

ASSET SUSTAINABILITY

Tree Management Policy

6.3.

Prepared by: Kelly Harrington, Land Management & Biosecurity Technical Officer
Meeting Date: Thursday, December 15, 2022

Executive Summary:

Cassowary Coast Regional Council's Operational Plan committed to facilitating the development and adoption of a Tree Management Policy (Action Item 24).

As part of our commitment to an environmentally balanced and aware community that preserves and maintains our natural environment, Cassowary Coast Regional Council has developed a Draft Tree Management Policy. This Policy will provide commitment to the retention and effective management of the region's public trees and strategic direction in relation to planting of new trees, continued maintenance, management and protection of trees located on Council controlled land.

The Tree Management Policy is one of a suite of documents used to manage trees on public land in the Cassowary Coast Region and is the over-arching document to which the others reference and are guided and informed by.

Recommendation:

"That Council:

- 1. endorse the 'draft' Cassowary Coast Regional Council Tree Management Policy and 'draft' Tree Management Guidelines for release for public consultation for a period of 5 weeks, commencing 19th December; and**
 - 2. note the Tree Management Procedure; and**
 - 3. endorse the future development of a 'Verge and Reserve Management' policy to be completed by 31 March 2023; and**
 - 4. endorse the commencement for public engagement (stage 2) to assist in the identification of significant trees to inform the development of a 'Significant Tree' Register."**
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Background:

Council recognises the value and important role of trees across the landscape and council aims to balance risks against the social, economic and environmental benefits of public trees.

Trees on public land are fundamental to the Cassowary Coast region's biodiversity and ecological values, landscape character and amenity. Trees form the aesthetic backdrop for the regions outstanding natural environmental values. They also shade parks, cool and soften buildings, enhance streetscape amenity and provide habitat and food for wildlife. As such, trees have a significant value to Cassowary Coast Regional Council and the community.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide:

- Commitment to the retention and effective management of the region's public trees
- Strategic direction in relation to planting of new trees, continued maintenance, management and protection of trees located on Council land
- Address key recommendations in Local Government Mutual Services Tree Risk Management Guide 2021
- Strategic direction for implementation of Law No.4 (Local Government Controlled Areas and Roads)

Council's activities and resources shall be prioritised 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 Cassowary Coast region's public trees.
- Improve the regions image, liability and the wellbeing of the community by prioritising the integration of public trees.

This Policy is underpinned by the following objectives:

- Increase and enhance the extent of tree canopy throughout the region through planting of appropriately selected trees in streets, public spaces and bushland areas.
- Where it is unavoidable that trees are to be removed from public land, Council will arrange an offset planting.
- Recognition of the importance of tree cover throughout the region.
- Trees are recognised and valued.
- Council will maintain a consistent approach to assessing risks and benefits posed by trees in accordance with defined criteria.
- Implement best practice safety processes and principles to minimise risks to the community from trees on Council controlled land.
- Enable effective, efficient and consistent communication with the community on Council's tree management approach and practices.
- Acknowledgement that certain trees may be trees of importance having cultural, environmental, landscape or other significance.

A suite of documents is being prepared to support Tree Management within the region:

- Tree Management Policy
- Tree Management Procedure
- Tree Management Guideline
- Verge and Reserve Management Policy (to be completed)
- Significant Tree Register (to be completed). Significant trees are outstanding trees that receive a higher level of protection because of their impressive size, age, rarity, ecological value or cultural and historical significance. On completion, the management of significant trees will be incorporated into the Tree Management Procedure.

Link to Corporate Plan:

COMMUNITY - OUR PEOPLE

What we want to see by 2025

Council working in partnership with the community, to enhance and promote pride in and liveability of the region.

Strategic Objectives

- C1 Increase community engagement, consultation, transparency in decision making and ease of access to information.
- C3 Promote safe, active, healthy, resilient and prepared communities.
- C5 Promote a single Cassowary Coast community.

Economy – our future

What we want to see by 2025

A strong diverse economy which provides opportunities for business and investment with an integrated approach to long-term planning where the region's assets meet community needs.

Strategic Objectives

- E1 Promote a shared set of values that allows the business community and Council to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose.

INFRASTRUCTURE - OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT

What we want to see by 2025

Regional infrastructure that delivers levels of service supported by the community and is financially sustainable.

Strategic Objectives

- I3 Sustainable asset management to effectively deliver services in a consistent and financially sustainable manner representing value to the community.
- I6 Integrated planning to support current and future needs of the region.
- I7 Build an 'organisational culture' that values risk management, facilitates the development of risk mitigation measures that are proportionate to the issues at hand, and capitalises on opportunities.

Region - OUR Natural ENVIRONMENT

What we want to see by 2025

An environmentally balanced and aware community that preserves and maintains our natural environment and incorporates contemporary and proven sustainability principles, as part of all activities for current and future generations.

Strategic Objectives

- R4 Guide the reduction of Council's environmental footprint.
- R6 Minimise the impacts of biosecurity risks in the region (pests, diseases & weeds).

Organisation – Our Team

What we want to see by 2025

A safe, healthy, engaging and inclusive work environment where people are productive, multiskilled, contribute to continuous improvement and, are provided with opportunities to achieve and develop and are recognised for their contribution.

Strategic Objectives

- O3 We strive to keep people safe in the workplace.

Consultation:

Management Team and Councillors

The concept of a Tree Policy was presented to and discussed at the CIS (March 2021).

Agreed next steps were:

- Develop suitable suite of plans and procedures that reflect the tree management policy.
- Develop public information resources to assist community.

This Draft Policy has been discussed at the Executive Leadership Team on 3 March 2022 and the Executive Management Team on 5 May 2022 and the Councillor Information Session on 10 May 2022.

The draft policy has also been discussed with the Council arboriculture and regulatory services teams.

Legal Implications (Statutory basis, legal risks):

Compliance with *Human Rights Act 2009*.

Human Rights Act 2019 - Considerations

The *Human Rights Act 2019* provides that it is unlawful for a public agency to act or make a decision in a way that is not compatible with human rights, or to fail to give proper consideration to a human right. This necessitates understanding the human rights that are protected. When making decisions or taking actions, consideration needs to be given to how that may impact on a person's human rights. Where there is a restriction on a person's human rights the restriction must be no greater than is justifiable to protect the rights of others or the community at large.

The contents of this report do not infringe upon the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

Policy Implications:

Drafted in accordance with Council's Policy Framework.

Risk Implications (Corporate, Operational, Project risks):**Strategic Corporate Risk**

- Mismanagement of community and services
- Addresses key recommendations in Local Government Mutual Services Tree Risk Management Guide 2021

Operational Risk

- CSL01 - Aggressive customers
- C1 - Lack of community/ stakeholder engagement
- C2 - Ineffective communications - Lack of quality, consistency and accuracy of information going out to the public
- G5 - Council employees providing incorrect advice to Council

Financial & Resource Implications:

Nil

Report authorised by:

David Goodman, Director Infrastructure Services

Supporting Documents:

1. Tree Management Guidelines - Draft
2. Tree Management Policy_Draft
3. Procedure Tree Management on Public Land_Draft (2)