

Tree Management Policy



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Next Policy review date:	
Reference number:	
Strategic Pillar	
Responsible Branch	

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1 OUTCOMES

- 1.1 We look after the trees in our parks and streets and help guide how trees on private property are managed. Together, we can keep our local neighbourhoods green, shady, and beautiful. This document ensures the Council and the community adhere to environmental and planning legislation that relates to trees in urban spaces.
- 1.2 This policy helps us deliver on our Urban Forest Cooling Strategy, Climate Change Action Plan, and Net Zero Pathway. It's all about putting those big picture goals into action right here in our streets and backyards.

2 POLICY

- 2.1 Whether a tree is on public or private land, we make sure it is looked after properly and in line with environmental laws. This shared approach keeps our management consistent and helps build a greener, healthier environment for everyone.

3 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 This policy is for everyone in our community residents, landowners, and our own Council team. It covers all Council owned trees in public spaces, as well as *Regulated Trees* on private property, including those in heritage and conservation areas.
- 3.2 This policy covers trees on private and public land
- For Private Trees- See Section 6
 - For Public Trees- See Section 7

4 LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS AND/OR RELEVANT STANDARDS

Document	Primary Link / Reference
SEPP (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021	NSW Legislation - EPI 2021-722
Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016	NSW Legislation - Act 63 of 2016
Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979	NSW Legislation - Act 203 of 1979
Rural Fires Act 1997	NSW Legislation - Act 65 of 1997
10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice	NSW Rural Fire Service - 10/50 Code
QPRC Local Environmental Plan 2022	Official Portal Link
QPRC Roadside Vegetation Management Policy 2026	QPRC Policies, Strategies and Plans
Queanbeyan Development Control Plan 2012	QPRC, Building, Development, Planning & Zoning
QPRC Braidwood Development Control Plan 2006	QPRC, Building, Development, Planning & Zoning

Palerang Development Control Plan 2015	QPRC, Building, Development, Planning & Zoning
Googong Development Control Plan	QPRC, Building, Development, Planning & Zoning
South Jerrabomberra Development Control Plan	QPRC, Building, Development, Planning & Zoning
AS 4373-2007: Pruning of Amenity Trees	Standards Australia Store
AS 4970-2009: Protection of Trees	Standards Australia Store
MIS 308: Tree Pruning	Arboriculture Australia - MIS Shop
MIS 312: Environmental Arboriculture	Arboriculture Australia – MIS Shop
QPRC Compliance and Enforcement Policy	QPRC Policies, Strategies and Plans
Section 48, Electricity Supply Act 1995	Electricity Supply Act 1995 No 94
Section 53C, Electricity Supply Act 1995	Electricity Supply Act 1995 No 94

