

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021



South Gippsland

Council Meeting No 462 - 18 August 2021



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*

9 Smith Street Leongatha

(03) 5662 9200


council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au

www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au

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Front page image: Mossvale Park, Berrys Creek (May 2020)

Photos by Ken Fraser



QUERCUS ROBUR
(ENGLISH OAK)

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

The South Gippsland Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this Land, Elders past, present and emerging, their Spirits and Ancestors. We recognise Australia's rich cultural heritage and aim to encourage integrated decision making now and in the future.

Our Purpose

To serve in the best interests of the whole Shire, delivering quality services, and advocating for community needs. The purpose of this Plan is to:

- Provide a comprehensive framework for the conservation and management of street, roadside, and parkland trees within the South Gippsland Shire.
- Provide a clear and consistent method for managing trees including maintenance and condition inspections schedules, replacement planning, and the ongoing development of township streetscapes in alignment with master planning.
- Determine priorities for maintenance, removal, replanting, and associated works.



Wilson's Promontory National Park (May 2020)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Gippsland Shire Council Tree Management Plan (the Plan) provides the framework for the ongoing maintenance, renewal, and risk management of Council trees of local and historical significance and urban street trees.

Council trees are a significant asset that are of high value to the community and contribute greatly to the amenity of the built environment within the Shire. It applies to all trees under South Gippsland Shire Council's management within the 40km to 80km per hour speed limit zone and any Council managed parks outside townships.

The presence of trees in public areas can present a degree of risk to people, property, and services and the benefits provided by these trees come at a considerable cost in terms of installations, maintenance, and impacts on infrastructure such as drainage, roads, and footpaths.

This Plan documents the management strategies that South Gippsland Shire Council has in place to ensure the longevity and quality of trees within the Shire's urban environments and the risk management practices used to ensure minimal impact on both Council and private property due to the presence of Council managed trees.

INTRODUCTION

South Gippsland Shire Council has responsibility for a wide diversity of trees within its townships in terms of species, age, size, and density. There is a broad mix of native and exotic trees.

The main townships of the South Gippsland Shire are:

Bena	Mirboo North
Dumbalk	Nyora
Fish Creek	Poowong
Foster	Port Welshpool
Franklin River	Sandy Point
Kongwak	Tarwin Lower
Korumburra	Toora
Leongatha	Venus Bay
Loch	Walkerville
Meeniyan	Waratah Bay
Mirboo	Welshpool

A Shire Map is available on page 28.



In these towns the street trees, significant trees, and tree avenues require ongoing maintenance to ensure their health and structure is to a suitable standard.

Some existing trees are unsuitable species for the location and as a result have been affected by excessive pruning for overhead power line clearance, construction works, climate variation, and / or are having a detrimental effect on nearby infrastructure. In these cases, there are opportunities to replace these species with more suitable trees along with the introduction of new trees and extend the tree network.

Outside the Shire's townships, the tree-scape is generally remnant native bush with areas of significant native vegetation with identified conservation value. These plant communities are important in maintaining local biodiversity and specific sites are designated within South Gippsland Shire Council's *Roadside Vegetation Management Manual*.

DEFINITIONS

ARBORIST	A person with a Certificate 3 in Arboriculture as a minimum and 2 years of relevant industry experience. Consultants must have a minimum diploma or higher.
HIGH RISK AREAS	An area in which South Gippsland Shire Council is the responsible authority or the designated committee of management and is of high use by the public on either a regular or one-off basis. These areas include but are not limited to CBD's, playgrounds, parks & gardens, swimming pools, recreation reserves, walking tracks, high use roads, and bus routes.
PLAN REVIEW & AMENDMENT	This Plan is open to the process of continuous improvement and will be reviewed every 2 years.
PRIVATE – RURAL – PARKLAND TREE	Trees located on private property. Trees located in a road reserve not planted by Council or trees Council has not assumed responsibility for. Trees planted by Council, or for which Council has responsibility located in a public parks or reserves.
REACTIVE & PROACTIVE MAINTENANCE	Inspection and or maintenance of trees prompted by a community member or staff request. Regular planned maintenance to mitigate risk to trees, infrastructure, and the community.
SIGNIFICANT TREE & AVENUE	A mature native plant that is a least 5 meters high and has a canopy spread of at least 4 meters. The circumference of the trunk must be at least 1 meter at 1.5 meter above ground level. A mature established exotic species located in a high-risk area. Where the planting can be lined to a significant event or person. A series of trees planted in a symmetrical formation along an urban roadside.
STREET TREE	A plant that is at least 3 meters high with a canopy spread of at least 2 meters. The circumference of the trunk is at least 300mm at 1.5 meters above ground level and must be located on a road reserve within the 40 km - 80 km speed limit zones.
TREE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES	The tree management responsibilities defined within this document are applicable only to those areas directly under the control of the South Gippsland Shire Council.



