Vegetation Management Strategy

January 2009
1 INTRODUCTION

The Central Coast Council manages a wide variety of vegetation types that require specialised management which ranges from street trees, parks and reserves to cricket and football grounds. This includes vegetation such as grass, exotic and native species, from a single planting to a bushland reserve.

The positive values of vegetation include maintaining biodiversity, providing fauna habitat, erosion control, creating wind breaks, improving water quality, nourishing soil, inhibiting weed growth, storing carbon dioxide, producing oxygen, improving visual amenity and providing a sense of place.

The Vegetation Management Strategy will ensure that a high standard of management is achieved aesthetically, environmentally and safely.

2 STRATEGY AIM

The aim of this Strategy is to:

• Provide a cost effective framework for making structured, consistent and environmentally sound management decisions for vegetation that is growing on Council owned and managed land.

• Provide vegetation management that is consistent with community expectations, legislation and policies while at the same time working within resource boundaries.

• Maintain vegetation in a safe and healthy condition and ensure appropriate clearances are maintained.

• Preserve, manage and enhance specific indigenous and introduced vegetation within the municipal area and manage priority weeds.

• Maintain biodiversity of flora and provide habitat for native fauna.

• Encourage best practice methods for vegetation management and consider alternative practices.

• Manage vegetation as part of the overall Risk Management Policy 2008 implemented by the Council in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life of its employees, residents and visitors.
3 VEGETATION SIGNIFICANCE AND RELATED LEGISLATION

The significance or importance of vegetation varies greatly and needs to be defined and considered prior to its management.

Significance is regulated by Heritage listings, various State and Federal legislation, Council Procedures and Policies, Tree Preservation Zones, community perception, importance as fauna habitat, biodiversity and any other regulatory constraints as considered appropriate.

Appendix A details a list of both internal and external documents that may need to be referred to for specific vegetation management issues.

4 CENTRAL COAST PLANNING SCHEME 2005

The Council has responsibility for land use planning under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993, and a regulatory role in environmental management under the Acts.

A Planning Permit is not required for vegetation removal or destruction:

(a) for fire hazard reduction in accordance with an abatement order under the Local Government Act 1993 or the Fire Service Act 1979;

(b) for fire hazard reduction carried out by or on behalf of the Tasmanian Fire Service, the Council or any public authority;

(c) for fire management purposes in accordance with an approved fire management plan;

(d) for the maintenance and repair of infrastructure, including roads, tracks, footpaths, drains, sewers, power lines, pipelines and telecommunications facilities but not including upgrading of informal vehicle or pedestrian tracks;

(e) for the removal and destruction of noxious or environmental weeds;

(f) for the purpose of normal maintenance of pasture and cropping land or within a garden not otherwise protected by covenant or other legislation;

(g) for soil conservation or rehabilitation works including Landcare activities and the like;

(h) where necessary to implement a permit;
(i) in accordance with an approval under a statutory process administered by the State or a vegetation management agreement approved under State legislation including activities conducted within a State Forest or Private Timber Reserve in accordance with a Forest Practices Plan;

(j) of any tree which is dangerous as certified by a qualified and experienced arborist;

(k) which has been planted for shelter belts, street trees, horticultural purposes;

(l) for firewood up to a maximum of 10 tonnes per year; or

(m) within 1m of the boundary between properties owned or occupied by different persons, for the purposes of erecting or maintaining a dividing fence between those properties.

5 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION

Consultation with the community, community groups and other stakeholders such as Crown Land Services and the Parks and Wildlife Service, is likely to reduce conflict on vegetation issues and provide an opportunity to facilitate optimum solutions.

Any request for the removal of vegetation will be considered by the Council within the context of this Strategy and associated accepted practice.

Falling leaves, twigs, fruit and flowers are considered normal and expected vegetation behaviour and therefore are not reason enough alone for removal or pruning. Vegetation will however, be maintained in a safe and appropriate manner to reduce nuisance issues.

Approved vegetation removal or pruning will be carried out as part of the Council’s normal assessment and maintenance works.

The Council will continue to provide a wide range of educational information to the community in the form of brochures, pamphlets and guidelines.
6 VEGETATED AREAS

Vegetation consists of native and exotic plants and includes any tree, shrub, grass or weed within the following areas controlled by the Council:

- parklands and bushland reserves;
- active recreation grounds;
- buffer zones and green belts;
- cemeteries;
- tree preservation areas;
- foreshore zones;
- road reservations; and
- others including leased property, gravel pits and aged persons homes.

7 COASTAL FORESHORE AND LEVEN RIVER RESERVATION

The Council holds a recreational lease over certain Crown land areas known as the coastal reserve between the Forth River and the Blythe River, and some areas along the Leven River.

