



Public Tree Management Policy

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Townsville City Council recognises the value and important role of trees in the urban landscape. In managing the City's Public Tree Network, Council must balance various risks against the social, economic, and environmental benefits Public Trees can provide.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Establish Council's commitment and strategic direction for the preservation, management, enhancement and maintenance of Public Trees on Council Controlled Land within the Townsville Local Government Area;
- Address Public Tree management and maintenance issues faced by Council;
- Provide a framework for decision making, documentation and standardised process to ensure consistency of the management of Public Trees on Council Controlled Land within Townsville.

3. PRINCIPLES

Across the City's Public Tree Network, Council's activities and resources shall be prioritised based upon the following order of principles:

- Manage risks to public safety;
- Manage risks to property or infrastructure;
- Preserve and maintain the health and structural soundness of the City's Public Tree Network including the City's Significant and Highly Significant Public Trees;
- Improve the City's image, liveability, and the well-being of the community by prioritising the integration of Public Trees within the urban landscape; and,
- Support the health of the City's ecosystems through investment in the City's Public Tree Network.

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to the management of all Public Trees on Council Controlled Land that are Council's direct Responsibility.

This policy excludes:

- Public Trees within Council leased areas where vegetation management is explicitly stated as a responsibility of the Lessee;
- Trees on privately owned land;
- Trees in State controlled road reserves maintained by Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) or their contractors, but excluding areas maintained by Council under the Road Maintenance Performance Contract (RMPC);
- Trees in National or State reserves managed by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) or the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (DNRME);

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- Trees in Council controlled bushland and natural reserves; or,
- Any vegetation in drainage reserves and firebreaks.

5. RESPONSIBILITY

The Director of Infrastructure and Operations is responsible for ensuring this policy and any supporting standards, guidelines or procedures are understood by all Council workers and contractors working on Council Controlled Land.

All Council workers, managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to.

All Public Trees on Council Controlled Land shall be recorded as non-financial assets on a register to be maintained by the Asset Custodian.

All Council workers, contractors and the community are encouraged to promptly report any Public Tree management concerns to Council's Customer Service Centre.

6. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

Asset Custodian is the section of Townsville City Council nominated from time to time by the Director of Infrastructure and Operations as being responsible for ensuring that Council's Public Trees are managed and maintained according to the Council's policies, guidelines and standards. Currently, Council's Parks Open Space and Environment (POSE) Team is the nominated Asset Custodian.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) – is a quality assured national qualifications framework for education and training within Australia. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework. This ensures national recognition, consistency, and common understanding across Australia of what defines each qualification.

can – in this policy, indicates a possibility or a capability.

Community – in this policy, refers to the broader Townsville population, and all groups (communities) that are part of it. It is important to note that people usually see themselves as belonging to one community of place but more than one community of interest or identity.

Consulting Arborist – means a person:

- with minimum AQF Level 5 in arboriculture;
- that is insured for both public liability and professional indemnity in an amount that meets Council's standards; and,
- has extensive knowledge and experience in arboriculture principles and practices.

Council – means the Townsville City Council.

Council Controlled Land – in this policy, refers to land under Council freehold ownership or Crown land managed by Council under trust. It also includes Council controlled road reserves and State controlled road reserves that are managed by Council under the Road Maintenance Performance Contract (RMPC). It does not include (1) State and Federal controlled reserves (E.g. National Parks, State Forests) or (2) bushland areas subject to Council's environmental management strategies.

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Delegated Officer – is a suitably qualified person holding the delegated power to provide approval on behalf of Council. In this policy, Delegated Officer refers to the Senior Arborist and Technical Officer – Horticulture and Arboriculture positions within Council appointed by the CEO. These positions are responsible for providing strategic guidance and specialist technical advice on Public Tree management and assessment.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) – is a multi-disciplinary approach that aims to discourage crime through environmental design. CPTED Townsville City Council strategies aim to influence and deter criminal behaviour by applying design and management principles to the built and natural environment.

Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) – refers to the nominal trunk diameter at 1.4 metres (m) above ground level determined by dividing the circumference of the trunk by pi (π).

Emergency Public Tree Works – means Public Tree Works that need to be completed urgently to mitigate imminent public risk. Emergency tree works include but are not limited to:

- Public tree works on a leaning tree with soil upheaval;
- Public tree works on a tree with open or active splits or cracks within the tree trunk or canopy;
- Public tree works to enable emergency access or emergency work;
- Public tree works in response to an accident or emergency;
- Public tree works in response to a storm event or other types of natural disasters; or,
- Public tree works on a private tree / branch that is
- a declared community safety hazard impacting on Council controlled land.

