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|                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation or bushland reserves which are managed in accordance with adopted environmental/conservation management plans.</li> <li>• Remnant native vegetation on roadsides, which is managed in accordance with Council's Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2021 and Road Management Plan 2021.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Background/Reasons for Policy:</b> | The Policy has been developed to enable consistent and effective management of the Shire's important public tree assets.  |
| <b>Definitions:</b>                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Suitably Qualified Arborist</b> – An arborist who holds recognised qualifications in arboriculture, appropriate to the task they are undertaking as per the appropriate legislation or Australian Standard.</li> <li>2. <b>Tree</b> – a long lived woody perennial plant with one or relatively few stems or trunks</li> <li>3. <b>Diversity</b> – the inclusion of individual trees representing a variety of Genus, species and age class to build resilience from disease and climate change and ensure continuous canopy cover through succession.</li> <li>4. <b>Immediate Risk</b> - a qualified Arborist has determined that the structural integrity of the tree is in such poor condition that it creates an imminent risk of failure and may cause injury to the public or damage to property.</li> <li>5. <b>TPZ</b> - Tree Protection Zone</li> <li>6. <b>SRZ</b> - Structural Root Zone</li> <li>7. <b>ULE</b> - Useful Life Expectancy</li> <li>8. <b>DBH</b> - Diameter at Breast Height</li> <li>9. <b>Significant trees</b> - trees worthy of protection due to unique, historical, rare, age, size or environmental importance</li> <li>10. <b>Township Boundary</b> - is a concentrated population settlement within the surrounding rural district and in planning terms is area zoned for urban land use. These zones include the residential, commercial and industrial zones.</li> <li>11. <b>WSUD</b> – Water Sensitive Urban Design.</li> </ol> |
| <b>References:</b>                    | <p>Tree valuation fact sheet. City of Melbourne</p> <p>Pruning of amenity trees. AS 4373–2007.</p> <p>Protection of trees on development sites. AS 4970–2009.</p> <p>Tree stock for landscape use. AS 2303:2015.</p> <p>Preferred Tree Species List</p>   |
| <b>Related Policies:</b>              | <p>Biodiversity Strategy – 2018</p> <p>Electric Line Clearance Management Plan (Annual Plan)</p> <p>Road Management Plan 2021</p> <p>Roadside Conservation Management Plan – 2021</p>   |
| <b>Related Legislation:</b>           | <p>Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme</p> <p>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)</p> <p>Heritage Act 2017 (Vic)</p>  |
| <b>Gender Impact Assessment:</b>      | A Gender Impact Assessment review did not identify any gender impacts associated with this Policy.  |

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## **1 Context**

The Macedon Ranges environment is enhanced by its tree-lined streets and parks, which form an integral part of the Shire's appeal and liveability. Trees significantly contribute to the character of townships and the Shire as a whole. Varying microclimates across the Shire provide the opportunity to maintain and enhance a unique sense of township identity.

## **2 Policy Statement**

Macedon Ranges Shire Council has approximately 35,000 street and park trees. These trees provide many social, economic and environmental benefits. They beautify and soften streetscapes, provide wildlife habitat and play a significant role in determining the character of our townships.

Trees are critical in the maintenance of a healthy environment and provide the following benefits: carbon sequestration, oxygen, shade and urban cooling, habitat provision, noise and pollution absorption, reduced rainfall runoff, improved mental health and increased property values. As trees are living organisms there will be some degree of leaf and other plant litter as these are shed as part of the natural life cycle. It is not unreasonable to expect residents to undertake home maintenance activities as part of having trees within our townships.

As trees are long-lived assets, decisions concerning tree management must be considered over the long term and should not benefit one particular outcome at the expense of the multiple benefits provided by a tree into the future. Council is therefore committed to developing a tree planting and replacement plan as part of the Tree Management Plan that will facilitate the longevity and diversity of the municipality's street and park trees.

This Policy is supported by the MRSC Township Street and Park Tree Management Plan which includes further guidance and procedures to ensure Council's related objectives are achieved to protect and enhance the Shire's public tree assets.

