

# Vegetation Management Strategy



October 2019



# Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2	STRATEGY AIM .....	3
3	VEGETATION SIGNIFICANCE AND RELATED LEGISLATION .....	3
4	CENTRAL COAST INTERIM PLANNING SCHEME 2013.....	4
5	CROWN LAND LEASED BY COUNCIL .....	4
6	COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION .....	5
7	VEGETATED AREAS.....	5
8	VEGETATION MANAGEMENT.....	5
9	VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS .....	6
10	PRUNING, CUTTING, SLASHING OR REMOVAL.....	7
11	NATURE STRIPS .....	8
12	DEVELOPMENT AND WORKS .....	9
13	UNAUTHORISED VEGETATION REMOVAL .....	9
14	PLANTING .....	9
15	TREE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM .....	10
16	WEEDS.....	10
17	SPRAYING.....	10
18	MAINTAINING A SAFE AND HEALTHY OPERATION .....	11
19	GREENWASTE DISPOSAL .....	11
20	HAZARDOUS VEGETATION .....	11
21	FIRE HAZARDS.....	11
22	RELATED DOCUMENTS .....	12

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Central Coast Council manages a wide variety of vegetation types requiring specialised management which ranges from rural and urban trees, park and street trees, roadside vegetation, natural areas such as foreshore, inland and riparian reserves, perennial and annual gardens, grass and weed species.

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

The Vegetation Management Strategy will provide a consistent and sustainable approach towards the management of all vegetation within Council owned and managed land.

## **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 parameters.
- 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 continually review current practices.
- Manage vegetation as part of the overall *Risk Management Policy 2019* implemented by the Council in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life and safety 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; therefore Council staff are required to refer to a considerable number of internal and external documents for specific vegetation management issues.

Significance is regulated by Heritage listings, various State and Commonwealth legislation, Council procedures and policies, tree preservation zones, community perception, importance as fauna habitat, biodiversity and any other regulatory constraints as considered appropriate.

#### **4 CENTRAL COAST INTERIM PLANNING SCHEME 2013**

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 Act.

There are many and varied requirements within the Planning Scheme relating to vegetation. Vegetation should be considered during the planning stage of any project and subdivision, if you are unsure of the requirements under the current Planning Scheme please consult with the Council's Land Use Planning Department.

#### **5 CROWN LAND LEASED BY COUNCIL**

Most of the coastal zone and significant areas of the Leven, Gawler and Forth River banks are leased by the Council from the Crown as Public Recreational Areas. Crown land activities in public reserves are governed by the *Crown Lands Act 1976*. Failure to adhere to the following may result in fines and or legal action.

*Under the Crown Lands Act 1976:*

- (1) *No person shall, without lawful authority:*
- (a) *use, occupy, or be found in possession of any Crown land or assigned land; or*
  - (b) *keep or depasture any sheep, cattle, or other stock thereon; or*
  - (c) *cut, dig, or take therefrom any timber, wood, gravel, stone, limestone, salt, guano, shells, sand, loam, brick-earth, or any other natural substance whatever; or*
  - (d) *strip or remove bark from any tree growing or being thereon; or*
  - (e) *cut, remove, take, or damage any trees or vegetation thereon; or*
  - (f) *subject to subsection (7), light thereon any fire; or*
  - (g) *deposit any litter as defined by the Litter Act 2007 including any vehicle or any part of a vehicle thereon.*

Persons sub-leasing land from the Council must adhere to the *Crown Lands Act 1976* as well as their individual lease agreement with the Council.

## **6 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION**

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

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.

Any request for the removal/pruning or planting of vegetation will be assessed by the Council within the context of this Strategy and associated documents. Any assessments and approved works will be carried out as part of the Council's annual works program unless identified as a safety risk.

Where significant vegetation works are required adjacent to or within close proximity to private property, property owners/residents will be informed through correspondence from the Council.

The Council will continue to provide educational information and material particularly on the Council's vegetation management programs and services, to the community in the form of brochures, pamphlets, guidelines and up to date information on the Council's website.

## **7 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:

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

## **8 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT**

As living organisms, plants and trees are not permanent features, they have a finite life and need to be managed accordingly.

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.

## 9 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. Trees will be assessed in all 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 canopy lifting, weight reduction, formative pruning, pest control, exclusion zones, stabilisation works or total tree removal. Tree works are prioritised based on the level of risk.

