

Tree Management Plan 2022 - 2027



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Executive Summary

The Latrobe City Council Tree Management Plan (the Plan) is the framework for all ongoing tree maintenance within the Latrobe City municipality.

Council is responsible for managing large populations of trees within the streetscape / urban forest in varying areas of the municipality. These areas include such spaces as urban and rural townships, rural roadsides, bushland reserves, parklands and reserves.

Trees located within the municipality streetscape / urban forest are a very valuable and influential assets for all members of the general public and the community to enjoy and admire.

Council prides itself on its trees and street scapes. Trees are a significant asset that are highly valued by the community and provides an interconnected environment, social and economic benefits to the community such as shade, streetscape amenity, air pollution reduction and habitat for wildlife.

The Plan documents the strategies and procedures that Latrobe City Council has in place to ensure the longevity and quality of trees it is responsible for, through risk and tree management.

The Plan provides directions for tree protections, the Significant Tree Register, tree risks, compliance and health, tree pruning, tree selection and planting, pest and disease management and tree removal.

Through this, the Plan intends to promote a greener Latrobe by engaging with the community to educate about the importance of trees for future generations to enjoy.

Vision

The Plan is an overarching document that is intended to provide strategic direction for the efficient and effective management of trees on Council owned or managed land, including streets and open space areas.

Council's aim through efficient and effective management programs, is to increase canopy coverage, protect existing trees, promote public safety and tree health, implement cost effective enhancement and maintenance of the public trees, increase public awareness of the value of our trees, and maximize the social, economic and environmental benefits of public trees for current residents, stakeholders and future generations.

In addition to the Plan, the management of Council's tree population must be carried out in accordance with the following related documents, that provide more detailed information for use by staff.

The guides listed below aid in decision making when dealing with tree related questions and issues:

- *Latrobe City Tree Operation Framework for Tree Maintenance*
- *Latrobe City Annual Electric Line Clearance Management Plan*
- *Latrobe City Tree Root Management Procedure 2022*
- *Latrobe City Road Management Plan 2021-2025*
- *Latrobe City Suitable Street Tree Species List*
- *Latrobe City Significant Tree Register 2021*
- *Council Policy Tree Maintenance Notification Policy V3*

Objectives

The objectives of the Plan are to:

- Recognise the value of trees, as an important community asset within the urban and rural environments;
- Influence the community through community education;
- Bring together any existing tree related documents under the one umbrella;
- Enable consistent decision making on tree related issues;
- Manage risks associated with trees;
- Demonstrate a commitment to community engagement in relation to tree management;
- Demonstrate Council's commitment to the protection and retention of trees within Latrobe City both native and exotic;
- Protect and enhance tree scapes through promoting tree health and enhancement of neighbourhood charters; and
- Contribute to biodiversity and habitat.

Plan Direction

The Plan is in line with the following Council policies and strategies:

- Latrobe 2026; Natural Environment – *In 2026, Latrobe Valley enjoys a beautiful natural environment that is managed and protected with respect to ensure a lasting legacy for future generations*
- Latrobe City Council Plan 2021-2025; Theme 2 Objective – *To enhance the visual attractiveness and liveability of Latrobe City*
- Latrobe City Open Space Policy
- Latrobe City Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy 2014-2019

Tree Management

Latrobe City Council has significant and valuable natural features throughout the municipality which include open space areas located in the both the rural and urban spaces within Latrobe City. These high-quality areas include such spaces as rural roadsides, bushland reserves, parklands / reserves and residential street scapes / urban forests.

Council is responsible for the care, maintenance and management of all trees in public open space areas including streets, parklands, reserves, bushland reserves and rural and local roadsides. Street trees require intensive management due to their growing environment and community expectations for amenity / aesthetics, functionality and safety.

Listed below are the services provided in the management and maintenance of Council's trees:

- Annual risk inspections of trees at Council facilities;
- Periodic inspection of street and park trees;
- Tree management around electrical assets; (Powerlines)
- Canopy pruning to maintain height clearance over footpaths and roads;
- Rural roadside pruning;
- Deadwood removal;
- Tree planting and watering; and
- Formative and structural pruning on juvenile trees.

Council's Supervisor Arborist assisted by the Team Leader - Tree Maintenance, oversee the day-to-day tree management activities throughout Latrobe City Council.