Clause 3(j), (k) and (l) of the lease agreement states:

"(j) Not to make any alterations, or erect buildings or structures on the Land without obtaining the Minister’s prior written consent. In seeking the approval of the Minister, the Lessee must provide detailed plans of the proposed alteration, building or structure to the Minister for his consideration;

(k) Not to do, or permit to be done on the Land anything which, in the Minister’s opinion may be or become a nuisance or annoyance to an occupier of an adjoining property;

(l) Not to permit any activity on the Land that is not authorised under this lease without obtaining the Minister’s prior written consent..."
When unauthorised activities occur, the conditions of the lease agreement are not met by the Council. Unauthorised activities, including pruning of vegetation and dumping of garden waste, can harm the native vegetation and habitats along the foreshore. Pruning or removal of vegetation in the coastal reserve, if considered an appropriate action, must be approved by Crown Land Services.

8 NATURESTRIPS

The landscaping of nature strips will be permitted under certain circumstances. Any proposed landscaping treatment will need to comply with the Council’s requirements and must be approved by the relevant Council officer.

9 DEVELOPMENT AND WORKS

Trees and vegetation will be considered during the early stages of design for any engineering works. This includes eliminating unnecessary removal of trees and vegetation and possible root damage. Designs will ensure that there is minimal vegetation and tree removal and impact.

10 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

As living organisms, plants and trees are not permanent features, have a finite life and need to be managed accordingly. Effort will be made to preserve and enhance indigenous vegetation where possible.

Vegetation management is undertaken for a number of reasons, which include:

• Providing appropriate carriageway and footpath clearances.
• Underground/overhead service clearances.
• Construction works.
• Area uniformity.
• Aesthetic and environmental improvements/benefits.
• Ground stability and erosion control.
• Sign visibility.
• Sight distances.
- Plant species control.
- Plant quality control.
- Storm damage.
- Fire hazard reduction.
- Removal of significant risk vegetation.
- Legal obligations/requirements.
- Reinstatement of natural areas.
- Preservation of remnant vegetation.

11 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

All vegetation will be maintained in accordance with the strategies developed by the Council and the appropriate Council Procedures.

The Council will continue to engage a suitably qualified arborist to undertake an annual tree assessment program of trees in the parks and reserves, along rural and urban roads and along pathways and around infrastructure in the bushland reserve areas. The assessment will cover the health and safety of each tree and will identify any required works such as limb trimming, or total tree removal.

Maintenance works are recorded and an annual program exists for the following activities:

**URBAN**
- Tree assessment
- Tree pruning
- Tree removal
- Tree sucker removal
- Leaf litter removal
- Stump removal/grinding
- Tree planting
- Mowing
- Street spraying
- Park/reserve spraying
- Boneseed removal
- Capeweed spraying (on request)

**RURAL**
- Tree assessment
- Tree pruning
- Tree removal
- Verge mowing
- Reseal spraying
- Shoulder spraying
- Blackberry spraying on request
- Gorse spraying
- Ragwort spraying/removal
- Boneseed removal
12 PLANTING

Selection of an appropriate species, planting site and usage levels are crucial in determining the long-term viability and cost effectiveness of vegetation.

Replacement and new plantings will complement surrounding vegetation giving consideration to plant species consistency. A range of exotics and natives should be used where suitable, however, foreshore areas will only be planted out with native foreshore plants.

The Council will ensure that any plants purchased for use in planting in the municipal area are not listed as Weeds of National Significance, Declared Weeds in Tasmania under the Weed Management Act 1999 or Environmental Weeds.

Planting will be undertaken by the Council’s staff or by community groups, schools and individuals with prior consent and co-ordination with the Council.

13 PRUNING, CUTTING, SLASHING OR REMOVAL

Vegetation often requires pruning, cutting, slashing or removal to maintain clearance for utility services, buildings and carriageways, to improve the safety, structure, health and beauty of the vegetation or to maintain appropriate sight lines.

Any contractor undertaking major pruning works in the Central Coast municipal area on behalf of a service company such as Aurora must advise the Council of the intended works.

Pruning or removal of any vegetation on Council controlled land will be undertaken by the Council or an approved contractor. Exceptions can apply to community groups who must gain approval before commencing any works.

Prior to any pruning, cutting, slashing or removal, the vegetation will be inspected and assessed in terms of health, growth habit, structure, stability, significance and subsequent pruning requirements.

