



Public Tree Management Guidelines

PURPOSE

The purpose of these Guidelines is to support implementation of Townsville City Council's Public Tree Management Policy.

These Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the definitions in the above-mentioned policy, statutory requirements, applicable Australian Standards and form the basis for consistency among Council workers and contractors in decision making, resource allocation and overall tree management.

These Guidelines support delivery of the Public Tree Management Policy through four (4) key areas:

- Tree Retention
- Tree Removal
- Tree Valuation and Offset Plantings
- Tree Maintenance

1. TREE RETENTION AND PRESERVATION

Council is committed to preserving, and maintaining the health, structural soundness and resilience of the City's Public Tree Network. Council shall protect Public Trees from any activities that can impact their health, structure and/or longevity.

1.1. TREE PRESERVATION REQUIREMENTS

All construction works or other activities on Council Controlled Land in proximity to Public Trees shall meet the following requirements:

- All approved Public Tree removals shall be consistent with this policy.
- All Public Trees to be retained shall be protected by a Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) in accordance with *AS 4970-2007 Protection of trees on development sites*. All TPZs shall be established prior to the commencement of any works and shall be approved in writing by a Delegated Officer;
- All landscape plans shall show all approved Public Tree removals, Public Tree Works, and TPZs for Public Trees to be retained;
- No interference with Public Trees shall occur; and,
- Any approved Public Tree Works shall be consistent with the requirements of this policy.

1.2. SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC TREES ASSET REGISTER

Council is committed to preserving, and maintaining the health and structural soundness of the City's Significant and Highly Significant Public Trees. All Significant and Highly Significant Public Trees shall be recorded on Council's Significant Public Tree Asset Register.

A Public Tree shall be listed on the Council's Significant Public Tree Asset Register where at least one criterion identified in Table 1 – *Public Tree Hierarchy Classification Table* is met.

Where a Significant or Highly Significant Public Tree is proposed for removal, an arborist report shall be prepared by Council's Senior Arborist confirming the basis for its removal in accordance with this policy (refer Section 2.1). Prior to removal of a Significant or Highly Significant Public Tree shall be referred to Council for notification and community consultation prior to removal.

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Council's Senior Arborist shall approve all Public Tree Works on Council's Significant and Highly Significant Public Trees.

2. TREE REMOVAL

Council is committed to a Public Tree removal assessment process where:

- All Public Tree removal requests shall be assessed on a case-by case basis against the removal criteria listed below;
- The Public Tree removal assessment shall be undertaken by a Delegated Officer;
- The Public Tree removal assessment shall explore all feasible options to resolve the identified issues and avoid the Public Tree's removal.
- Public Tree removals considered an emergency due to imminent public risk shall bypass the Public Tree removal assessment process. The hazardous Public Tree shall be made safe and/or removed immediately. All photos and assessment documentation shall be forwarded to the Senior Arborist and recorded in Council's Enterprise Asset Management systems;
- All approved Public Tree removals shall be coordinated by Council. Approved Public Tree removals shall be prioritised within Council's annual Public Tree Works Programs and delivered subject to funding and resource availability; and,
- Any unauthorised Public Tree removals can be investigated as a breach of Council's Local Law 4 that prohibits the removal of any Public Trees without Council's permission.

2.1. CRITERIA FOR TREE REMOVAL

Council may consider the removal of Public tree for the following reasons:

- The tree is dead;
- The tree is diseased or declining and beyond remedial treatment and unable to be managed through recognised arboricultural methods;
- The tree is causing extensive damage and/or poses an increasing risk to property / infrastructure. The ongoing cost to acceptably mitigate the identified risk exceeds the value of the tree;
- The tree affected by road widening, service modification / relocation or other essential infrastructure works. All reasonable design alternatives and/or protection measures have been exhausted;
- The tree unreasonably restricts the development potential of the property/s. All reasonable design alternatives or protection measures have been exhausted;
- The tree has been identified as an inappropriate species or is a poor arboricultural specimen for its location.
- The tree is a declared pest or environmental weed species (prohibited or restricted biosecurity matter under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*).