Annual tree maintenance programs are contracted out to experienced tree maintenance contractors, with the in-house Tree Maintenance Team predominantly undertaking reactive tree maintenance works for all general day-to-day related issues / activities, including several planned programs such as works identified through annual tree audits and rural roadside tree pruning works.

Council acknowledges that trees require good planning and appropriate maintenance to provide aesthetic, environmental and ecological benefits to the community. This will be achieved through but not restricted to, the following:

- Public areas including streets and roadsides to be planted with trees consistent with Council's Suitable Street Tree Species list;
- Prompting tree health by providing adequate resources. To ensure the tree population is maintained in a healthy and safe condition;
- Continue the inspection and maintenance of street trees under the annual Block Pruning Program;

- Continue performing the annual tree risk inspection in and around Council facilities;
- Continue the inspection and maintenance of rural roadside trees under the annual Rural Road Pruning Program;
- Review Councils' Electric Line Clearance Management Plan annually and upload to the Council website; and
- Continue the inspection and pruning of trees under the Annual Urban Powerline Pruning Program.

Community Consultation

The community highly value trees within their street scapes. These include large open space areas such as parklands, bushland reserves and street trees all within their local areas.

This can present challenges for Council on issues relating to tree management when the focus is on an individual tree or a group of trees.

Council will place an emphasis toward informing, consulting and where appropriate involve the community in tree management. This will be achieved through, but not restricted to the following:

- Ensure the community is informed about all major projects involving tree removal, tree planting and other major tree management programs. (Except where emergency works are required);
- Provide advance information regarding tree maintenance works via letter box drops to affected local residents, interest groups and surrounding community groups;
- Increase community knowledge about the benefits of street and parkland trees within the urban environment through Council's web page and social media; and
- Seek opportunities to encourage community involvement in tree management.

Tree Protection

The primary goal of tree protection is the long-term survival and viability of trees.

The urban forest is subject to a variety of pressures, conflicts, changes and public requirements.

Protecting and maintaining healthy, safe and aesthetically pleasing trees is vital to Council achieving the desired landscape, social and environmental objectives for the City.

Trees have the potential to live for many generations and provide great benefits to the entire community from an environmental and ecological perspective. As well as aesthetically enhancing the forever growing urban environment.

Due to trees being living organisms and the constant changes to their local environment, it is important to protect Council's natural and cultural tree heritage for future generations to enjoy and admire.

Trees need to be protected from the detrimental impact that new developments, construction works, and other activities may have on their health and longevity.

Australian Standards 4970-2009, Protection of Trees on Development Sites provides land managers, arborists, builders, contractors and planners with tree management guidelines for the proper care and protection of trees retained and integrated into construction projects.

Significant Tree Register

Council has a Significant Tree Register which identifies any trees of state or local importance growing within the municipality. Council's current Significant Tree Register only applies to trees under the direct control of Latrobe City Council. Currently no private trees are identified within the document.

The purpose of Council's Significant Tree Register is to identify and recognise the significance trees within the Latrobe City municipality and ensure their protection for future generations.

Through the introduction of the Significant Tree Register, Council believes this is placing higher emphases on trees of significant or of remarkable stature. This will gain community support by increasing awareness of significant trees located within their community.

Council acknowledges that trees are a valuable community asset requiring protection through a combination of planning controls, enforcement and education. This will be achieved through, but not restricted to the following:

- Where Council trees could be affected by any works, Council's Supervisor Arborist is to be consulted during the planning or design stage;
- Council will use the Australian Standards AS 4970-2009, Protection of Trees on Development Sites as guidance for the protection and preservation of trees during all stages of a development or construction project;
- Conditions related to development applications will be used to ensure that, where appropriate, established trees are protected through all stages of a proposed development;
- Regular monitoring of development and construction sites to ensure adherence with approved tree protection plans;
- Promote community awareness of the Significant Tree Register and ensure it is easily available to the public, both in hard copy and/or on Council's web site; and
- Develop individual protection plans for the trees on Council's Significant Tree Register.

Tree Risks

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. Council has a duty of care to reduce the level of risk to the public and property.

The response by Council to damage caused by trees will vary according to the nature and extent of the damage. The most reported damage is those caused by tree roots. Council currently undertakes tree root inspections in accordance with the schedules contained within the Latrobe City Tree Root Management Procedure 2022.

