THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

TREE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL POLICY

VERSION: 1

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CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

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INTRODUCTION

Council acknowledges Wadawurrung Traditional Owners of this land and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of the Greater Geelong community today. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

The planning and management of trees in accordance with this Policy will give due consideration to protecting Aboriginal culture and heritage. This will include raising awareness and compliance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018. Council acknowledges that certain native trees can be important to cultural heritage places and are a significant part of the heritage of all Australians.

Purpose

This policy provides the framework for the management of trees within City of Greater Geelong. It establishes when Council will plant, prune or remove a tree and what measures must be undertaken to protect and enhance the tree population.

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Increase the extent of urban forests, enhance canopy cover and connections with native vegetation;
2. Assist in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity that contribute to healthy ecosystems;
3. Assist in providing buffers from urban development to improve the condition and function of native vegetation;
4. Maximise resilient landscapes, liveability and community health and wellbeing;
5. Assist in carbon sequestration
6. Build community capacity to understand, value and manage our urban green spaces;
7. Increase the collaboration and integration between urban planning, engineering, open space planning and environmental disciplines
8. Advance the engagement and inclusion of traditional owners in management of our open spaces.

Scope

This policy applies to all trees within the City of Greater Geelong located on Council owned and managed land or subject to protection by the City of Greater Geelong planning scheme.

The policy framework applies to all Council departments, government entities, utility companies, land owners, developers and community members.

DEFINITIONS

This section defines the key terms used in this policy.

Term used in Policy

CANOPY TREE – A tree with spreading branches that is greater than 6 metres in height at maturity.

CITY - The City of Greater Geelong organisation, led by the CEO.

CONSTRUCTION WORKS – Any work carried out in connection with the construction, alteration, conversion, fitting-out, commissioning, renovation, repair, maintenance, refurbishment, demolition, decommissioning or dismantling of a structure, road or preparation of a building site and its surrounds.

COUNCIL - The City of Greater Geelong Council comprised of elected councillors and led by the Mayor.

COUNCIL OWNED AND MANAGED LAND – Land within the City of Greater Geelong Council that is owned or managed by the City, either developed or otherwise.

DEVELOPMENT WORKS – Real estate development, property development, service installation and changes to land use.

DIVERSITY – the inclusion of individual trees representing a variety of genetic family, species and age class to build resilience from disease and ensure continuous canopy through succession.

ECOLOGICAL VEGETATION CLASS - Ecological Vegetation Classes are the standard unit for classifying vegetation types in Victoria. EVCs are described through a combination of floristics, lifeforms and ecological characteristics, and through an inferred fidelity to particular environmental attributes.

HABITAT TREE – Live or dead trees managed to provide ecological niches (microhabitats) such as cavities, bark pockets, large dead branches, cracks, sap runs, or trunk rot.

INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY - describes the variety and diversity of all life that originates or occurs naturally in a particular place. This includes individual trees and other species that are special to Greater Geelong

PLANNING SCHEME –means the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme, including clauses 42.01 Environmental Significance Overlays, 42.02 Vegetation Protection Overlays, 42.03 Significant Landscape overlays, 43.01 Heritage Overlays, 52.17 Native Vegetation Provision and the Distinctive Area Landscape Statement.

SUITABLY QUALIFIED ARBORIST - An arborist who holds recognised qualifications in arboriculture, appropriate to the task they are undertaking as per the appropriate legislation or Australian Standard.

TREE - a long lived woody perennial plant, with one or relatively few main stems or trunks.

POLICY

Policy Statement

The City of Greater Geelong is Victoria's second largest city, 75km south west of Melbourne. The City contains a mix of coastal, country and suburban communities that are home to over 150,000 trees. These trees provide many social, economic and environmental benefits. They beautify and soften streetscapes, provide wildlife habitat and play a significant role in determining the urban character of our city. Trees are critical in the maintenance of a healthy urban environment as they produce oxygen, trap airborne pollutants and absorb carbon dioxide.

Trees form an essential part of a healthy urban environment. Urban ecology applies to the genes, species and communities of all species within the municipality including trees and plants indigenous to the local area, Australian natives and introduced tree species. Locally indigenous plants and animals require dedicated attention and resources if they are to be conserved and must be protected and enhanced as a priority. Trees provide opportunities to expand the range, habitat and connections between biodiversity conservation areas and are an essential part of achieving good urban ecology outcomes.