Removal of Public Trees on Council Controlled Land shall not be considered by Council in the following circumstances:

- The tree is considered healthy and structurally sound;
- The tree is affected by termites but its structural integrity has not been compromised;
- To benefit private views;

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- The tree causes minor allergenic or irritant responses;
- There are unjustified claims of damage to infrastructure from Public Tree root activity;
- The tree is obstructing the installation of a nonessential crossover or verge design proposal;
- The tree can be retained through reasonable design solutions;
- The tree is obstructing advertising signage or other non-critical views;
- The tree is shading solar installations or other areas of private property;
- The tree is a source of leaf, fruit and/or debris drop;
- The tree is an animal roost, increasing the prevalence of animal droppings or noise;
- The tree is disliked or does not meet personal aesthetic preferences; or,
- The tree is classified as a 'habitat' tree that supports ecological functions such as hollows or breeding places.

2.2. OFFSET TREE PLANTINGS

All approved Public Tree removals should be offset by Offset Tree Plantings. The Offset Tree Plantings:

- Should achieve no net canopy loss within three (3) years of the approved Public Tree removal. The canopy area of the original Public Tree shall be used to determine the quantity of replacement trees required;
- Shall be planted under an individual project or grouped under an Offset Tree Planting Program for planting within the Local Government Area.

3. TREE VALUATION AND OFFSET TREE PLANTINGS

Council acknowledges that in some cases the removal of an existing Public Tree may be appropriate or necessary. Where a Public Tree must be removed, however, Council shall recognise the value of the Public Tree removed and should offset its loss with Offset Tree Plantings across the Local Government Area.

3.1. TREE REMOVAL COSTS

The person, company or section of Council who requested the Public Tree removal shall be responsible for all costs associated with the original tree's removal and subsequent Offset Tree Plantings and establishment. The removal of an invasive species or weed (defined as species prohibited or restricted biosecurity matter under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*) shall be at Council expense.

The Public Tree removal costs shall include:

- Public Tree removal costs, including stump grinding, debris disposal and any community engagement; and,
- Offset Tree Planting costs, including the supply of offset trees, planting and a twenty-six (26) week establishment period.

4. TREE MAINTENANCE

Council is committed to preserving, protecting, and improving the health of the City's Public Tree Network by delivering Public Tree Works Programs within funded service levels. As a living asset, the City's Public Tree Network must be maintained across all stages of the Public Tree life cycle.

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4.1. TREE PRUNING

Council shall deliver prioritised annual Public Tree Works Pruning Programs that are:

- Informed by proactive pruning inspections;
- Informed by resident requests that have been approved by a Delegated Officer;
- Delivered in accordance with AS 4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity trees;
- Supervised by a suitably qualified person and undertaken by properly trained staff (*refer Section 7.2.1*); and,
- Coordinated by Council and delivered subject to funding and resource availability.

Any unauthorised Public Tree pruning on Council Controlled Land can be investigated as a breach of Council's Local Law 4 that prohibits any interference with Public Trees without Council's permission.

Criteria for Tree Pruning

Council shall undertake prioritised pruning of Public Trees on Council Controlled Land to:

- Mitigate risk to public safety, property or infrastructure;
- Provide clearance around Public Trees, including pruning for vehicle sight lines, public signage and the requirements of the DTMR;
- Develop, improve or restore Public Tree structure;
- Manage or regenerate Public Tree health;
- Resolve instances of genuine nuisance;
- Improve aesthetics including managing the size and/or shape of the Public Tree; or,
- Conserve or enhance wildlife habitat.

Council shall not undertake pruning of Public Trees on Council Controlled Land to:

- To benefit private views;
- Lop or top a tree;
- Fence-line prune a tree along a property boundary with no regard to acceptable arboricultural methods;
- Maintain clearances around powerlines – these works are the responsibility of Ergon in accordance with the *Electrical Safety Act 2002*;
- Maintain clearances of a private tree on private property around the electricity service wire – these works are the responsibility of the property owner;
- Improve solar access;
- Reduce sap or debris drop (leaf, bark, fruit, twigs);
- Reduce animal droppings or noise;
- Remove obstructions to advertising signage;
- Reduce minor allergenic or irritant responses;
- Satisfy personal aesthetic preferences; or,
- Any other vegetative works that will cause a tree to decline or die.

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4.2. TREE ROOT MANAGEMENT

Tree root growth is not constrained by property boundaries. Opportunistic tree root growth means tree roots will seek out the most favourable soil conditions – this growth may result in direct or indirect damage to built infrastructure.