Vegetation can be pruned or removed:

- to remove any dead, dying, dangerous or defective branches;
• to uplift the canopy (prune lower branches) to allow pedestrian and road clearance;

• to allow appropriate clearance of branches in conflict with adjoining buildings;

• to allow for clearances around light poles and powerlines;

• to improve the trees structural stability, health and appearance;

• to improve sight lines for vehicles and traffic signs;

• if a report received from a qualified arborist identifies a tree with potential structural weakness, decay or other diseases;

• if there is severe and damaging impact on infrastructure/services and no alternative solutions are available;

• due to storm damage;

• due to trip hazards.

Vegetation will not be pruned or removed:-

• to allow or improve a view;

• to reduce fruit fall, leaf/flower litter, sap drop, bird droppings or similar;

• to increase street lighting on to private property;

• to reduce shading on to private property (exceptional cases considered);

• contrary to Australian Standard AS4373:2007 *Pruning of amenity trees.*
14 **SPRAYING**

Identification of priority weeds and appropriate control requirements needs consideration prior to spraying. The promotion of desirable vegetation can suppress weeds, lessening the need for chemical control.

Competent operators will undertake herbicide use and sprayed areas will be monitored for chemical effectiveness and follow-up spraying will be completed every year for at least the next two years.

15 **VEGETATION REPLACEMENT PROGRAM**

The vegetation replacement program involves replacing the native and exotic vegetation that have been removed with strategic planting which identifies 'the right tree for the right location'.

Each park and reserve will be assessed for vegetation requirements. The vegetation assessment will identify priority areas that require revegetation as soon as possible and earmark vegetation which are nearing maturity. A specific replacement program is the preferred method in parks and along urban roads, as there is little chance of natural regeneration.

16 **MAINTAINING A SAFE AND HEALTHY OPERATION**

The Council will ensure that staff and contractors are appropriately inducted, trained, instructed and, where necessary, licensed, for each activity and be supported by a system of work that clearly defines accountabilities for managing hazards and the way the work is completed.

17 **GREENWASTE DISPOSAL**

All suitable greenwaste produced from vegetation maintenance works will be chipped into mulch for further use.

18 **HAZARDOUS VEGETATION**

Hazardous/high risk vegetation or vegetation relating to an emergency such as storm damage may be removed at short notice by authorisation from an appropriate Council officer.
19 FIRE HAZARDS

The Council manages vegetation through fire hazard reduction control. Potential fire hazards on Council land will be treated by programmed maintenance activities.

The Council will maintain adequate buffers between bushland reserves and private property.

20 REFERENCES

BOOKS/REPORTS/STRATEGIES/POLICIES/ACTS

*Weed Management Act 1999*

*Australian Standard 4373:2007 – Pruning of amenity trees*

*Australian Standard 1742.3:1996 – Traffic control devices for works on roads*


Molnar, John 2005 *Tree Policy*, Devonport City Council

*Asset Data Specification for Street Trees*, Hobart City Council

*Street Tree Policy*, Stonnington City Council

*Street Tree Management Plan*, Kingston City Council

2008 *Street Tree Management Strategy*, Bayside City Council

*Tree Management Strategy*, Wangaratta

2001 *Working safely with trees: recommended practices for the amenity tree industry*, Work Safe Victoria

National Farm Chemical User Training Program

2001 *The Australian Arbor Age*

WEBSITES

Appendix A: RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Local Area Management Plans:
  - Central Coast Coastal Management Plan 2001
  - Clayton Wetland Management Plan 2001
  - Old Nietta Railway Reserve, Ulverstone 2004
  - Reid Street Reserve Management Plan 2007
  - Gables Park Management Plan 2007
  - Penguin Creek & Hiscutt Park Management Plan 2007
  - Riverside Avenue Management Plan 2007
  - River Park Development Plan 2007
  - Leven Canyon Flora & Fauna Habitat Survey 2007
  - Strategy for Restoration and Maintenance of Tea Tree Point 2007 (Penguin Coastcare)
  - Customs Reserve Management Plan 2007 (Turners Beach Coastcare)
  - Turners Beach Foreshore & Vegetation Management Plan 2008
- Pruning of Amenity Trees AS4373:2007
- Central Coast Council Municipal Weed Management Plan 2007
- Central Coast Council Street Tree Strategy 2008
- Central Coast Planning Scheme 2005
- Dangerous Goods Act 1998
- Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (Highways) Act 1982
- Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993
- Threatened Species Protection Act 1995
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
• Powerline Vegetation Clearance – Aurora Energy Pty Ltd

• *Weed Management Act 1999*

• Statutory Weed Management Plans, Department of Primary Industries and Water

• *Regional Weed Strategy 2005*, Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management

• *Coastal Weed Strategy 2007*, Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management

• *Weed Hygiene Plan*, Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management

• Working Safely with Trees 2001 – Work Safe Victoria