## **3 Strategic Direction**

The Township Street and Park Tree Policy is presented in the following key areas:

1. Tree Protection
2. Tree Planting
3. Tree Management and Maintenance
4. Tree Roots and Infrastructure
5. Tree Removal
6. Community Engagement

### 3.1 Tree Protection

Trees must be protected from construction works and other activities that threaten their health and stability. Council will ensure all construction, works, events and development activities in proximity to MRSC trees and trees shown on endorsed plans to be retained must abide by the following:

- All strategic, development and construction work within the Shire is required to consider existing trees in the early stages of planning and design of the project to ensure protection in accordance with Australian Standard 4970 *Protection of Trees on Development Sites*;
- Removal of trees will not occur unless approved by Manager Open Space and Recreation or delegate and be consistent with the removal criteria within this policy;
- During all construction and development works, existing Council tree assets to be retained must be protected in accordance with the Australian Standard AS 4970–2009 *Protection of trees on development sites*;
- In accordance with AS 4970–2009, any works that would encroach by more than 10% into a tree's Tree Protection Zone (TPZ), or into its Structural Root Zone (SRZ), will require a consulting arborist to demonstrate, via a method consistent with this Australian Standard, that the affected tree would remain viable;
- An endorsed Planning Permit or Asset Protection Permit may require the preparation and submission of a Tree Protection Plan for Council approval. This plan must be developed by a qualified Arborist and consistent with the report requirements identified in AS4970–2009 *Protection of trees on development sites*. A bond, based on the tree(s), amenity value as calculated using the methodology in the Tree Valuation in Macedon Ranges Shire Council may be required and held for the duration of the works, which will be held against the Council approved Tree Protection Plan. Should any damage occur to any Council tree as a direct result of development works, Council may withhold part, or all, of the bond;
- Trees must not be pruned in any form and branches or roots must not be cut or removed unless authorised by an MRSC arborist. All pruning on MRSC trees must conform to AS 4373 *Pruning of Amenity Trees*;
- Trees identified and protected by relevant legislation for scientific, social, historical, heritage, horticultural or aesthetic reasons shall be recognised, protected and retained in the landscape. This legislation includes the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic), the *Heritage Act 2017* (Vic), and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) (Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme); and
- Where Council deems parking cars beneath trees affects the tree(s) health, tree protection measures will be considered in accordance with Council's traffic management policies.

### 3.2 Tree Planting

Quality tree stock and industry best practice planting techniques are essential for the tree to fulfil its long-term intended function. A combination of planning, site preparation, quality stock selection and ongoing maintenance is essential for successful tree establishment and avoiding costly future interventions.

- The Shire's tree planting program is generally carried out between May and September, though subject to seasonal conditions planting may be approved outside this period. New trees must not be planted outside this period unless approved by the Open Space Unit with a tree establishment and management plan;
- The Shire aims to plant at least one tree in front each property, additional trees will be planted where there is appropriate space and site conditions;
- All tree stock will be grown in accordance with AS 2303 *Tree Stock for Landscape Use*;
- The Shire will plant the most appropriate tree species for a given location based on site suitability, aesthetic, functional and environmental attributes, diversity and resilience and the potential to contribute to the predominant or preferred landscape character. For example, any planting under powerlines will be smaller tree species that do not typically exceed 8m in height at maturity. Tree species will generally be selected from the Preferred Species List (available on Council's website). This list is periodically updated in consultation with specialists to:
  - ensure that future-planted trees are suitable for the intended planting location, at the time of planting and in consideration of climate change;
  - reflect the latest information regarding tree selection and climate change; and
  - increase the diversity of the list.
- In order to maximise the environmental benefits that trees provide, large canopy trees will be planted wherever conditions allow;
- All newly planted trees will be protected and maintained for an establishment period of 24 months. Any trees that die during this period will be replaced in a future planting season;
- Resident requests for planting will be assessed and if the site is suitable, planting will be scheduled for a future planting season subject to budget constraints; and
- Residents are not permitted to plant trees on Council owned and managed land.

### **3.3 Tree Management and Maintenance**

Macedon Ranges Shire Council will ensure its high standard maintenance regime is continued and strengthened and that it provides adequate resources for ongoing tree management. Tree maintenance standards and procedures will be regularly updated to ensure they reflect the latest legislative requirements and industry best practice.