5 CONTENT

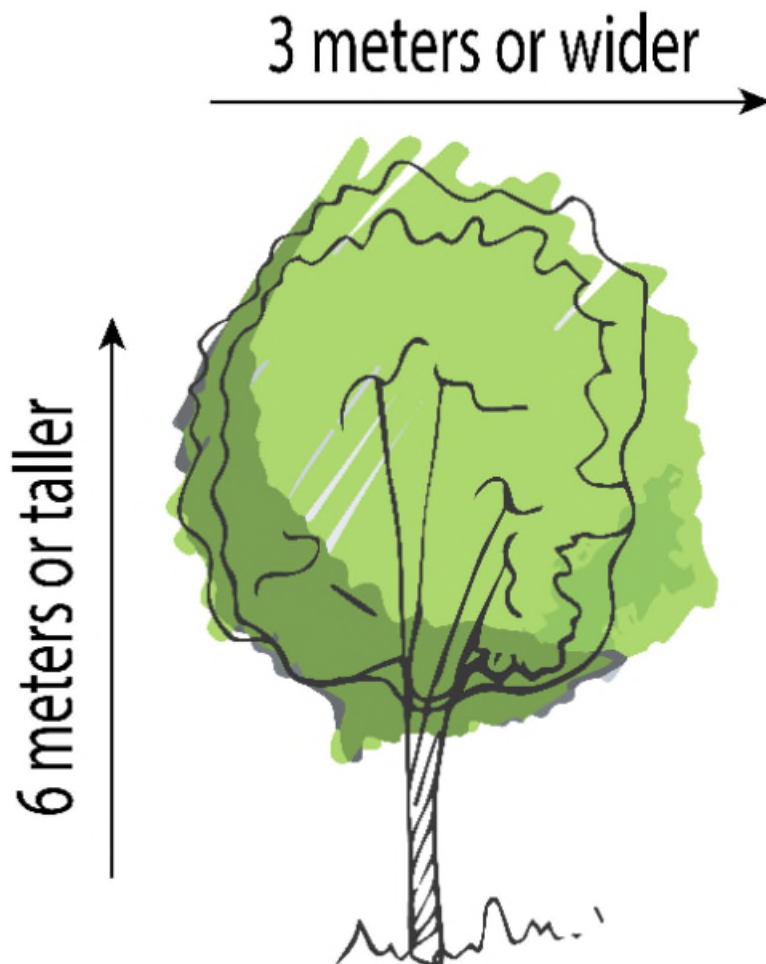
- 5.1 This policy gives our team and local landowners a step-by-step guide to follow. By using the same standardised processes, we can make fair, consistent decisions for our urban forest right across the region.
- 5.2 Policy Directives:
- Trees on Private Land:** We've simplified the process for landowners applying to prune or remove regulated trees, so everyone knows exactly what to expect.
 - Trees in Public Spaces:** We've outlined how we look after trees in our streets, parks and reserves, ensuring we prioritise maintenance and keep our public spaces safe.
 - Development and Infrastructure:** We work to protect trees during construction and make sure our leafy canopy coexists safely with the power grid and other important community infrastructure such as roads and footpaths.
 - Looking after our Heritage and Environment:** We actively protect wildlife habitat, look after our historically significant trees and comply with heritage guidelines and legislation.

6 TREES ON PRIVATE LAND

6.1 When is Council Approval Required for Private Tree Work?

- 6.1.1 Council is the regulatory authority for private tree works in all zones other than the RU1- Primary Production zone. Tree work in the RU1- Primary Production zone is regulated by NSW Local Land Services.

- 6.1.2 Where Council is the regulatory authority, approval is generally required to work on a *Regulated Tree*.
- 6.1.3 A **Regulated Tree** is defined as a tree that is either 6m high or taller or has a canopy spread of 3 meters or more.



Source: QPRC Urban Landscapes

- 6.1.4 Development Control Plans provide further requirements for tree work. There are a number of Development Control Plans that apply across the Local Government Area, and depending on where you are, different controls will apply. Further information is available in the following Development Control Plans:
- Queanbeyan Development Control Plan, 2012
 - Braidwood Development Control Plan, 2006
 - Palerang Development Control Plan, 2015
 - Googong Development Control Plan, 2010
 - South Jerrabomberra Development Control Plan 2015
- 6.1.5 Owners of trees on private land are required to engage qualified arborists to assess their tree health before applying for approval for proposed works to regulated trees.

- 6.1.6 Some works to regulated trees are exempt from approval requirements. You don't need to lodge an application or get a permit from us for the minor pruning jobs that:
- Provide clearances consistent with the tree pruning guidelines table in Section 6.1.7 of the policy
 - Do not remove more than 5% of a tree's canopy
 - Do not damage or affect the health or structural stability of the tree
 - Are undertaken in line with the Australian Standard for the pruning of amenity trees and by a qualified arborist, minimum level 2 in arboriculture (AQF).

6.1.7 Pruning Guidelines:

	Clearance Permitted	Permitted Branch Size (diameter)
Major Arterial Roads	4.5m clearance in height measured from the road surface and in line with the kerb alignment	Up to 100mm
Local Roads	2.5m clearance over parking lanes and 4.5m clearance over roads, measured in height from the road surface and in line with the kerb alignment	Up to 100mm
Footpaths	2.5m clearance over footpath measured in height from ground level	Up to 50mm
Domestic power or telecommunications lines	Minimum clearance of 0.5m and a maximum clearance of 1m measured from the service line	Up to 50mm
Buildings	Maximum clearance of 1m from any approved building, measured from the surface of the structural component (wall or roof) of the building	Up to 50mm

- 6.1.8 Where exempt pruning is undertaken, Council advises that the owner of the tree should retain evidence supporting the decision that the works were exempt. This evidence should include high-quality photographs of the tree and evidence of measurement of height and canopy spread.

