



Urban Tree Management Policy

Policy Owner	Manager Operations and Parks Operations and Parks
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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy outlines the framework and guidance for Council to effectively and consistently manage its trees in urban areas and townships across Mitchell Shire Council (MSC).
- 1.2 Council is committed to responding to our changing climate by increasing canopy cover by planting tree species that are adaptable to local conditions as well as protecting, enhancing and properly managing its urban tree population.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Council managed trees located within urban areas, townships and open space parks within MSC
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to privately owned trees or trees located on private property
- 2.3 It does not apply to trees located in Bushland Reserves (Bushland management plans are the overarching documents) or for trees located in roadside reserves >60km/h (Road management Plan) with the exception of trees being listed as significant
- 2.4 The policy shall be applicable to all internal staff, external stakeholders, private developers, contractors, property owners and residents
- 2.5 This policy outlines the minimum standard to be adhered to regarding trees and the management of trees within MSC.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 MSC is responsible for managing approximately 44,000 trees within its urban and township areas, with development the number of trees within streets and parks is expected to rise significantly within MSC.
- 3.2 Trees are significant assets to the Mitchell Shire Council (MSC) environment and landscape. Mature trees are the dominant feature in many streets and parks and provide economic, social, health and environmental benefits to the community. Trees soften the built form of buildings adding beauty to the landscape. They help screen unsightly views, create a sense of security, provide privacy and reinforce a sense of place and identity within a community.
- 3.3 Trees improve air quality by trapping pollutants, sequestering carbon and filtering storm water. Trees reduce storm water runoff and erosion and provide habitat for

wildlife while increasing the biodiversity within the Municipality. Trees help to maintain ecological processes and healthy ecosystems in urban areas.

- 3.4 Urban trees provide great economic benefits to the community including increasing property value, reducing building heating and cooling costs, reduce heat stress for people and infrastructure by providing shade and shelter and attract visitors to the area supporting business. Because of this, part of this policies focus includes expansion of planting along main streets, town centres, car parks and gateways.
- 3.5 Strategically placed urban trees of certain species have been shown in some instances to help protect properties from fire by trapping embers, absorbing radiant heat and reducing windspeed and spread.
- 3.6 To ensure Council best protects, enhances and recognises the value trees provide for the Mitchell Shire community this policy has been established to provide a framework for decision making around tree retention, planning, planting and ongoing tree management for the benefit of the community.
- 3.7 Warmer, more adverse climate conditions are creating more difficult growing conditions for urban forest ecosystems. Recognising microclimates within the municipality taking into consideration resilient species adaptable for a predicted 2 degree increase in average temperatures.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 The Urban Tree Management policy has the following aims:
 - a) To protect, maintain and enhance existing Council managed trees within MSC by implementing the Australian Standard AS 4970-2009 as the minimum standard to be adhered to for the protection of Council trees.
 - b) To seek compensation for the loss of Council trees as a result of development by placing a monetary value (Amenity value based on an adapted City of Melbourne method) on all Council managed trees.
 - c) To outline clear standard criteria for the removal of MSC managed trees. Only trees that meet the criteria set out within the Operational Procedures will be considered for removal in MSC, that include:
 - i. Dead, dying or immediately hazardous
 - ii. Documented evidence of causing damage to infrastructure or property
 - iii. Where approved as part of a development where all other options for tree retention have been exhausted by the applicant (Amenity value shall be applied).
 - d) To ensure Mitchell Shire Council's Tree Management Operational procedure is clear and available for all in the community to access and understand.
 - e) To encourage provisions to expand and enhance canopy cover throughout the municipality through the *"Living Melbourne: Our metropolitan Urban Forest Strategy"*

and support creating a Mitchell Shire Urban Forest & Ecology Strategy that will guide Councils strategic direction on enhancement and protection of its urban forest

- f) To support the enhancement of streetscapes and amenity throughout the municipality through the selection of species adaptable to the effects of climate change, recognizing and considering the complexities associated with planting in these areas including existing infrastructure, heritage values (including overlays, precincts and other heritage aspects), existing habitat corridors, existing plans and existing species with new plantings complementing current street design.
- g) To be considerate of areas prone to bushfire including urban areas interfacing rural communities (including larger plantations within urban areas as well as those that fall outside the scope of this policy, where fuel loads may increase fire risk) and other identified priority areas, when selecting tree species and planting location.
- h) To recognise and respond to the impacts of climate change on Council's tree population and to implement Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) methods where feasible to help promote a sustainable tree population.
- i) To enhance bio-diversity and habitat connectivity through urban areas where practicable.

5. Definitions

5.1 An outline of the key definitions of terms included in the policy.

Urban Area	A pre-determined area within Townships, parks and open space usually with >60km/h speed limits
Council Tree	A tree that is located on Council managed property
Tree retention	Managing trees to be left within the landscape
Tree management	Processes involved in the risk controls for trees
Canopy Cover	The area in which a trees canopy extends to or over
Urban Tree Management Operational Procedures	The operational document of this Policy.

6. Responsibilities

- 6.1 The Manager Operations and Parks will be responsible for the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy.
- 6.2 The Tree Management Coordinator will be responsible for the implementation, compliance, reviewing and providing advice on this policy.

7. Related Documents

- 7.1 The Mitchell Shire Council's Urban Tree Management Operational Procedures (2021) is the primary document that implements this policy. The Operational Procedures outline key considerations for tree removal, protection, management,

planting, root management, wildlife and habitat preservation, community engagement and asset valuation.

Relevant legislation, related policies, strategies, procedures and guidelines to be cross-referenced and hyperlinked wherever possible.

- *Living Melbourne: Our metropolitan Urban Forest Strategy*
- *Mitchell Shire Council – Road Management Plan 2021*
- *Mitchell Shire Council – Environment Policy 2020*
- *Mitchell Shire Council – Rural Roadside Environmental Management Plan*
- *Mitchell Shire Council – Emergency Management Plan*
- *Mitchell Shire Council - Fire Management Plan*
- *Fuel Load Assessment – Monument Hill Reserve*

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

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