RELEVANT ACTS AND DOCUMENTS

Relevant Acts

- Australian Standard AS4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees
- Australian Standard AS4970-2009 – Protection of Trees on Development Sites
- Electricity Safety Act 1998•
- Planning & Environment Act 1987
- Heritage Act 2017
- Road Management Act 2004
- SP AusNet “Guide to Planting Near Electricity Lines”

Council Documents

- Electric Line Clearance Management Plan 2021
- Municipal Fire Management Plan
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Road Management Plan
- Roadside Vegetation Management Manual



TREE INSPECTIONS

Council's trees are inspected and assessed on a regular basis. The frequency of these inspections is determined by the location of the trees and their potential for public risk. Inspections and risk assessments are conducted according to the standardised and documented procedure within this Plan.

Council's inspection regime is intended to satisfy Council's risk management responsibilities, develop a proactive management strategy, and tree replacement program.

The responsible officers conducting tree assessments are inducted and endorsed into Council's Tree Assessment & Inspection Process by the Coordinator Open Space. An Arborist will be engaged to conduct an arboricultural assessment to follow up investigations and complete any works beyond the scope of Council employees at any time deemed necessary by a Council officer carrying inspections. These inspections are to be endorsed through an arboricultural report including aerial inspection.

Every 5 years, an external Arborist will be engaged to conduct inspections on High Risk Areas, Significant Trees, and Avenues. These inspections include an aerial inspection through a licenced drone pilot for canopy and structural defect identification.



TREE REPLACEMENTS & PLANTINGS

Street, parkland, and roadside tree planting is best done in a programmed and sustainable manner. This approach is sound both environmentally and economically. It is also necessary to pre-plan what tree stock will be needed to be assured of obtaining the good quality stock of the right species at the right time.

A “Sustained Amenity” approach to provide a balanced diversity of tree ages and sizes should be followed to achieve long term stability of the tree population and landscape character. The right mix of species and age diversity are vital components of a sustainable tree population. A general methodology for achieving this is for no particular genera to make up a predominant percentage of the whole tree population. The age of the trees should also be spread evenly across concentrated planting areas to lessen the impact of the removal of whole areas of trees.

Priority for tree planting should be given to:

- Sites where trees have been removed.
- High profile and high use areas.
- Areas where there are high percentages of old aged trees, low species diversity and/or trees in poor condition.



Main Street, Meeniyan

- Areas with a lack of trees.
- Areas where residents or community groups have requested trees and are prepared to be involved in tree establishment and after-planting care.
- New developments.

Selection of tree species should take advantage of the wide range now available. A diversity of species spread across the Shire has multiple benefits e.g. disease tolerance, visual and seasonal variation, lower maintenance, habitat creation, and diversity. Only high quality tree stock should be used and planted correctly as substandard trees or planting can increase maintenance costs significantly and conversely good quality stock and planting techniques dramatically increases establishment rates and the community's appreciation of trees.

TREE REMOVAL – PARKS RESERVES & ROAD RESERVE

Tree removal can affect significant and non-significant trees.

Removal can be necessary for reasons such as, poor condition, risk management, traffic hazards, access problems, personal health, visual objection, tree litter, and damage to underground services. These guidelines are to enable decisions to be made in a fair and consistent manner. The Coordinator Open Space may authorise the removal of trees that are Non-Significant and trees that are identified as Significant after referral to Council.