6.2 The Application Process:

6.2.1 Who Can apply?

- 6.2.1.1 Only the owner of the tree or someone with their written permission can lodge an application. If you are a tenant or a neighbour, you will need the owner's written consent first.

- 6.2.1.2 Strata and Body Corporate Properties: If the tree is on shared or common property, the application should be made by the property manager or Strata Agent.

6.2.2 How to Lodge your application:

6.2.2.1 Gather your information: Please include clear, high-quality photos of the tree and any supporting evidence (like an arborist's report, plumber's report or engineer's report for structural damage) with your request

6.2.2.2 Submit Online: Head to our online E-Services Platform to lodge your application [here](#)

6.2.2.3 Pay the Fee: Application fees must be paid when you submit. You can find the current rates in our QPRC Fees and Charges Document [here](#)

6.2.3 What Happens Next?

6.2.3.1 Our Timeline: We aim to review your request within 14 days, though it might take a bit longer after major storms or during busy periods.

6.2.3.2 Site Visit: One of our Council Officers will visit your property to look at the tree from the ground. They will check its overall health, its structural safety, any damage it might be causing to pipes or buildings, its ecological value, and whether pruning is an option rather than removal.

6.2.3.3 A Quick Reminder: This Council visit is only to see if your request meets the legal guidelines for removal or pruning, it doesn't replace a full professional risk assessment. Because the tree is on private land, its ongoing health, safety, and care remain the property owner's responsibility.

6.2.4 Reasons that do not qualify for pruning or removal

6.2.4.1 Trees are a natural and vital part of our community, so we cannot approve their removal or heavy pruning for everyday inconveniences.

6.2.4.2 Here is a guide to the reasons that will not be accepted for a tree permit:

- Daily Mess and Litter: Natural shedding of leaves, twigs, bark, flowers, fruit, cones, nuts, seeds, sap, or resin onto cars, driveways, or lawns.
- Local Wildlife: Attracting birds, bats, possums, or insects (like bees and cicadas) that make noise or leave droppings.
- Allergies: General seasonal pollen or allergies (unless a specialist medical doctor provides formal proof linking a severe health condition directly to that specific tree).
- Blocked Gutters: Debris in roof gutters or downpipes. This is considered standard home maintenance and can usually be solved with regular cleaning or gutter guards.
- Leaky or Cracked Pipes: Tree roots entering sewer or stormwater pipes that are already old, damaged, or poorly sealed. We ask that you look into repairing or relining the pipes first.
- Minor Lifting: Roots lifting garden edgings, pavers, brick walls, or driveways that can be easily repaired, modified, or bridged.
- Sunlight and Lawns: The tree creating shade, blocking light to pools or solar panels, or preventing grass and gardens from growing underneath.

- Views and Looks: Removing or cutting a tree to improve a scenic view, because you don't like the look or position of it, or because it doesn't fit a new backyard design.
- Property Value: The belief that removing a healthy tree will boost your home's market value or curb appeal.
- Unapproved Building Plans: Clearing a space for a future pool, shed, or granny flat before you have an approved Development Application (DA) for that project.
- Fear of Storms: General worry that a healthy, sturdy tree might fall in a future storm, if there is no expert evidence showing a structural defect.
- Tree Size: The tree simply growing "too big" or "too tall," as long as it is healthy and stable.

6.2.5 Consider Alternatives to Tree Removal

6.2.5.1 Pruning trees is better than Removal: Consider whether maintaining your tree so it clears your roofline or service wires would be a better option than removal.

6.2.5.2 Engineering Options: Explore alternative options including building design modifications like root barriers, pier and beam foundations or flexible, permeable paving. as a better option than complete tree removal.

