged structural damage to significant private property or value such as dwellings will be considered via a structural engineer report funded by the property owner with the decision of the tree's removal being that of the Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Services, CEO or Council. This report must be fact based and must not be open to interpretation. This report must consider all factors including construction specifications, soil sampling and must exhaust all alternatives leaving tree removal as a last resort. Council will consider the reimbursement of the cost of the engineer's report if the report finds the tree is at fault of causing damage or is highly likely to cause damage and any costs associated with the tree removal will be funded by Council.

3.6.3 Development Requirements: Trees need to be removed for infrastructure development, road widening or other construction activities, where in accordance with the requirements of the Planning & Design Code pursuant to the Planning, Development & Infrastructure Act 2016 and Native Vegetation Act

- Where approval for removal has been given, residents and developers will be invoiced for offset replacements prior to removal occurring, including planting materials and all associated maintenance cost for the initial three years. Offset fees will be reviewed and adopted on a yearly basis as part of Council fees and charges setting.

3.6.4 Replacement Planting: To offset the loss resulting from approved tree removals, replacement trees will be planted at a minimum ratio of five for one (5–1) replacement trees for every one tree removed. This will ensure a net increase in tree canopy cover over time, in alignment with Council's adopted fees and charges. Wherever practicable, replacement trees will be planted as close as possible to the original removal site.

3.7 Tree Protection

Council will ensure public trees are protected from development activity where practicable through the application of the Australian Standard AS4970-2009 - Protection of Trees on Development Sites and the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016.

Council will investigate unauthorised tree pruning, poisoning, damage or removal and may pursue enforcement action in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999 and/or consider civil action where appropriate in line with Council's Enforcement Policy

3.8 Tree removal or pruning is not supported based on the following criteria:

- 3.8.1 Damage to minor infrastructure such as - driveway materials, pavers, fences, stormwater pipes, retaining walls, irrigation and waste water systems or gardens
- 3.8.2 Minor infrastructure are determined against the trees value which is based on the Burnley Method of tree valuation
- 3.8.3 Nuisance or debris
- 3.8.4 Solar Panels shading
- 3.8.5 Damage or displacement to minor infrastructure such as paving, retaining walls, garden surrounds or root penetration of lawns
- 3.8.6 Shading of private property gardens
- 3.8.7 Damage to driveway and stormwater crossovers
- 3.8.8 Construction of new or altered driveway crossovers – pruning is considered
- 3.8.9 Any Tree planting or alterations to Council trees within Council road reserves or on Council land will be managed in accordance with section 221 of **The Local Government Act 1999** and Part2 clause 4.4 sub section 4.4.5 of **"Local Government Land By-Law 2021"**

The following chart provides guidance for tree removal decision making:

Tree Removal Decision Making Process				
Criteria	Reporting Requirements	Threshold for Approval	Delegation of Authority	Justification/Comments
Public Safety Risks	Field based Arborist inspection Or Independent Arborist report	Tree poses an unacceptable risk to public safety or property (hazardous condition, dying, dead,)	Council Tree Management Officer	Removal is justified if risks to public safety cannot be mitigated by other means (e.g., pruning, fencing). Immediate action required for public safety.
Tree Health & Stability	Field based Arborist inspection Or Independent Arborist report	Tree is dead, in decline with less than 5 year life span, or structurally defective	Council Tree Management Officer	Based on arborist's assessment of health and structural integrity. Trees in poor health should be considered for removal to avoid potential failure.
Impedes on road clearance envelope	Field based Arborist inspection Or Independent Arborist report	Tree isn't offering appropriate clearance as per Native Vegetation Management Plan with no pruning options	Council Tree Management Officer and Director Of Infrastructure and Environmental Services	Removal is justified if risks to public safety cannot be mitigated by other means (e.g., pruning, fencing). Immediate action required for public safety.
Impact on Infrastructure	Engineering Assessment	Tree causes significant or repeated	Director of Infrastructure and	Removal justified if tree causes ongoing damage to public infrastructure (e.g., roads, utilities) and other management solutions