The City of Greater Geelong's Urban Forest Strategy presents a vision that 'Geelong will be a cool green city for the future', this supports the objectives of the Sustainability Framework to 'green our urban spaces'. To support this vision and ensure consistency and the best community outcome when managing trees, the Tree Management Policy has been divided into seven key areas:

1. Planning
2. Tree Planting
3. Tree Maintenance
4. Tree Protection
5. Tree Removal
6. Tree root interactions with public and private infrastructure
7. Native Vegetation and Biodiversity

1. Planning

1.1. All strategic, development and construction work within the municipality is required to consider trees as early as possible in the design of the project to ensure the protection of existing trees and alignment with the Urban Forest Strategy and Sustainability Framework.

1.2. The principles that will guide construction and development within the City include:

1.2.1. All design and construction work around trees must consider existing trees to ensure the retention and protection of canopy trees in accordance with Australian Standard 4970 Protection of Trees on Development Sites

1.2.2. All subdivision applications must identify and prioritise sufficient space for canopy tree planting and include tree zones in the functional layout plans in accordance with the Code of Practice for Infrastructure in Road Reserves.

1.2.3. All developments must be designed and built to accommodate a minimum of one mature canopy tree in the nature strip per residential block or every fifteen metres, regardless of the presence of a tree at the time of design and planning.

1.2.4. Engineering solutions that decrease compaction and increase water availability are to be adopted to improve the growing environment for trees, and reduce conflicts with infrastructure

1.2.5. New buildings and associated infrastructure must be designed or located to minimise conflict with existing trees.

1.3. To improve and increase canopy cover in accordance with the Urban Forest Strategy, the largest species suitable for the site shall be selected.

1.4. When designing streetscapes trees that provide an appropriate scale, form and character for the neighbourhood and maximise beneficial environmental outcomes must be selected.

1.5. The City will build partnerships with local, state and federal organisations to help green and cool the city.

2. Tree Planting

2.1. Opportunities for planting will be proactively identified within streets and reserves to increase canopy cover across the municipality.

2.1.1. Planting will prioritise shading pathways and street and park infrastructure

2.1.2. Resident requests for planting will be assessed and if the site is found suitable a tree will be planted in the next available planting season.

2.2. The City will aim to plant at least one tree in front of every property frontage. Additional trees will be planted where there is appropriate space and site conditions.

2.3. Species selection will consider the current and future environment of the site, the constraints specific to the site, the character of the neighbourhood, and diversity and resilience of the tree population

2.4. All tree stock will be grown in accordance with Australian Standard 2303 Tree Stock for Landscape Use

2.5. Council will advocate for greater tree planting on private land

3. Tree Maintenance

3.1. Best arboricultural practice will be applied at all times to promote a healthy and safe tree population. All pruning will be undertaken by a suitably qualified arborist in accordance with Australian Standard 4373 Pruning of Amenity Trees

3.2. Street and park tree inspections and pruning will be undertaken on a regular basis to improve tree health and safety and to provide clearances for pathways, roads, buildings and other essential infrastructure.

3.3. Trees will be inspected and pruned to ensure compliance with the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015 (as amended from time to time) and other relevant statutory requirements.

3.4. Tree/s will not be pruned to facilitate views, to provide solar access to solar panels or gardens or to reduce the impact from wildlife waste or noise.

3.5. New technology in the field of arboriculture will be incorporated into management and maintenance techniques where appropriate.

3.6. Trees in areas of environmental significance will be managed to promote safety, the environmental values of the site and habitat opportunities for wildlife

4. Tree Protection

4.1. The City will work with developers to protect as many mature trees as is feasibly possible

4.2. All development applications must include all information necessary to allow a full assessment of the potential impacts on trees to be retained, on or adjacent the site.

4.3. All trees will be protected in accordance with Australian Standard 4970 for the Protection of Trees on Development Sites. Developers are required to meet all costs related to tree protection.

4.4. Council owned and managed trees are protected under the Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law. The City's Local Laws team will investigate and pursue enforcement for any vandalism or unauthorised works to trees.

4.4.1. Trees that do not survive works will be retained as habitat trees where appropriate or a new tree will be replanted in the same location.

4.5. Trees recognised in a Significant Tree Register for scientific, social, horticultural or aesthetic reasons shall be recognised, protected and retained in the landscape.

4.6. The City will engage with the public through consultation, publications, and community planting and education programs to raise awareness of the benefits and management of trees.

5. Tree Removal

5.1. Tree removal will not be permitted to facilitate views (including advertising signs), off-street parking, installation of solar panels or awnings or to reduce the impact from any bird / bat / other animal waste or noise.