6.2.6 What if I am unhappy with Council's Decision?

6.2.6.1 Internal Review Process: We understand that sometimes you might disagree with our decision regarding a private tree. If that happens, we offer an in-house review process so you can have the decision looked at again.

6.2.6.2 How Does the Review Process Work?

- Submit Your Request:** You can log your appeal online through our [Electronic Services Platform](#).
- Application Fee:** There is a fee to lodge a review. You can check the current rate in our QPRC Fees and Charges document, and it will need to be paid when you submit. Check the applicable fees [here](#)
- Provide New Evidence:** To help us reconsider, you will need to provide a comprehensive report from an advanced tree expert specifically a qualified arborist holding an AQF Level 5 qualification.
- Who Decides:** Your application will be jointly reviewed by our Coordinator of Development and Building Compliance/Urban Landscapes and our Manager of Environment and Compliance/Urban Landscapes
- The Timeline:** This is a desktop review (meaning our team usually won't need to visit your property a second time). We will assess the paperwork and get a final determination back to you within 14 days of your submission.

6.2.6.3 What if I am still not happy with Council's Decision?

If you feel we didn't get it right and you want an independent look at the decision, you always have the right to take the matter further. You can make a formal appeal

directly to the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales. You must lodge your appeal within 3 months of the date of the decision.

6.2.7 Additional Considerations

6.2.7.1 Heritage Items and Heritage Conservation Areas: If your tree is a heritage item or sits within a heritage conservation area, you may need extra approval from our Land Use Planning team or Heritage NSW. You can obtain further information here: [Heritage - Queanbeyan-Palerang](#)

6.2.7.2 Building and Development: If you are undertaking development that requires the removal of trees, the assessment of the tree removal is part of the overall development assessment. So that your DA can be fully assessed under Section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, you must ensure it is accompanied by landscape and arborist plans assessing the existing trees.

6.2.8 Giving Back to our Canopy (Tree Replacement)

6.2.8.1 For Simple Tree Removals: You must plant 1 replacement tree for every 1 tree removed on your property. Your Council approval letter will tell you exactly what species to plant, how big it needs to be, where it should go, and the deadline for planting it.

6.2.8.2 For Development Applications (DAs): Your landscape plans must clearly show the location, size, and species of all replacement trees. You must plant these trees *before* you can move into or use the new development.

6.2.8.3 If You Don't Have Room: If your property genuinely lacks the space to grow and maintain a replacement tree long-term, you must pay a "tree replacement fee" in line with Council's standard Fees and Charges. Council uses the Mature Canopy Area (MCA) replacement model to calculate this fee, and 100% of the money goes toward planting new trees in local public spaces.

6.2.8.4 What is the MCA Replacement Model? Think of the MCA Model as a "shade for shade" rule. When you cut down a big tree, you lose a giant green umbrella that cools the street and replacing it with one tiny twig isn't a fair swap. This tool calculates exactly how much leafy shade the community is losing based on the size of the tree you removed, it then determines how many new trees you need to plant to make up for it, or if your yard is too small to fit them, it calculates a fee you must pay so Council can plant those replacement trees in a nearby park or street instead.

6.2.9 Tree Work without a Permit

6.2.10 Caring for our urban forest is a team effort. Because trees provide so many benefits to our neighbourhoods, pruning or removing a tree without written permission is an offence

6.2.11 Where works are undertaken to a tree that does not meet the definition of a Regulated Tree, Council suggests that the owner of the tree keep evidence such as

photographs and arborist reports for a period of 6 months after the work has been completed.

6.2.12 If unauthorised tree work takes place, this can lead to:

- Notices and Orders to stop work or remedy the damage
- Penalty Infringement Notices
- For severe canopy loss or significant environmental damage, we may take legal action in the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales.

6.2.13 We are always here to help you navigate the paperwork first, ensuring our local tree canopy stays healthy, safe, and protected for everyone.

6.2.14 Handling Trees on Neighbours Land

6.2.14.1 We know that overhanging branches or root systems can sometimes cause a bit of friction between neighbours. Because these are private property matters, Council cannot get involved in civil disputes or tree disagreements between residents or tenants. Our role is strictly as the approval authority.