Council trees need to be inspected and assessed to determine their potential for public risk; with trees in high risk or high use areas requiring more frequent inspections. Council currently undertakes tree risk inspections in accordance with the schedules contained in Latrobe City Tree Operation Framework for Tree Maintenance.

Council acknowledges that all trees have an inherent risk which must be managed effectively. This will be achieved through, but not restricted to the following:

- All Council trees reported as being unsafe or hazardous by the public or identified as being of concern by staff, are to be inspected by an appropriately qualified and experienced Arborist;
- All trees that are to come under the control of Council are to be assessed by a qualified and experienced Arborist for their suitability for retention, and to identify any remedial works required to bring them up to a good and safe condition;
- Identify and manage potential tree risks to the satisfaction of Council's insurer; and
- Tree maintenance generated through the tree risk inspection process will be recorded and scheduled for works.

Compliance and Health

Latrobe City Council maintains trees on Council managed land to fulfil its legislative and management obligation to residents and visitors of the area.

All programs and works undertaken are in accordance with:

- Electrical Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020;
- Latrobe City Annual Electric Line Clearance Management Plan; and
- Latrobe City Road Management Plan 2021-2025.

The purpose of this program is to ensure legislative and management obligations are met.

These works include:

- Clearance pruning from electrical assets to ensure compliance with government legislation;

- Prescribe management procedures to minimise danger of electric lines causing fire (and bushfire) or electrocution, caused by trees;
- Provide clearances for pedestrian, vehicles, and sight lines to ensure compliance with government legislation;
- Manage Tree health; and
- Reduce the risk to public safety.

Latrobe City Council is sensitive with respect to the preservation of trees within the urban environment.

To facilitate Council's Urban Block Pruning Program and to ensure compliance is achieved, tree pruning activities within the municipality is divided into ten blocks over a biennial cycle, five blocks will be completed annually.

Within each block boundaries, all street trees must be pruned, this includes parkland trees / vegetation under and around electrical assets, including parkland trees overhanging / encroaching Council roadways and footpaths.



The minimum clearance requirements are detailed in the Code of practice for Electric Line Clearances contained within the Electrical Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020.

The clearance distances are calculated based on a range of criteria including whether the powerline is in a hazardous or low bushfire risk area, whether the powerline is high or low voltage and the length of the section of powerline between power poles.

The photo above depicts a street where the trees have been pruned to ensure compliance from electrical assets. These tree pruning works have been undertaken in accordance with the Electrical Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020.

Tree Pruning

Pruning is an essential component of the effective management of Council's trees. Once trees are established, pruning is the key maintenance process to keep individual trees in a safe and visually appealing condition. The key to maintaining and enhancing the urban forest is quality tree works.

The pruning of trees should be minimised as trees look more appealing aesthetically when left to form their own natural shape.

Council acknowledges that trees should also be pruned to achieve specific goals, which includes meeting legislative requirements and managing obligations to residents and visitors to the area.

This will be achieved through, but not restricted to, the following:

- Council trees to be pruned in accordance with the Australian Standard for Tree Pruning, AS 4373 – 2007 (Pruning of amenity trees);
- Continuing the urban street tree pruning program, with each tree being visited and pruned as necessary at least once every two years (biennial);
- Continuing the annual rural roadside tree maintenance program with all works being carried out as needed with Council's Road Hierarchy used to prioritise works;
- Individual trees may be pruned as necessary in response to customer requests from residents, Council staff or other parties;
- Pruning of Council owned trees is not permitted by anyone other than Council staff or Council engaged contractors;
- Maintain public safety through the removal of structurally unsound limbs;
- Maintain tree health through the removal of dead or diseased material;
- Maintain prescribed clearances from services;
- Maintain prescribed clearances from roads, footpaths and driveways;
- Ensure traffic safety and visibility of road signs; and
- Minimise future work requirements through the removal of potential tree species which are known to pose future problems.

Where private trees overhang Council property such as footpaths or roadways, the tree is regarded as the owner's responsibility and therefore the onus is on the owner to prune the branches when requested.

An order for the pruning of overhanging branches can be issued under Council's by-laws.

Tree Selection and Planting

As most trees in the streets and parks of Latrobe City will occupy their planting sites for many years, a carefully considered selection of the site and tree species is vital.

Trees are the dominant component in landscapes and one of the most effective ways of improving the image and landscape character of a city, is to upgrade the street tree / roadside and public open space planting.