Criteria for Root Management

Council shall seek to resolve conflicts between built infrastructure and Public Tree roots by:

- Investigating claims of Direct Root Damage;
- Investigating claims of Indirect Root Damage where a geotechnical or structural engineering report implicates Public Tree root damage;
- Remedying approved claims with appropriate root management activities as directed and supervised by a Delegated Officer;
- Remedying approved claims by Public Tree removal where no root management, design alternatives or arboricultural solutions can be obtained;
- Where practicable and cost-effective, taking preventative measures to minimise future conflicts between existing Public Trees and built infrastructure;
- Around future Public Trees, providing adequate growing space to promote healthy root growth.
- Where growing space is constrained, exploring all feasible solutions to maximise Public Tree health and minimise future conflicts with adjacent built infrastructure.

Council shall not undertake root management of Public Trees to:

- Remedy unjustified claims of Public Tree root related damage to property or infrastructure.

5. PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

Prioritised pest and disease management shall be delivered as part of Council's annual Public Tree Works Programs.

Criteria for Pest and Disease Management

Council shall undertake prioritised pest and disease management of Public Trees on Council Controlled Land to:

- Mitigate risk to the City's urban forest posed by pests and pathogens that affect a tree's structural integrity and health. Examples include Longhorn Beetles, borers, wood moths, Ganoderma, Myrtle Rust, and Phytophthora.

Pest and disease management shall be prioritised based on the level of risk to the City's urban forest and in accordance with any management strategies set out by *Townsville Local Government Area Biosecurity*

Plan 2020 - 2024.

Council shall not undertake pest and disease management of Public Trees on Council Controlled Land to:

- Mitigate a perceived risk posed by a termite population in a Public Tree – property owners are responsible for ensuring their property is suitably protected against termites.

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6. APPENDIX A

Table 1 – Public Tree Hierarchy Classification Table

Public Tree Hierarchy Classification	Botanical	Ecological	Cultural	Landscape
<p>Highly Significant (listed on Significant Tree Register)</p>	<p>Outstanding physical characteristic/s including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater than 80 years old; • Greater than 30m high; • Greater than 30m canopy width • Greater than 600mm diameter at breast height (DBH); or • A curious growth habit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rare, endangered or vulnerable species; • A desirable genetic seed source; • Habitat tree for local fauna; • Part of an endangered regional ecosystem; • Remnant tree that provides significant ecosystem services including soil stability, shade and water table management; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to indigenous cultural traditions, ceremonies and/or stories; • Listed or located within a State Heritage listed location; • Part of a commemorative or memorial tree planting of city wide significance; • Planted by international or national dignitaries; • Planted by early settlers or is connected to documented local history. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local landmark or feature tree of city wide significance; • Contributes to the scenic character and amenity of the city; • Part of an avenue planting of city wide significance.

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<p>Significant <i>(listed on Significant Tree Register)</i></p>	<p>Reasonably significant physical characteristic/s including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 60-80 years old; • Between 25-30m high; • Between 25-30m canopy width • Between 300-600mm diameter at breast height (DBH). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A near threatened species; • Part of an of concern regional ecosystem; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listed or located within a Local Heritage listed location; • Part of a widely recognized commemorative or memorial tree planting; • Planted by state or local dignitaries; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A widely recognised local landmark or feature tree; • Contributes to the scenic character and amenity of the broader public open space network • Part of widely recognised avenue planting.
<p>Desirable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy and structurally sound tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local native species • Part of a least concern regional ecosystem; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the overall cultural heritage of the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the overall scenic character and amenity of the public open space location
<p>Un-desirable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diseased or declining tree • Poses safety risk that cannot be efficiently managed through recognized arboricultural methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A declared pest or environmental weed species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not contribute to the overall cultural heritage of the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not contribute to • any scenic character and • amenity • Identified conflicts with infrastructure • Identified as an inappropriate tree species for its location

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7. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Version	Amendment	Reviewer	Approved
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Contact us

👤 103 Walker Street, Townsville City

✉ PO Box 1268, Townsville QLD 4810

📞 13 48 10

📧 enquiries@townsville.qld.gov.au

🌐 townsville.qld.gov.au

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