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Department:	Transport
Responsible Officer:	Director Technical Service
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### **INTRODUCTION:**

Trees are an important part of the landscape of the North Burnett Regional Council. As a living organism trees are variable in shape, size, robustness, fruiting behaviour, and longevity. It is therefore important to ensure that trees selected for public areas within the Region are appropriate for the environment in which they are planted, well tended and removed when the organism deteriorates or the environment in which they are planted changes.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

To provide guidance on the: selection, tending, and maintenance of trees in public spaces.

### **POLICY:**

**Definition of a Tree:** A tree is “a perennial gymnosperm or angiosperm which when mature, has a top height greater than 2.5m.”

**Gymnosperm:** \Gym"no\*sperm\ a plant that bears naked seeds.

**Angiosperm** \An"gi\*"o\*sperm\ a plant which has its seeds enclosed in a seed vessel.

Public safety is the paramount concern for the selection and ongoing management of trees in public spaces in the North Burnett Regional Council. Management responsibility includes:

- Ensuring that trees in urban areas are regularly inspected for hazards that could pose a risk to public safety.
- Ensuring that trees are routinely pruned as required with the aim of protecting public utilities, enhancing public safety and urban amenity, and improving or maintaining tree health.
- Undertaking major tree surgery work as required.
- Undertaking remedial tree surgery and the removal of fallen or broken timber following storm events.
- Ensuring that dead and dying or dangerous trees that are identified are removed and replaced.
- Ensuring that trees are removed and replaced as the environment in which they are located changes.
- Ensuring trees do not pose a risk to aircraft in the vicinity of aerodromes and airstrips.

Management's responsibilities will be implemented through ensuring that: sites are appropriate for trees, suitable trees are selected, and appropriate silvicultural decisions are made throughout the useful life of a tree.

**Species Selection:** Acceptable trees species are ones which are capable of surviving without routine assistance from Council staff (including minimal assistance at the time of establishment). Suitable trees species will not require regular applications of pesticides or herbicides to ensure either their visual amenity, or survival. Suitable species include those species which are locally endemic, native (but not endemic), or exotic. Consideration will be given to the suitability of a given species for a site.

Elements to be considered include:

- physical characteristics of tree including (but not limited to: rooting habit, tree form, crown width, number of leaders, presence of thorns, toxicity via contact, top height, propensity to drop materials & size of discarded material, pollen discharge, tree seasonality, propensity to self propagate, smell, aesthetic charm, and ability to survive in the North Burnett Region
- rarity of species.
- purchase cost of tree.
- maintenance cost of tree.
- cost of removing tree when mature (maximum size).
- the rooting habit and the potential for interference or damage to underground services, footpaths or buildings.

A species that has been gazetted by an Australian State or Federal Government as a noxious or environmental weed will not be a suitable species.

**Budget Requirements:** Council will provide funds in its annual budget for the purchase, maintenance, and removal of trees in public spaces in the North Burnett Regional Council.

**Trees and Powerlines:** Only suitable trees that are listed on the North Burnett Regional Council Tree List will be planted beneath powerlines, if at all. Where trees are already present beneath powerlines, these will be maintained and removed if necessary. Trees planted adjacent to a powerline should be a minimum of 15m from the edge of the line or the same distance as the top height of the tree when mature (whichever is the greater).

**Inspection:** Trees in the urban areas of the North Burnett Region are inspected periodically (1-5 years) from ground level to monitor tree health and identify potential hazards. Trees in high use areas such as near children's playgrounds are inspected every 1 to 2 years. When a member of the public is concerned about the safety or health of a particular tree on public land (i.e. Where a Customer Service Request is lodged), a site visit is arranged.

**Pruning:** Priority is given to trees in areas of high public use, such as aerodromes, streets, car parks, shopping centres and picnic/park areas. Formative pruning of young trees is carried out in the first five years following planting. Multiple leaders on young trees are removed or reduced when they are considered to be a potential future hazard. Trees are pruned to avoid interference with power lines, street signs, street lights and other services. Lower branches up to a height of 3 to 5 metres may be removed in order to give clear pedestrian and traffic access and clear sight lines, particularly for vehicles entering and leaving driveways, or approaching intersections, or to provide kerbside access for waste collection vehicles. On main roads and major streets, lower branches maybe removed to a maximum height of 5m. To minimise hazards caused by wind and rain, thinning of individual tree crowns, or tree stands, may be carried out. Trees are shaped by shortening heavy limbs and general pruning to give a balanced weight distribution in the tree framework. Dead, diseased, cracked, hollow or otherwise unsound wood is to be removed. Pruning near aerodromes will generally entail reducing the height of the tree to an acceptable height for the safe operation of aircraft.

**Watering:** Trees will only be watered to ensure their establishment and survival. Residents are encouraged to water young trees in their neighbourhood to help them become established in the landscape.

**Fertilisers:** Trees will only be fertilised at the time of establishment to ensure their survival and maximise their growth following planting.

**Spraying:** Tree selection and management aims to minimise the use of pesticides. Tree species are selected on the basis of their resistance to pests and diseases. Trees are only treated with pesticides during the establishment period (1 to 3 years). In any case trees greater than 5 metres in height are not sprayed.

**Tree Removal:** Council staff will endeavour to advise the effected resident prior to the removal of tree or major maintenance.

*Trees are removed where:*

- they are dead, damaged or in irreversible decline;
- they constitute a traffic hazard or other identifiable hazard to public safety which cannot be corrected by pruning; or

- they penetrate, or are about to penetrate the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces of a Council operated aerodrome or airfield, or otherwise pose a risk to aviation;
- if they are located in a position which would interfere with the ability of Council to install new infrastructure required by the community;
- if they are interfering with above or below-ground services such as power lines or water pipes and the problem is likely to require repeated remedial action;
- a tree has been planted that is inappropriate for the location in which it has been placed;
- they interfere, or have the potential to significantly interfere with a floodway.

*Trees are considered for removal where:*

- the tree is an unsuitable species for where it is planted, such as fig trees and willows near storm water lines, or is in conflict with the design intent of the landscape;
- if it is a part of a dense planting which requires thinning to promote the health of the remaining trees; or
- if they were designated as temporary in the original landscape design and have reached the end of their intended life span.

Trees will not be removed for reasons such as:

- householder preference for no street trees, or for a different species;
- complaints about appearance (unless these are related to very poor tree health);
- complaints about leaf litter or twigs; or
- complaints relating to tree roots competing with lawns or protruding above the ground, unless these roots are a safety hazard to pedestrians on footpaths or nature strips.

**Tree Replacement:** Trees will be replaced with regard to the current and perceived future use of a site. Trees will only be purchased within the allocation provided for the purchase of trees in Council's annual budget.