



# Tree Management Policy

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## 1. PURPOSE

This policy provides the direction for the planting and continued management of trees located on Council managed land (Streets, Roads, Reserves and Public Open Space). It will provide a basis to make decisions on the management of trees with a particular vision to balance amenity and risk.

Trees provide significant economic, social, environmental, ecological and aesthetic benefits to our communities and assist in the creation of neighbourhood character and identity of our township streets and rural roadsides. Council recognises trees as a living asset, and understands ongoing maintenance, renewal and management is required for long-term sustainability and community benefit.

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## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the many hundreds of thousands of trees on Council managed streets, roads, reserves and public open spaces that Council has management responsibility for.

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## 3. POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 Trees are highly valued assets to the Golden Plains Shire environment. Mature trees are a dominant feature in tree lined avenues, streets, rural roadsides, parks and reserves. Trees improve air quality by absorbing air pollutants, releasing oxygen and sequestering carbon dioxide. Collectively trees add beauty by softening the harsh lines of township development, help screen unsightly views, provide privacy and create a sense of identity and security within the community.
- 3.2 Trees also provide great economic benefits to the community including increasing property value, reducing building heating and cooling costs and reducing heat stress for people and infrastructure by providing shade and shelter. Trees, especially indigenous species, can provide biodiversity value to an area and support a range of local fauna species.
- 3.3 Issues relating to tree management have a high profile and can generate considerable public debate and passion and as a consequence, planning is required in order to facilitate effective tree management.
- 3.4 This policy outlines Council's tree management processes in line with relevant legislative requirements, strategic policies and accepted tree care practices. Best practice tree management benefits the landscape and environment and meets the expectations of the local community. Trees located on private property are not included in this policy.

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## 4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1 To be developed during 2020/21 for annual implementation.

## 5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- Coroner's recommendations following investigation into a fatality caused by a falling tree in Regional Victoria.
- 5.1 All local government agencies should have a computer-based inventory of all trees for which they are responsible, which identifies the species of the tree and its location.
  - 5.2 All local government agencies should have a computer maintenance program, which is linked to the inventory and provides dates and details (what was done and why) of all maintenance and inspection operations that are undertaken on trees.
  - 5.3 All local government agencies should have a computer-based risk assessment system that is applied to all trees contained within the tree inventory, utilising a system that is widely and readily available or another system that embodies the principles of risk assessment specified in the relevant Australian Standard.
  - 5.4 All local government agencies should have a formalised tree inspection protocol, which specifies the purpose of the inspection and what form the inspection takes (eg, walk-by visual tree inspection, use of technological aids in the inspection process) and whether the inspection is ground-based or from above. The inspection record should also indicate what further arboricultural works, if any, are recommended for the tree and why these works are recommended.
  - 5.5 All inspections must be undertaken by a qualified (level 4 or above) arborist. The Coroner is generally of the view that a level 5 qualification or above is preferred, but this may not be applicable to all Council-based situations.
  - 5.6 All and any inspections and assessment protocols should be clearly dated and indicate a clear time line for the next inspection / assessment. The inspection / assessment record should also indicate what further arboricultural works, if any, are recommended for the tree and by what date in the future these should be undertaken.
  - 5.7 In any tree inspection, tree assessment or risk assessment, it should be noted that the anatomy of a branch and of an epicormic shoot are quite different. The term 'branch' should only be applied to tree structures that have a proper branch anatomy and epicormic shoots should be clearly identified as such in any assessment or inspection procedures.
  - 5.8 All and any inspection protocols should involve components that assess the trunk and canopy components (above ground) and root system (below ground) of the tree. Inspection protocols should involve the use of relevant criteria that allow proper assessments against these criteria to be made at the time of inspection.

## 6. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Council will maintain township streets, rural roadsides and areas of public open space within the municipality with a particular emphasis on mitigating risk to persons and property, whilst also ensuring that amenity, environmental and heritage values are equally considered, including:
  - Appropriate siting and species selections for all new trees

- Appropriate protection, maintenance and management of trees
- Appropriate measures taken where possible to retain significant native trees and non-native of heritage or amenity value
- Co-ordination of Council policy and strategic documents/to assist
- Sufficient resources being allocated to allow for best practice tree management
- Effective risk management
- To provide parameters for development sites as per AS 4970-2009

6.2 **Tree Management** - Council will ensure that the management of its trees is consistent with best practice at all times and that trees are maintained at an appropriate standard.