5.2. Risk to public safety and property will take priority in tree removal decisions in emergency situations.

5.3. The removal of individual street and park trees will only be approved when:

5.3.1. removal is the only option to mitigate a high or extreme risk; or

5.3.2. the tree is dead or in decline and unlikely to recover; or

5.3.3. the tree is causing damage to infrastructure or property and there is no reasonable option to otherwise resolve the issue; or

5.3.4. the tree is affected by development and there is no other design option available. Removal will occur if the applicant agrees to pay all costs, including removal, replacement and the value of the tree being removed as calculated by the City's methodology. All money collected will be used to improve tree canopy cover; or

5.3.5. the tree/s unable to be maintained to meet Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015 (as amended from time to time) and other relevant statutory requirements; or

5.3.6. the removal of trees is required to facilitate renewal of the street or reserve.

5.4. Where a tree has been removed, and the site is suitable for replanting, a replacement tree will be established in future planting seasons.

5.5. If an existing tree is removed to facilitate private or public works, or damaged due to works or vandalism and cannot be retained, an offset value will be applied to the tree.

5.5.1. The offset value is calculated using the following methodology:

(volume of tree canopy removed/volume of an average 5-year-old tree) x Tree Planting and Establishment charge = Offset Value

5.6 All money collected through the application of offset values will be used to improve tree canopy cover

6. Tree root interactions with public and private infrastructure

6.1. All development and construction works must make allowances for the protection of Council-owned or managed trees on nature strips and reserves during the planning, design and implementation process.

6.2. When tree roots are reported to be interfering with private infrastructure, investigations will be undertaken in accordance with the City's adopted risk reporting method.

6.3. Cracked pipes or drains leak moisture and provide an ideal entry point and growing environment for any plant roots in the area. It is the responsibility of the asset owner to maintain pipes, so they are fully sealed and do not leak.

6.4. Practical solutions will be sought to reduce the risk of damage to infrastructure from public trees. Tree removal will only be considered if no practical arboricultural solution can be found.

7. Native Tree Management

7.1. The importance of indigenous and native tree species is recognised and the City will seek to enhance indigenous biodiversity where possible.

7.2. Opportunities to integrate environmental outcomes such as promotion of habitat into tree management programs will be sought.

7.3. Native trees will be planted in recognised indigenous biodiversity corridors and catchment areas

7.4. When planting on Rural Roadsides species selection will consider the local Ecological Vegetation Class for appropriate species selection.

7.5. Coastal communities are home to significant stands of indigenous tree species. These populations will be reinforced through ongoing planting programs

IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY

Monitoring and reporting

The Responsible Officer monitors compliance with this Policy and is responsible for reporting to Council.

The Responsible Officer will report to Council quarterly via the Council Plan Quarterly Report.

Advice and assistance

The Responsible Officer for this policy manages the provision of advice to the organisation regarding this policy.

A person who is uncertain how to comply with this policy should seek advice from this person or from their Manager.

Records

The City must retain records associated with this policy and its implementation for at least the period shown below.

Record	Retention / Disposal Authority	Retention Period	Location
Significant Tree Register	Coordinator - Tree Management	Seven years	Parks Gardens Reserves and Foreshore - Reports
Parks Planning Referrals	Parks Planning Officer	Seven years	Community Laws Management – Planning and Strategy
Tree Planting Program	Tree Planting Supervisor	Seven years	Parks Gardens Reserves and Foreshore – Projects and Programs
Tree Maintenance Program	Coordinator Tree Management	Seven years	Parks Gardens Reserves and Foreshore – Projects and Programs

Review

The City should review and, if necessary, amend this policy within two years of the approval date.

References

- City of Greater Geelong, *Biodiversity Strategy*, 2003
- City of Greater Geelong, *Environment Management Strategy*, 2020
- City of Greater Geelong, *Municipal Road Management Plan*, 2018
- City of Greater Geelong, *Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2014*, 2014
- City of Greater Geelong, *Stormwater Services Strategy 2020-2030*, 2019
- City of Greater Geelong, *Urban Forest Strategy*, 2015
- COAG standing Council on Environment and Water, *Australia's Native Vegetation Framework*, 2012
- National Trust, *Register of Significant Trees*, 2014
- Standards Australia, AS4970-2009 *Protection of trees on development sites*, 2009
- Standards Australia, AS4373-2007 *Pruning of amenity trees*, 2007
- Standards Australia, AS2303-2018 *Tree stock for landscape use*, 2018
- Victorian Government Gazette, *Code of Practice for Management of Infrastructure in Road Reserves – Victoria*, 28 April 2016
- Victorian Government Gazette, *Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015*, 23 June 2015
- Victoria State Government, *Bioregions and EVC benchmarks*, 2020
- Victoria State Government, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999
- Victoria State Government, *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* 1988
- Victoria State Government, *Greater Geelong Planning Scheme*, 2020
- Wadawurrung People, *Caring for Country*, 2020