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| **Tree Management Policy for Council Managed Land** |
| **2023**  |

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# Introduction

Uralla Shire is fortunate to be home to a diverse array of flora and fauna. These ecological assets are an intrinsic part of our regional environment, attracting visitors and new residents to the Shire.

Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of trees in the Shire area.

The Council views trees as an intergenerational resource that is essential to the health and well-being of our community. They have a historical element within our streetscapes and are intrinsically linked to the character of our urban environment.

Trees, especially indigenous species, can also provide biodiversity value to an area and support a range of local fauna species. They also play a vital ecological role by providing habitat, moderating temperature extremes, storing carbon and improving air quality. Scientific research supports the view that the establishment of trees and vegetation is a cost-effective means to deliver environmental services.

The management of Uralla Shire’s trees and forests has an explicit role in Council operations, involving consideration of urban infrastructure, aesthetic qualities and historic neighbourhood characteristics. The management of urban vegetation often involves consultation between staff and the community for the delivery of services.

This policy establishes the principles by which Council will manage the trees across the Shire. It seeks to maintain and improve trees and vegetation for social, recreational, environmental, ecological, scientific and economic benefits, while balancing these values with Council’s duty of care obligations for the prevention of property damage or injury to persons.

The policy provides a framework for vegetation management including, but not limited to, maintaining, planting replacing and where necessary removing trees and other vegetation.

# Purpose

* This policy is intended to provide guidance and direction for planting, protection, management and maintenance of trees located on streets, roads, reserves and public open spaces managed by Uralla Shire Council.
* The policy will provide a basis for informed decision making, documentation and standardised processes to ensure consistency in the management of the trees on Council managed land.

# Scope

The Policy applies to all trees on Council’s operational land, nature strips, land managed through the Public Reserve and Crown Reserve system for which an individual management plan does not apply, Council-managed parks and gardens, sporting grounds, car parks, memorial parks, and cemeteries.

The policydoes not extend to trees and vegetation on private land.

# Policy Objectives

1. To preserve the historical and ecological values of the trees in land areas managed by Council to the benefit of the health and wellbeing of the Uralla Shire community.
2. Maintain best-practice tree management and maintenance standards.
3. Maintain the amenity and attractiveness of the streetscapes in our towns and villages.
4. Increase public awareness regarding the best practice of tree management and encourage the public to cooperate with Council in its care and maintenance.
5. Ensure that vegetation on public land is maintained to minimise the chances of damage or injury to persons and/or property.
6. Enhance Uralla Shire Council’s reputation within the community as a steward and manager of trees.

# Link to Community Strategic Plan

This policy has the following link to the Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2022-2031:

* Strategy 3.1 - To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment
* Strategy 3.2 - Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment

# Tree Management

The management and maintenance standards of Council’s tree assets shall be guided by the following principles:

## Tree Planting

* Council will proactively undertake tree planting on road reserves, streets, open spaces and other Council-managed lands by seeking to:
* Maintain and enhance the local biodiversity.
* Enhance the appearance of the built environment.
* Provide planting which requires minimum maintenance.
* Ensure planting is selected which considers Council’s long term maintenance obligations.
* Ensure planting near property does not increase the bushfire threat.
* Where practical, Council shall replace trees after they have died or been removed.
* Tree planting shall be scheduled to allow for optimum seasonal conditions that are conducive to the long-term survival of trees.
* Residents shall be required to first seek and obtain permission from Council before planting trees and shrubs within Council-managed open space environments and roadsides.
* Individual tree requests by residents must be fully assessed for suitability before approval by the Council.
* Unauthorised plantings on Council owned or managed land may be removed due to safety, amenity, maintenance or infrastructure impacts concerns.