		damage to infrastructure	Environmental Services	(e.g., root barriers, road/footpath construction methodologies) have been exhausted.
Impact of Private Infrastructure	Privately funded Engineering Assessment	Tree causes or has been proven to pose significant damage to infrastructure	Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Services or CEO or Council	Removal justified if tree causes ongoing damage to private infrastructure (e.g., foundations) and other management solutions have been exhausted.
Biodiversity and Ecology	Field based inspection by a Council officer or regulatory authority or is reported by public or property owners	Tree is invasive or poses a threat to local biodiversity	Environmental Officer or Council Tree Management Officer	Non-native or invasive species removal to support local biodiversity and ecological goals.
Weather or fire event	Field based Arborist inspection Or Independent Arborist report	Tree has been storm damaged or burnt in a fire and poses a risk to public safety or property	Council Tree Management Officer	Removal is justified if risks to public safety cannot be mitigated by other means (e.g., pruning, fencing). Immediate action required for public safety.
Community and Aesthetic Value	Report to Councillor, senior management	Significant opposition or support from the community	Council	High community value trees require community consultation. Removal should balance public sentiment and tree preservation goals.
Development Requirements	Planning process, major projects	Tree removal required for approved development projects	Council	Must comply with development approvals and offset requirements (5:1 replanting ratio). Removal should align with planning and development guidelines.
Environmental Benefits	Native Vegetation Assessment	Tree contributes significantly to local environmental goals	Council	Trees providing critical habitat or significant environmental services should only be removed in extreme circumstances, with plans for biodiversity offsets.
Pest and Disease Management	Field based Arborist inspection Or Independent Arborist report	Tree poses a risk due to pests or diseases	Council Tree Management Officer	Treatment of infestation if not cost prohibitive, removal of trees that are diseased or infested to prevent the spread of pests or diseases to other healthy trees in the vicinity.
Cost of Maintenance or Mitigation	Field based Arborist inspection Or Independent Arborist report	Maintenance costs exceed budget for safe retention	Director of Infrastructure & Environmental Services	While cost considerations are secondary, high-maintenance trees that pose a significant financial burden may be considered for removal after other factors are weighed.
Replacement and Offset Plans	Planning process	Viable replanting plan (minimum 5:1 ratio)	Manager of Infrastructure & Environmental Services	Removal must include a replanting strategy to ensure canopy cover is maintained or increased over time, adhering to council's environmental and sustainability objectives.

3.9 Council will implement a proactive approach to risk management through the following actions:

- 3.9.1 Develop a Risk Management Framework: Establishment of a risk management framework that sets out the process for prioritising, identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks related to public tree maintenance, management, removals and planting of new trees.
- 3.9.2 Tree Risk Assessment Program: Conduct regular inspections of public trees to identify potential hazards.
- 3.9.3 Tree Database: Maintain a detailed tree database to record information about public trees and support evidence-based decision making, including species, age, location, health status, and inspection and maintenance history.
- 3.9.4 Priority Based Management: Allocate resources based on tree database performance indicators and a prioritised system that categorises trees according to the level of risk they present.
- 3.9.5 Resourcing, Training and Development: Ensure appropriate resourcing is made available to meet its obligations and provide ongoing training for Council staff to fulfil their requirements under this Policy.
Emergency Response Plan: Regularly review and as required, update Council's emergency incident response arrangements for dealing with tree-related incidents during extreme weather events, such as storms or high winds.
- 3.9.6 Audit and Review: Regularly audit and review the risk management process and to ensure effectiveness and alignment with current standards.

3.10 The Council will engage with the community in the following scenarios:

- 3.10.1 Consultation: During the planning and implementation of significant tree planting or removal projects.
- 3.10.2 Education: Providing information on the benefits of trees and best practices for tree care.
- 3.10.3 Feedback: Encouraging community feedback on tree management policies and practices.
- 3.10.4 Volunteering: Supporting community tree planting and maintenance activities through volunteer programmes.