6.2.14.2 Here is how we can help: We only get involved to review and process a formal tree permit application when someone wants to prune or remove a tree.

6.2.14.3 Working It Out Together: If a neighbour's tree is causing an issue on your side of the fence, the best first step is always to have a friendly chat with them to see how you can work it out together.

6.2.14.4 If you can't resolve the matter with your neighbour, you should seek independent legal advice.

6.2.15 Bushfire Protection and the 10/50 Rule

The 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme is an NSW state law that helps protect homes from bushfires. If your property is in an official high-risk bushfire zone, you can clear certain vegetation around your home without needing a permit from the Council.

6.2.15.1 What you are allowed to do:

- Clear trees: You can remove trees on your own property within 10 metres of your home.
- Clear shrubs: You can remove low vegetation, bushes, and shrubs on your own property within 50 metres of your home.
- No Permit Needed: If your property is in the clearing zone and you follow the rules, you do not need to apply for Council approval.
- It is Voluntary: This law gives you the right to clear vegetation to protect your home, but it does not force you to cut down any trees if you do not want to.
- You must check the map first: You can only clear vegetation if the official NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) online tool confirms your property is eligible. You must check the tool on the day you plan to clear, as the boundaries can change.
- Check if your property is in a 10/50 zone [here](#).

- 6.2.15.2 Where works are completed under the 10/50 exemptions, Council suggests that the owner retain evidence supporting their decision including clear high-quality photographs of the tree and evidence of the distance from the external building wall to the centre of the trunk of the tree.

7 MANAGING PUBLIC TREES

Our street trees, parks, and reserves belong to the whole community. While we take care of these public tree assets, keeping our urban forest healthy and safe is a team effort.

7.1 How we Monitor Public Trees

- 7.1.1 With thousands of trees across our region, our team cannot inspect every single one. We also rely on your eyes on the ground to help us keep our community safe.

- 7.1.2 When to report a Tree:

- Unsafe or looking like it might fall.
- Blocking a footpath, road or cycleway.
- Cutting off a driver's line of sight at an intersection or driveway.

Click [here](#) to report any of the above

- 7.1.3 Our Inspection Priorities

- High Priority- Main roads, busy footpaths, shopping strips and popular parks
- Lower Priority: Quiet areas like deep bushland reserves or creek lines (unless there is an immediate threat to property or public safety)

- 7.1.4 Looking After Public Trees Safely: To keep everyone safe and prevent property damage, residents are not permitted to prune, chop, or remove trees on public land.

- 7.1.5 The Only Exception: If a street tree directly outside your property has small, leafy shoots or suckers growing from the very bottom of its trunk, you are welcome to snip them away to keep the verge looking tidy.

- 7.1.6 For everything else: Please leave any higher branches or larger limbs to our professional crews.

7.2 Rules for Removing Healthy Public Trees at a Resident's Request

- 7.2.1 Street trees are valuable community assets that keep our footpaths shady, cool our streets, and make our neighbourhoods look great. Because they take decades to grow, we have a firm rule against cutting down, moving, or heavily chopping a healthy public tree just to make room for a private project or personal preference.

- 7.2.2 Common Requests That Require Alternative Solutions: Council frequently receives requests to remove healthy public trees for private convenience. In most cases, removal will not be approved for the following reasons alone, and residents must look at alternative property maintenance or design options:

- **Property Access & Construction:** Installing new driveways or kerb crossings, navigating scaffolding for building developments, or laying new underground utility pipes through a root zone.
- **Property Damage Concerns:** Claims regarding roots invading older, cracked private pipes, lifting private concrete driveways, or causing perceived threats to front boundary fences and foundations will not be considered without accompanying professional reports, such as from a qualified structural engineer, licensed plumber, or AQF Level 5 consulting arborist and proposed alternative solutions to retain the tree or justification as to why the tree has to be removed and no alternate solutions are available.
- The restriction criteria outlined in Section 6.2.4 of this document (Reasons that do not Qualify for Tree Pruning or Removal) apply equally to public trees. Council will not prune or remove a healthy public tree for any of the minor nuisance or lifestyle reasons listed there.