Assessments will be conducted visually by inspection including aerial (if required) using a standard inspection sheet in digital form and is to be based on the individual merits of the situation. These situations will involve judgment based on a combination of the related arboriculture issues combined with such factors as safety, political, social, historical, economic, budgetary, or environmental considerations.

Removal is to be the last resort when

alleviating tree related problems.

Other options are to be assessed and considered in preference to removal wherever reasonable (e.g. root barriers, pruning, sweeper services, drain cleaning, infrastructure modification, or other management programs).

Parties likely to be affected by the works being undertaken are to be given no less than four (4) days written notice of the proposed action, including arrangements for stump removal, reinstatement, and tree replacement including Council's street tree planting programs.

In emergency situations, notification prior to removal may be possible, and follow up advice including notification details must occur within the following 48 hours.

Stump removal to take place within 8 to 12-week period of tree removal. The entire root system must be removed to a minimum depth of 200mm. Tree replacements will be undertaken as soon as possible the following planting season depending

S, SERVES

on practicality / availability. No works related to Council trees are to be undertaken by staff on private property unless appropriate permission or disclaimer has been approved by the property owner.

Where the resident, committee of management, or member of the public insists on the removal or retention of a tree following notification, the matter will be referred to Council via the Coordinator Open Space. The referral will include a brief overview report and recommendations for action, any arboriculture report obtained, details of objection, and any other relevant information related to the request. The Coordinator Open Space will respond to the resident and advise on a decision. For disputes, invite the resident to obtain independent advice at their own cost to have the matter reconsidered.



TREE PROTECTION

Trees and infrastructure are essential items in a modern environment. Trees are regularly subject to damage from civil works. When civil works are proposed in the vicinity of trees, an assessment and works plan is necessary to ensure tree damage is avoided or minimised. There are various guidelines for determining what can be classed as in the “vicinity” of a tree. The age, size, and/or vigour of the tree are usually the determining factor. For example, guidelines to avoid unacceptable root damage may include “exclusion zones” equal to a radius 12 times the trunk diameter or the area contained within the “drip line” of the tree.

All protection issues should be identified at the design stage with any protection plans finalised prior to any works commencing. Successful protection of trees relies on a commitment from all parties involved in the project. Council will not accept the responsibility for any trees below an acceptable condition/standard. Any development or works within a street, parkland, or roadside should take all practical steps to preserve existing trees in a healthy and safe condition. Trees growing beyond the “scope of works” due to the potential extent of their root system, changes to drainage patterns etc. can be seriously damaged. Capital and

*Mossvale Park 2020*

maintenance works should be designed and managed to avoid private trees being impacted by Council works and Council trees being impacted by private works.

Many authorities and private contractors have responsibility for conducting works adjacent to Council trees, particularly in streets. All parties need to give due consideration to all tree assets that they are likely to impact upon.

All works likely to impact on a Council trees are to be referred to the Coordinator Open Space at planning / design stage. Tree condition information including photos is to be provided for all Council projects

where trees (public and private) may be impacted by works. A “Tree Protection Plan” must be provided upon request to the Coordinator Open Space and implemented to Council’s satisfaction for all projects likely to impact on trees. All works within the vicinity of a Council tree (or trees that will become the responsibility of Council) should include actions to minimise any negative impact to the tree. Trees identified to be retained and that are damaged either deliberately or through neglect or by works be rectified where practicable and as soon as possible. Costs associated with this are the responsibility of the person / contractor who caused the damage and will be subject to compensation where applicable.

ELECTRICAL LINE CLEARANCE

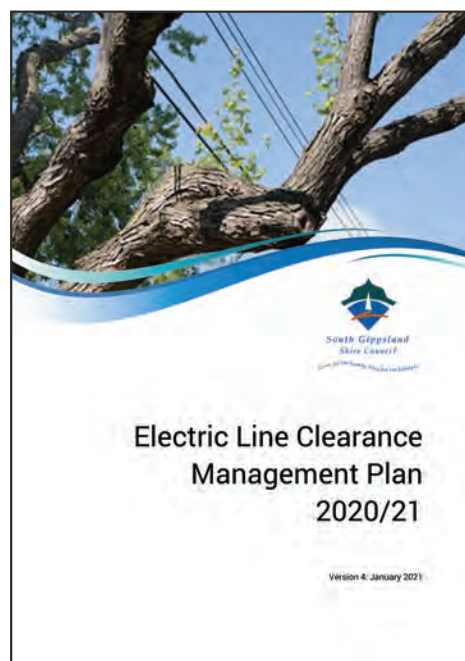
South Gippsland Shire Council is responsible for power-line clearance works within the townships of Leongatha and Korumburra. All other townships are non-declared areas and are the responsibility of the power distributor (Ausnet).