4 Supporting Processes and Documents

- 4.1 The Barossa Council – Roadside Vegetation Management Plan 2023-2026

5 Related Policies

- 5.1 *Customer Service Policy*
- 5.2 *Enterprise Risk Management Framework**
- 5.3 *Public Consultation Policy*

6 Legislation and References

- 6.1 *Local Government Act 1999*
- 6.2 *The Barossa Council Local Government Land By-Law 2021*
- 6.3 *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*
- 6.4 *Biosecurity Act 2014*
- 6.5 *Australian Standard AS 4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees*
- 6.6 *Australian Standard AS 4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites*
- 6.7 *Guidelines from the Local Government Association and other relevant bodies*
- 6.8 *Native Vegetation Act 1991*

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7 Review

- 7.1 This Policy will be reviewed by [the Council / Document Control Officer] in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, within four (4) years or more frequently if legislation or Council's need changes.

8 Further Information

- 8.1 This Policy is available on Council's website at www.barossa.sa.gov.au. It can also be viewed electronically at Council's principal office at 43-51 Tanunda Road, Nuriootpa and all Council branches, during ordinary business hours. A copy of this Policy can be obtained at those venues upon payment of a fixed fee.
- 8.2 Complaints regarding this Policy or its application can be made to the Customer Service team on 8563 8444 or barossa@barossa.sa.gov.au at first instance, who will refer you to the most appropriate officer according to Council's *Customer Service Policy*

9 Definitions

Business Day	A day when Council is normally open for business – Monday to Friday, excluding Public Holidays and when Council's Principal Office may be closed (e.g. over the Christmas holiday period).
Council Staff	All full-time, part-time and casual employees of The Barossa Council including trainees, apprentices, and on-hire employees.
Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS)	A software application that manages digital information such as email, word-processed documents, spreadsheets, images and scanned documents. An EDRMS can also track paper records and physical objects.
Supervisor	Any direct line manager, including Chief Executive Officer, Director, Manager, Team Leader, Coordinator or Leading Worker who are responsible for Worker(s) reporting to them.
Tree Management Officer	A suitably qualified or experienced council officer or contractor responsible for assessing trees in accordance with relevant industry standards, ensuring public safety, environmental sustainability, and compliance with statutory requirements.
Worker	A person is a worker if the person carries out work in any capacity for Council, including work as: (a) an employee; or (b) a contractor or subcontractor; or (c) an employee of a contractor or subcontractor; or (d) an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking; or (e) an outworker; or (f) an apprentice or trainee; or (g) a student gaining work experience; or (h) a volunteer; or (i) a person of a prescribed class.
Visual Tree Assessment	A Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) is a method used by Tree Officers to visually inspect a tree's health and condition, focusing on identifying potential problems and risks. It involves observing the tree's "body language" and noting signs of decay, damage, or structural defects.

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Infrastructure	The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities essential for the functioning of a region.
Tree Risk Assessment	A Tree Risk Assessment (TRA) is a systematic process used to evaluate the potential risks associated with trees. Risk assessment methods align with Quantified Tree Assessment (QTRA) methodology and assessment tools found in Councils Forestree asset management system.
Burnley Method of tree valuation	A formula-based approach to valuing trees, particularly those in urban or amenity settings. It considers factors like tree size, age, condition, and location to determine a monetary value.
Roadside Vegetation Management Plan	Based on the Native Vegetation Act 1991 – A specific management plan developed by Council relevant to maintaining vegetation within the council area. The plan has been developed in consultation with and has been approved by The Native Vegetation Council.
Clearance Envelope	Is an area clear of vegetation allowing the movement of vehicles and clearance to infrastructure. The road clearance envelope is specified in Councils Roadside Vegetation Management Plan which has been adopted by the Native Vegetation Council.
Local Government Act 1999	The Local Government Act 1999 establishes the legal framework for councils, defining their role, responsibilities, and operational structure.
The Local Government Land By-Law 2021	For the management and regulation of the use of and access to local government land vested in or under the control of the Council, including the prohibition and regulation of particular activities on local government land.

10 Document Control

[Community / Corporate] Plan Link:		Corporate Plan CS3 Assets – Output 6
Document Owner:		Director Infrastructure and Environmental Services
Document Control Officer:		Senior Manager Infrastructure and Environmental Operations
Version history		
Version No.	Date	Description of Change
1.0	18/11/2025	New Policy