Council recognises the value of tree planting as a method of increasing tree canopy cover and improving the urban forest, hence why Council invests heavily in the planting and establishment of trees throughout Latrobe City.

Council's suitable street tree species list was developed to ensure trees are selected to suit the site conditions, including proximity to infrastructure such as overhead power lines, drains and footpaths.

Council acknowledges the selection of appropriate trees for urban street plantings is critical for successful establishment and well managed streetscapes. This will be achieved through, but not restricted to, the following actions:

- Council has prepared a masterplan to guide future planning for tree planting across Latrobe City after consultation with the community and a report being brought to Council;
- Continue to develop Council's suitable street tree species list by trialling and monitoring new test species;
- Council's Supervisor Arborist shall be consulted on species suitability, where there is any departure from the preferred species selection;
- Continue to encourage community participation in tree planting programs to promote ongoing stewardship and education; and
- All Council development projects incorporate planting of new trees in conformance with Council's suitable street tree species list.

Tree planting by private developers and others on any land that will become the responsibility of Council, must be done in consultation with and to the satisfaction of Council.

Pest and Disease Management

Trees are subject to a range of pests and diseases.

When pests and diseases occur that could affect the immediate or long-term survival of Council owned and managed trees, Latrobe City will react appropriately.

There is a significant population of Elm trees within Latrobe City that require special protection.

Council is committed to preserving the Elm Tree population by maintaining an annual Elm Leaf Beetle soil injection control program. This will ensure Elm Trees within Latrobe City are maintained for future generations to admire.

Council acknowledges the need to minimise the threat of pests and diseases to the current tree population throughout Latrobe City.

This will be achieved through, but not restricted to, the following actions:

- Develop specific control treatment programs where appropriate for major pests and diseases likely to affect trees under the control of Latrobe City Council;
- Monitor Council's tree population to enable timely and appropriate responses when pest and disease outbreaks compromise the immediate or long-term survival of the trees; and
- Council will endeavour to notify owners of privately-owned trees of pest and disease outbreaks so that the owner may take action as required.

Tree Removal

Trees can take many years to develop fully and once removed cannot be quickly replaced.

Latrobe City Council will investigate all tree management options before recommending a tree removal. While Council acknowledges trees will shed tree materials, this is seen as a natural occurrence and the removal of a tree solely on this basis is not supported.

There are circumstances in which tree removal is an acceptable management option in nature strips, parks and reserves and other Council managed land when required for: human health and safety, to protect infrastructure, to facilitate approved development and infrastructure improvements, to maintain a healthy urban forest or for ecological restoration. These options will only be considered if a suitable alternative can't be achieved.

Removal of any tree has the potential to create a great deal of conflict, as trees often instil very emotive feelings, both for and against removal.

Latrobe City Council places a high emphasis on protecting its Council maintained trees, this is why the decision to remove a tree is not taken lightly.

Trees will only ever be considered for removal if:

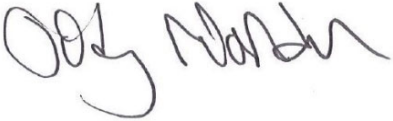
- Tree threatening to cause significant property damage. (Either to private or Council owned property).
 - This option will only be considered if a suitable alternative can't be achieved.
- Tree causing significant interference to services or mains i.e. power lines, water and sewer pipes, kerb and pavements.
 - This option will only be considered, if a suitable alternative can't be achieved.
- Tree causing problems for pedestrians and/or motorists.

- This option will only be considerate in the interest of public safety.
- Council or other public authorities require the removal of trees to facilitate the construction of new infrastructure.
 - This option will only be considered if a suitable alternative can't be achieved.
- Tree being storm damaged or having failed in part due to shedding limbs.
- Tree is Dead, Declining, and/or Diseased (DDD)

Council will seek to avoid tree removal wherever possible and this will be achieved through, but not restricted to, the following actions:

- Council will investigate all tree management options prior to the recommendation for tree removal;
- Council will only remove tree/s that are not suitable for their location and for which risk minimisation strategies will not be successful; and
- Review insurance claims in accordance with advice from Council's insurer and assess the removal and replacement of trees that pose an unacceptable risk.

The Tree Management Plan should be reviewed every five years in line with the review of all Latrobe City Tree management documents.

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| Approved by: | Jody Riordan, General Manager Regional City Planning & Assets |
| Date approved: | 26 July 2022 |
| Review date: | 26 July 2027 |
| Signed by GM |  |