Requests for power-line clearance should be forwarded to the responsible authority/party:

- AusNet Services for requests in public areas except for the townships of Leongatha and Korumburra.
- South Gippsland Shire Council for the townships of Leongatha and Korumburra.

Property owners are responsible for clearance around the section of service lines within their property.

Refer to Section 8C4 of the *Electricity Safety Act 1998*, Appendix 3 for clarification.



TREE MAINTENANCE

The maintenance of trees in South Gippsland Shire is to ensure that the areas designated and maintained for regular public use will remain as safe as practicable. These guidelines apply to all of the parks, reserves, and road reserves managed by Council for regular public use.

Responsibility

- South Gippsland Shire Council is to ensure that an annual maintenance program is adopted and periodically reviewed.
- The development and co-ordination of the maintenance program will be the responsibility of the designated Council officer.
- All staff wherever possible are to recognise the work requirements within their area of responsibility and convey these to the Coordinator Parks and Gardens.
- The Parks and Gardens team members/contractors are to complete the designated works within the specified time and to the required standards directed by instruction on the issued works order.

Guidelines

- All dead branches, with a diameter of 30mm or greater, are to be removed when overhanging pathways, roads, park furniture, and playgrounds.
- In relation to pathways, all trees are to be remedially pruned where their height and physical characteristics could threaten designated path and track users (see pruning of trees - statutory/distances pro-forma).
- In relation to seats, tables, play areas, other park facilities, and designated car parking areas, all trees for a distance of 5-metres from the outer edge of any single item/area are to be remedially pruned depending on their height and physical characteristics.

RISK MANAGEMENT

South Gippsland Shire Council has a designated *Risk Management Policy (C35)* which is available from Council's website under Council Policies. Any tree asset comes with a level of inherent risk. Identifying and managing (minimising) that risk is essential in urban environments, in particular where people, buildings, and other infrastructure will be in close proximity to trees. In public areas containing trees, Council and some other authorities, have a duty of care to provide residents and visitors with a safe environment. The risk associated with trees is a combination of the condition of the tree and the use around and in the vicinity of the tree including bushfire management strategies and overlays. Council has a duty of care to reduce the level of risk to the public and potential financial burden on ratepayers.

Insurance companies require a certain standard for identifying all trees and their hazards, recording information and developing tree management strategies, plans, and maintenance programs. The cost to Council of not correctly managing their various assets can be significant. Insurance premiums and legal duty of care responsibilities have the potential to impact

significantly on the finances of Council.

Trees in high risk areas correspond to areas where members of the public congregate such as but not limited to shopping precincts, swimming pools, parks, playgrounds, Council controlled sports grounds, Council maintained reserves, kindergartens, school bus stops, and significant walking tracks. A risk analysis is completed as part of regular tree condition assessments. Risk assessment/ potential is the overriding factor in determining priority for works and allocating resources. Risks include hazardous trees, deadwood, sight and distance issues, and powerlines clearance.

All trees reported as being unsafe or of concern by the public or identified as being of concern by staff are to be inspected by an appropriate staff member as a level one visual inspection and an assessment report provided to the Coordinator Parks and Gardens or designated officer within one week of notification. The results of the report will determine whether further external investigation and action is required. Council's *Tree Inspection Report* - hazard rating section should be used for these purposes.