Interference with a tree – means to carry out an activity that damages, disfigures, mutilates, or otherwise interferes with the growth and health of a tree. Interference includes but is not limited to:

- Ringbarking or removing bark from a Public Tree;
- Lopping or topping a Public Tree;
- Applying a substance to the Public Tree or its roots that is harmful and adversely affects its health;
- Damaging a Public Tree with heat, including by burning, scorching or singeing part of the tree;
- Damaging a Public Tree's root zone by any means, including excavating, filling, compacting or applying a harmful substance;
- Cutting or tearing branches, roots or the trunk of a Public Tree; or,
- Permanently or temporarily, fixing any object to, or inserting object into, any living tissue or surrounding bark of the Public Tree.

may – in this policy, indicates a permission.

Offset Tree Planting – refers to new Public Tree plantings intended to offset the tree canopy lost from a previous Public Tree removal. Offset Tree Plantings are intended to achieve no net canopy loss within three (3) years of the approved Public Tree removal.

Public Open Space – refers to publicly accessible land that is set aside for informal and formal community use. The land typically supports a variety of civic, cultural, recreation and sporting activities whilst also providing stormwater management, amenity, and environmental benefits.

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Public Tree – in this policy, refers to any tree within the Local Government Area that has any part of its trunk growing from Council controlled land.

Public Tree Network – is the network of Public Trees on Council controlled land within the Local Government Area.

Public Tree Works – means approved activities such as pruning, removing, (re)planting or tree care activities that are undertaken on a Public Tree by approved personnel in order to achieve a specified tree management objective. In accordance with Local Law 3, Part 5 Section 17c, Public Tree Works can also be undertaken on a private tree that is declared community safety hazard impacting on Council controlled land.

Road Reserve – refers to areas of land set aside for road purposes, extending from property boundary to property boundary. It includes not only the area covered by the actual road formation (carriageway) but encompasses the entire area of land dedicated for the use of the travelling public. This includes any areas of public open space within or adjacent to the carriageway where Public Trees, gardens and grass are planted.

Root Damage – Direct – refers to the direct damage or distortion of a built structure resulting from pressure exerted by a tree root. Direct damage from tree roots is typically limited to light built structures including footpaths and low walls. Direct damage may also occur in larger structures with sub-standard footings.

Root Damage – Indirect – refers to indirect damage or distortion of a built structure due to soil movement, associated with changes in soil moisture. Tree root growth is rarely the sole contributor to soil movement and changes in soil moisture – as there may be multiple contributing factors, claims of indirect damage need to be thoroughly investigated.

shall – in this policy, indicates a requirement.

should – in this policy, indicates a recommendation.

Significant Public Tree or Highly Significant Public Tree - means a Public Tree that is recorded in the Significant Public Tree Asset Register and has been classified in accordance with the Public Tree Hierarchy Classification Table (Table 1) contained in the Tree Management Guidelines.

Tree – Trees are long lived woody perennial plants with a trunk diameter at breast height greater than 200 millimetres (mm); usually greater than three (3) metres in height; and have one, or relatively few, main stem or trunk. Public trees are either owned or managed by Council.

Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) – is a specified area above and below ground and 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.

Urban Forest – is the combined network of private and Public Trees and associated vegetation located in urban and peri-urban areas. Urban forests are managed for the purpose of improving the urban environment and provide many ecosystem services.

7. LEGAL PARAMETERS

Federal Government

Biosecurity Act 2015

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

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State Government

Biosecurity Act 2014

Electrical Safety Act 2002

Environmental Protection Act 1994

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulations 2012

Planning Act 2016

Nature Conservation Act 1992

Neighbourhood Disputes (Dividing Fences and Trees) Act 2011

Vegetation Management Act 1999

Local Government

Local Law 4

Townsville City Plan

8. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Australian Standards

AS 2303-2015 Tree stock for landscape use

AS 3743-2003 Potting mixes

AS 4373-2007 Pruning of amenity trees

AS 4454-2003 Composts, soil conditioners and mulches

AS 4970-2007 Protection of trees on development sites

Townsville City Council

Townsville City Council Tree Management Guidelines

Townsville Local Government Area Biosecurity Plan 2020 – 2024

9. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Version	Amendment	Reviewer	Approved
24/10/21	1.1	Initial adoption	Matt Richardson	Ordinary Council

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