- Best arboriculture practices must be applied at all times to promote a healthy and safe tree population. All pruning will be undertaken by a suitably qualified arborist (minimum AQF level 3) in accordance with AS 4373 Pruning of Amenity Trees;
- Inspections and pruning of township street and park trees will be undertaken routinely to improve tree health and safety, and to provide clearance for paths, roads, buildings, driveways and other essential infrastructure. All condition data, including each tree's Useful Life Expectancy (ULE), will be recorded in Council's Tree Inventory and Geographical Information System (GIS);
- Trees will be inspected and pruned to ensure compliance with the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020 (as amended from time to time) and other relevant statutory requirements. The annual Electric Line Clearance Management Plan is available on Council's website;
- Trees will not be pruned to facilitate views, provide solar access or to reduce the impact from tree litter, wildlife waste or noise;
- As trees are living organisms there will be some degree of leaf and other plant litter shed as part of their natural life cycle. It is not unreasonable to expect residents to undertake home maintenance activities as part of living with trees;
- Trees in areas of environmental significance will be managed to promote safety, the environmental values of the site and habitat opportunities for wildlife;
- The Shire will monitor and treat pest and disease incursions that threaten street and park trees as appropriate and as resources permit; and
- All tree management and maintenance activities must be to the relevant Australian Standard.

### **3.4 Tree Roots and Infrastructure**

Trees are an important part of our residential environment and an understanding of tree root behaviour and the built environment is essential for minimising conflicts between trees and other infrastructure.

- All development and construction works, including Council capital works must make allowances for the protection of Council owned or managed

trees on nature strips and parks during the planning, design and construction processes;

- When tree roots are reported to be interfering with infrastructure (private and public), investigations will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Risk Management Policy;
- Cracked pipes or drains leak moisture and provide an ideal entry point and growing environment for any plant roots in the area. It is the responsibility of the asset owner to maintain pipes, so that they are fully sealed and do not leak; and
- Practical solutions will be sought to reduce the risk of damage to infrastructure from public trees, this may include but not be limited to, installation of a root barrier or root pruning. Tree removal will only be considered if no practical arboriculture solution can be found.

### **3.5 Tree Removal**

Trees, like all living things grow, age and eventually die. All street and parks trees will be inspected and maintained. Tree removal is a last resort management option. However, public safety always take priority.

- The removal of individual street and park trees will only be approved when:
  - removal is the only option to mitigate a high or extreme risk; or
  - the tree is dead or in decline and unlikely to recover; or
  - the tree is causing damage to infrastructure or property and there is no reasonable option to otherwise resolve the issue; or
  - the tree is affected by development and all alternate design options have been exhausted. Removal will occur if the applicant (internal or external) agrees to pay all costs, including removal, replacement and the amenity value of the tree being removed as calculated by the Tree Valuation in Macedon Ranges Shire Council. All monies collected will be used to improve street and park tree amenity; or
  - the tree is unable to be maintained to meet Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020 (as amended from time to time) and other relevant statutory requirements; or
  - the removal of the tree is required to facilitate renewal of a street or park and all design options have been exhausted; or
  - A tree's form and health are not performing to expectation and that this is not the outcome of interference by external parties, i.e. damaging a tree to facilitate its removal.
- Where a tree has been removed and the site is suitable for replanting, a replacement tree will be planted in a future planting season;



- Where a tree is recommended for removal, consideration will be given to its suitability for retention as a habitat tree, subject to required safety pruning;
- The tree causes a severe allergy that substantially diminishes quality of life:
  - The applicant must supply medical evidence from a specialist dermatologist or clinical immunologist/allergy specialist demonstrating the cause and effect between the tree and the allergy; and
  - It must also be demonstrated that the tree is the sole cause of the allergy and that removal of the tree would prevent the reaction.
- In some cases, street trees may be removed to facilitate a whole street upgrade which will result in a net increase in or improvement to the streetscape that could not be achieved by retention of existing trees.

### **3.6 Community Engagement**

Council's Community Engagement Policy and Customer Service Charter frame all engagement activities regarding management and maintenance of township street and park trees.

- The community will be informed and consulted about all major projects involving tree removal and planting and any other specialised projects that involve township street trees and park trees;
- The type and extent of consultation will vary depending on the impact of the works on the local community and will be determined in accordance with a number of factors including; the prominence of the location, the significance of the tree(s), the size of the tree(s), the number of the trees and the visual impact of the proposed works;
- Community engagement may include direct contact with the customer, letters to immediately adjacent residents, signage on site and information on Council's website; and
- All customer service requests will be responded to in accordance with the Council's Customer Service Charter.