Requests shall be actioned within the following timeframes:

RISK LEVEL	REMEDIAL ACTION - RECOMMENDED TIMEFRAME	REMEDIAL ACTION - MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME BASED ON RESOURCE AVAILABILITY
Critical	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours
Urgent	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours
High	Within 3 days	Within 5 days
Medium	Within 1 month	Within 2 months
Low	Within 3 months	Within 6 months
Negligible	No work required, monitored as per inspection schedule	No work required, monitored as per inspection schedule

ENVIRONMENT

Consultation with residents can create a much better understanding of tree issues and a wider acceptance of the role and works undertaken by Council. South Gippsland Shire Council will seek to consult with adjacent residents when new or major tree works are being proposed or undertaken, will encourage the wider community to be aware of tree issues, and to contact Council for information or when matters of concern are noticed.

Recycling of material from tree maintenance operations such as woodchip, leaves, stump grubbing tailings and timber can reduce costs and provide a valuable source of materials for town maintenance operations.

Where tree removal can be safely avoided, Council will endeavour to maintain the tree for habit purposes to encourage and minimise the impact on wildlife.

SIGNIFICANT TREES

There are some trees on South Gippsland Shire Council's "Significant Tree Register". There are a number of national trust registered trees located at Mossvale Park

There are a number of Avenues of Honour plantations across the Shire that are protected by a Heritage Overlay. These are located in the following townships:

- Berrys Creek
- Kardella
- Kongwak
- Koorooman
- Leongatha
- Meeniyah
- Strzelecki
- Toora
- Welshpool
- Wooreen

Protection measures for significant trees are critical. There are a variety of ways to ensure their protection e.g. including them within the planning scheme and/or Section 173 Agreements.

Assessment and agreement of what is considered to be significant is subjective and applications for the registration of significant trees should always be referred to Council. A process of nomination and registration may be best undertaken by a panel of people with a wide range of expertise and viewpoints; this should assist in creating community stewardship of these trees.

Community awareness of significant trees and the implications of having a Significant Tree Register are important. It will be the community in most cases that identifies what trees are significant and what best helps to protect them.

The range of selection criteria in the *Significant Tree Assessment Matrix* can act as a valuable educational resource and assist in determining the significance of nominated trees. These criteria are sourced from the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). In using this matrix, a greater emphasis on what is peculiar or important to the local community rather than what is important at a state level should be considered.



Mirboo North Lyrebird Walk (July 2019)

PEST & DISEASE

Trees are subject to a range of pests and diseases. The concept of eradication is not practical in most cases and harm minimization should be seen as the best approach.

Pests and diseases do not recognise boundaries so a co-operative approach is required between land owners / managers. Where pests and diseases have the potential to affect Council's tree asset or "Significant Trees", Council should seek to assist residents and other land managers where possible in being aware of potential problems and control options.

Many of the surrounding councils and local communities deal with similar issues and opportunities to assist each other should be explored e.g. Elm Leaf Beetles do not respect boundaries, wildlife corridors should not stop at boundaries, Land Care and community groups do not limit themselves to Council boundaries etc.

Council has an annual cyclic proactive control program for Elm Leaf Beetles (Elm trees) in place to minimise the effects of these pests for trees on Council managed land across the Shire.

Koonwarra (May 2020)

TREE CONTROL REGULATIONS

There are currently existing Federal, State and Local Laws and that control the removal and pruning of both native and exotic vegetation on both private and public land. The policies and procedures contained in this Plan are in support of those laws and regulations and need to be viewed as being in addition to those laws and regulations.

It is the responsibility of all persons to ensure that is not in contravention of any existing laws and regulations. The following information is provided to assist in determining what laws and regulations may apply noting that these may change over time.

More information on this and also the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP).

National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation can be found at www.environment.gov.au

Local Government

South Gippsland Shire Council has a variety of Planning Scheme Overlays and

Local Laws that specify what may or may not be undertaken with certain types of vegetation.

The overlays may include:

- Heritage Overlays with Tree Control
- Heritage Act 2017 – includes trees of State Cultural Heritage Significance
- Significant Landscape Overlays
- Environmental Significance Overlays
- Public Acquisition Overlays
- Vegetation Protection Overlays

Other relevant authorities would include but not limited to:

- Vic Roads (Rural Roads Victoria)
- Catchment Management Authority
- Melbourne Water
- Southern Rural Water
- Parks Victoria
- AusNet Services

SHIRE MAP





Mossvale Park, Berrys Creek (May 2020)



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Shire Council*