7.3 When Tree Removal or Relocation will be Considered

- 7.3.1 Removing or moving a street tree is always our last resort. We will only consider it if you can prove that no other design options exist (such as shifting a proposed driveway or crossover), and the tree meets one of the following conditions:
- **It is young enough to move:** It is a young, small tree that can be safely dug up and transplanted to a new home.
 - **It is in poor health:** Our team inspects it and finds it has poor structural health or is dying.
 - **You provide an expert report:** You provide a private assessment from a qualified tree expert (AQF Level 5 Arborist) supporting your request.
 - **What is an AQF Level 5 Arborist?** This is a highly qualified tree expert who holds a Diploma in Arboriculture. Standard tree loppers usually do not hold this qualification.

7.4 Who Covers the Costs?

- 7.4.1 If Council approves moving or removing a public tree for private benefit, and none of the exception criteria listed above applies, please keep the following in mind:
- **Applicant Costs:** The property owner covers all costs for the work.
 - **Keeping the Canopy:** We will use our Mature Canopy Area (MCA) model to calculate the replacement trees needed to offset the loss of shade.
 - **Professional Execution:** To ensure the work is done safely, all tree removals, relocations, and new plantings on public land are handled by our Council team or qualified contractors at your expense.

7.5 Trees on Council Managed Land

- 7.5.1 Every tree standing on Council land, whether it's in a local park, a sports ground, or an operational site is protected. If any tree work is needed on these lands, it must have written approval from our team first.

7.6 Note on Firewood and Harvesting

- 7.6.1 When a public tree is damaged in a storm or drops branches, it might be tempting to chop it up for the backyard fire pit. However, members of the public are prohibited from cutting up or removing fallen timber for personal firewood. Leaving fallen timber in place is often important for local wildlife habitats and clearing it safely requires professional equipment and insurances.

7.7 Tree Vandalism and Malicious Damage

- 7.7.1 Tree vandalism is a serious criminal offence. It includes any unauthorised cutting, pruning, poisoning, drilling, ringbarking, or removing of trees on public land. If someone intentionally damages or kills a public tree (for example, to clear a view, make space for construction, or stop leaves from falling), Council will take immediate action to ensure the offender does not benefit from their actions.
- 7.7.2 "Shaming" Signs: If a tree is vandalised, Council will install a large, prominent sign directly in front of the site. The sign will state that a community tree was maliciously destroyed and will ask the public for information to help catch the offender. These signs may stay up for up to 2 years to block any view or access the vandal may have been trying to gain.
- 7.7.3 Leaving the Tree in Place: If a vandalised tree dies, we will not remove it. Instead, our team will safely prune away any dangerous branches so the trunk is structurally safe, and we will leave it standing as a dead monument for up to 2 years. This ensures the offender does not get the clear space or open view they wanted.
- 7.7.4 The 2-for-1 Replacement Rule: We will plant advanced, mature trees as close as possible to the vandalised site. To make up for the loss to our community's urban tree canopy.
- 7.7.5 Fines and Legal Action: Illegally cutting, pruning, or poisoning a public tree is a criminal act and breach of Council policy. Under the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, Council actively investigates all acts of tree vandalism, in accordance with the adopted Compliance and Enforcement Policy.

7.8 Our Commitment to Saving Trees

- 7.8.1 We always try to keep our public trees right where they are: Our team works hard to explore every practical option to save a tree before considering removing it. This includes altering the designs of nearby public pathways, playground layouts, or local infrastructure to give tree roots the space they need to thrive.
- 7.8.2 We Hold Ourselves to the Same Standards: If it is impossible to save a public tree due to safety, critical works or no alternative design options. We play by the exact same rules we ask of our community. We apply our Mature Canopy Area (MCA) model to ourselves, ensuring that the total square meters of canopy shade lost is fully replaced. We will plant and establish these new trees in a structurally suitable nearby public space to look after our local environment and urban tree canopy.

8 REVIEW

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed every four years or earlier as necessary if:
- a) legislation requires it, or
 - b) Council's functions, structure or activities change