It will:

- Develop formal management guidelines and improve existing documentation for the management of Council's tree assets in line with accepted tree care practices and relevant legislative requirements to maintain and enhance the tree population
- Provide adequate resources to ensure tree management is undertaken to mitigate risk potential
- Maintain an inventory of township street trees under its control via a Tree Register

6.3 **Significant Tree Management** - Council will develop a 'Golden Plains Shire Tree Inventory' which will identify significant, exotic, native and indigenous trees on Council managed land that have special significance. They would be identified because of their historical, amenity, horticultural, location or contextual value. This would include Avenues of Honour, areas of significant roadside native vegetation as identified in Council's roadside biodiversity mapping and Vegetation Protection Overlay, and some other trees that are listed in Planning Scheme overlays or on the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Register of Significant Trees.

- Significant trees within GPS shall be appropriately managed and protected
- All significant trees shall be managed in accordance with all relevant legislation
- Flagging of significant trees in the Golden Plains Shire Tree Inventory will occur

6.4 **Tree Protection** - As far as practicable, Council will endeavour to ensure trees are protected from development, construction, temporary works and other activities that may have a negative impact upon tree health.

- Whilst maintaining a balance between risk/safety and project outcomes, where possible, protection of Council managed trees is to be considered during civil works or maintenance activities that could place trees under stress or at risk.

The retaining of trees will be an important factor when considering applications for new development or where implementing infrastructure works.

- Costs associated with private works that impact on trees will be borne by the person/s undertaking the works.

## 6.5 Tree Inspection Program

- Council shall undertake tree inspections and data collection in non-high risk township areas every five [5] years
- Council shall undertake tree inspections and data collection in high risk areas such as town centres, near playgrounds and high activity areas every three [3] years
- Council shall undertake reactive tree inspections on request – eg, rural roadsides

It is acknowledged that resources restrict the capacity of the Council to inspect and maintain all trees to the same level at all times. It is the Council's intention however to ensure that an appropriate and duly diligent proportion of each annual tree management budget be allocated to hazardous tree inspections and maintenance issues.

## 6.6 Tree Pruning

- Council shall be responsible for undertaking tree pruning of all trees as required that are owned and maintained by Council
- All pruning undertaken on trees within GPS municipality township areas shall be accordance with AS 4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees and the Street Tree Pruning Guidelines
- All tree pruning shall be carried out by appropriately trained Council staff or an independent contractor who shall be appointed by Council
- All tree pruning shall be carried out in accordance with all relevant legislation which may include: *Heritage Act 1995*, *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- Residents are not permitted to prune or remove Council trees

## 6.7 Tree Removal - Trees in poor health, dead or hazardous-will be removed and / or replaced subject to funding. While all other options will be explored, tree removal may be required to ensure public health and safety, to protect infrastructure, or to facilitate approved development and infrastructure improvements. For large native trees retention of the stag is preferred to retain habitat value for native wildlife.

- Trees will only be removed after investigation and assessed for removal by Council's Works Department, appropriately trained Council staff or a Council engaged independent arborist on a 'case by case' basis

- All tree removal shall be carried out in accordance with all relevant Legislation
- Council will consult and inform the community about all major projects involving tree removal and plantings
- Council will pursue unauthorised tree removal and investigate enforcement action under the jurisdiction of Local Law No. 2 – General Public Amenity
- Council may be obliged to remove unauthorised plantings, without compensation to the person/s who planted them without permission

### 6.8 **Tree Roots**

- Subject to budget, Council will investigate tree root damage claims involving infrastructure
- Where practical, Council will minimise the impact to infrastructure caused by roots from Council trees.
- Tree roots can cause conflict with infrastructure resulting in damage to assets. Council will deal with this conflict on a case by case basis and explore all options to mitigate the conflict, with tree removal being the last option

### 6.9 **Tree Planting** - Council will proactively carry out tree planting in road reserves, open space and on other Council managed land as resources permit.