## Tree Protection

* Uralla Shire Council will give priority to the protection of trees in all aspects of the Council’s development, construction, temporary works and all other activities that may affect tree health.
* Protection of Council managed trees is to be considered during civil works or maintenance activities that can affect trees.
* Retaining of trees will be a key consideration in applications for new developments or in implementation of new projects.
* Costs associated with private works that impact on trees will be borne by the person/s undertaking the works.
* Council shall endeavour to protect and control all visible/known weeds, pests and diseases that pose a threat to the tree health.
* Inspections of council-owned and managed tree sites shall be undertaken routinely, with frequency based on the risk level of each site.
* Customer requests that identify any trees posing an immediate risk to public safety will be actioned as soon as reasonably possible.

## Tree Pruning

Once a street tree is established, pruning is the major ongoing maintenance required to manage risk to the public and maintain tree health:

* Council shall be responsible for pruning all trees as required that are located on Council managed land.
* Council will undertake street and park tree pruning to improve tree health, structure and to provide nominal clearances for pathways, roads, buildings and other essential infrastructure.
* Residents are not permitted to prune or remove Council trees. The Council will investigate unauthorised tree pruning and pursue enforcement action where appropriate in accordance with the Enforcement Procedure.

## Tree removal and replacement

* Council will approve the removal of dead, dying or potentially dangerous trees to ensure public safety, to protect property and infrastructure, or to facilitate approved development and infrastructure improvements.
* Council may be obliged to remove unauthorised plantings, without compensation to the person/s who planted them without permission.
* Residents may submit a request for a tree to be considered for removal due to safety or other concerns. A written request must be submitted to Council for a tree within Council-owned land or outside the resident’s property to be considered for removal.
* It is an offence for a person to cut, saw, poison or remove any tree or shrub on any land under the care, control and management of the Council.

# Related Policy Material

**Uralla Shire Open Space Strategy 2018**: The strategy provides an extensive analysis of the Shire’s green networks, pedestrian accessibility and shade amenity provisions to determine where opportunities lie to support and bolster the overall network.

**Uralla Shire Roadside Vegetation Management Policy 2013**: The Policy provide the framework for Council management of vegetation on rural road corridors.

***National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*** - protected fauna and plants.

***New South Wales Heritage Act 1977*** - sites under conservation and orders, relics.

***Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*** – endangered ecological communities, critical habitat, endangered and vulnerable species, key threatening processes, recovery plans.

***Rural Fires Act 1997*** - authorised removal of fire hazards.

***Noxious Weeds Act 1993*** - clearing of noxious weeds.

# Definitions

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| **Council Tree Asset** | Any tree planted or self-sown within a road reserve, open space area or roadside within the Uralla Shire local government area. Referred to as tree or trees in this Policy. |
| **Amenity** | That which gives pleasure by being aesthetically attractive, affording comfort, sustaining life and health or creating a sense of well-being. |
| **Biodiversity** | The variety of all life forms: plants, animals, microorganisms, their genes; and the terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems of which they are apart.  |
| **Dead** | A tree that is no longer capable of performing any of the following processes:1. Photosynthesis via its foliage crown (as indicated by the presence of moist, green or other coloured leaves);
2. Osmosis (the ability of the roots system to take up water);
3. Turgidity (the ability of the plant to hold moisture in its cells);
4. Epicormic shoots (the production of new shoots as a response to stress, generated from buds under the bark or from a lignotuber – at ground or underground stem).
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| **Dying** | A tree that is exhibiting any of the following symptoms:1. Permanent leaf loss in both deciduous and evergreen plants;
2. Permanent wilting (the loss of turgidity which is marked by drying out of stems, leaves and roots);
3. Shedding of the epidermis (bark dries out and peels off to the beginning of the sapwood).
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| **Habitat** | Trees and other vegetation that have the potential of hosting or supplying food for nesting birds, arboreal marsupials and/or bats. Trees are also capable of supplying habitat in order to support the growth of locally indigenous or endemic epiphytic plants. ‘Habitat’ trees include dead trees.  |
| **Native species** | Species which occur naturally within the Uralla Shire landscape.  |
| **Nature strip** | A piece of publically owned land between the boundary of private property and the road/street. |
| **Urban forest** | The collection of trees, shrubs, groundcovers and wetlands on public, private and institutional land within a defined urban area. |