- All new tree stock selection and planting shall be in accordance with Council policy
- Use of tree species outside of the recommendation of Council staff must be approved by Council's Natural Resources Team within streetscapes and public open space.
- Council will plant advanced trees within township streetscapes and parks that it is responsible for maintaining and provide guidance for suitable planting within any Council maintained asset. Where practical, Council shall replace trees after they have died or been removed
- Purchasing and planting shall be scheduled to allow for optimum seasonal conditions that are conducive to the long term survival of trees
- All new developments shall be designed to accommodate trees where possible and in such a way as to allow for improved asset management and long-term community benefit
- Tree protection zones as per Australian Standard AS4970-2009 shall be incorporated with regard to all developmental sites
- Residents must first seek and obtain permission from Council before planting trees and shrubs within nature-strips or other Council managed open space environments and roadsides.

- Residents can request that Council undertake planting within their street or reserve
- Residents will be notified in advance, of tree removals and/or plantings in the immediate area

6.10 **Power Line Pruning** - Powercor has the responsibility to maintain Council trees in accordance with the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015 within the undeclared area of the Golden Plains Shire.

- In the declared areas, Council shall prepare an approved Electrical Line Clearance Management Plan in accordance with the requirements of Energy Safe Victoria which shall be subject to all provisions (including audit) of the relevant Legislation which is the Electricity Safety Act 1998
- In all such declared areas Council shall be responsible for appointing a Powerline Pruning Contractor to undertake tree pruning in accordance with the Guidelines to the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015
- Contractors must at all times where possible trim trees in accordance with the amenity tree pruning standards

6.11 **Pest and Disease** - Tree pests and diseases are a component of tree management and Council recognises that control measures will be required at times to maintain healthy trees. A range of methods will be utilised in the management of pest and disease outbreaks

- Monitor tree population to enable timely and appropriate responses
- Identify damage and initiate the implementation of a pest and disease control program
- Determine if further action is required if there are signs of excessive damage and/or insect infestation

### Reporting

6.12 **Community Consultation** – The Golden Plains Shire manages trees on Council managed land on behalf of the community. Consultation with affected and interested members of the local community is paramount.

- The community will be provided with advance information and consulted about all major projects involving tree removal, tree planting and other major tree management programs
- Day to day management and emergency works which involve public safety do not require consultation

### Records Management

6.13 Council must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973*.



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### 7. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS OR ABBREVIATIONS USED

- 7.1 **Township Areas** – The parameters of township areas are defined within town boundaries of established areas and the commencement of speed limit zones at townships or township boundaries.
- 7.2 **Council Tree Asset** – Any tree planted or self-sown within a road reserve, open space area or roadside within the township area boundary maintained by Golden Plains Shire. Referred to as tree or trees in this Policy.

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### 8. RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

#### Legislation

- 8.1 *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- 8.2 *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*

#### Strategic Documents, Policies and Procedures

- 8.3 AS 4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites
- 8.4 AS 4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees and the Street Tree Pruning Guidelines
- 8.5 Electric Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015
- 8.6 Electric Safety Amendment (Bushfire Mitigation) 2014
- 8.7 Golden Plains Shire Environment Strategy 2019-2027
- 8.8 Golden Plains Shire Roadside Environmental Management Plan
- 8.9 Golden Plains Shire Roadside Environmental Code of Practice Handbook
- 8.10 Victorian Heritage Register H2238, Heritage Victoria

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### 9. HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT OF COMPATABILITY

- 9.1 It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic).

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### 10. POLICY OWNER

- 10.1 Director Assets and Amenity
- 10.2 The policy owner is the individual who is given the responsibility to review, edit and maintain this policy and associated procedure. The policy owner is also the point of contact for any questions regarding this policy.

## 11. DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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| NOTES:                   | <p>Policy documents are amended from time to time, therefore you should not rely on a printed copy being the current version. Please consult Council's Policy page on the Golden Plains Shire Council website to ensure that the version you are using is up to date.</p> <p>Available at:<br/> <a href="https://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/residents/my-council/about-council/council-policies">https://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/residents/my-council/about-council/council-policies</a> </p> |