Trees are a long-term investment, that take many years to grow. For example, a eucalypt can take 100 years to develop adequate habitat hollows. Many species of native wildlife depend on hollows for essential habitat; this habitat is not readily replaced. Complete tree removal is sometimes necessary; however, it should be the last resort after other risk management/treatment methods have been explored. These can include mulched exclusion zones, redirection of paths and signage.

An annual program exists for the following activities:

### *URBAN*

Tree assessments

Tree pruning

Tree removal

Tree sucker removal

Leaf litter removal

Stump removal/grinding

Powerline clearances (selected streets only)

Tree planting (April to August)

Mowing

Street spraying  
Park/reserve spraying  
Boneseed removal  
Capeweed spraying  
Spanish heath spraying  
Blue periwinkle spraying  
Coastal environmental weed removal program  
Verge mowing  
Reseal spraying  
Shoulder spraying  
Blackberry spraying  
Gorse spraying  
Spanish heath spraying (selected zones)  
Ragwort spraying/removal  
Blue periwinkle spraying (selected zones)  
Watering Program (November to February –  
depending on weather conditions)

Gardens and areas of amenity horticulture are to be maintained as per the Council's service level requirements.

## **10 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 for vehicles, pedestrians and traffic signs.

Any contractor undertaking major pruning works in the Central Coast municipal area on behalf of a service company such as TasNetworks 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 tree's 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, e.g. excessive shading for a large percentage of the day);
- contrary to Australian Standard AS4373:2007 *Pruning of amenity trees*.

## 11 NATURE STRIPS

The landscaping of nature strips by residents is encouraged as per the Central Coast Council Street Tree Strategy which allows two trees per nature strip. No other landscaping treatment is permitted without meeting Council's requirements and must be approved by the relevant Council officer.

The establishment of tree avenues along priority streets will continue to be implemented through the Council's Street Tree Strategy. The Strategy identifies priority streets and appropriate species for planting. All residents are encouraged to request nature strip trees, each site will be assessed for suitability and if appropriate Council staff will undertake planting and ongoing maintenance as per the Council's annual works program. See the Council's Street Tree Strategy for further information.



Vegetation must not be removed poisoned or vandalised. Such works must only be undertaken after approval has been obtained from the Council. Damaged vegetation will be replaced by the Council where appropriate and further action may be taken as per the Council's Vegetation Damage Signage Policy 2018.

If a resident decides and/or advises the Council that they are no longer going to mow and maintain their nature strip, they are to be advised that the Council will slash/mow it twice per year only.

## **12 DEVELOPMENT AND WORKS**

Planning applications submitted to the Council will be assessed for any existing tree related issues and conflicts. Any possible impacts on existing trees within the road reserve will be minimised as per Australian Standard AS 4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites.

Development adjacent to or adjoining Council owned, or leased reserves must be closely considered and designed in a manner to reduce any negative impact on the natural environment. Urbanisation alongside natural environments can significantly impact and compromise such areas and small considerations within the planning stage can reduce future issues. These developments must be discussed with the Council's Natural Resources Management Officer.

The protection of existing vegetation where possible and exploring opportunities for additional vegetation/landscaping will be considered during the early stages of design for any civil engineering works and new subdivision developments.

## **13 UNAUTHORISED VEGETATION REMOVAL**

Preventative action will be taken by the Council aimed to stop unauthorised removal, pruning or damage to vegetation on Council managed land. Wherever possible, the Council must endeavour to stop any unauthorised activities immediately. The Council will take measures to rectify any damage using various methods including replanting, seeding, mulching and creating exclusion areas through temporary or permanent fencing. Extensive removal or damage may trigger the Vegetation Damage Signage Policy July 2018. Surveillance cameras may be installed if on-going damage to vegetation continues.

### *ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS*

Some reserve areas are actively managed by Coastcare and Landcare groups. These groups work to a program under the direction of and in collaboration with the Council undertaking weed control, revegetation and mulching works. Further information regarding these groups, the areas they work in and work activities can be obtained from the Council's Natural Resource Management Officer.

## **14 PLANTING**

Planting is a crucial component to vegetation management; ongoing planting will help to ensure sustainable tree populations and revegetation will further enhance and strengthen our natural areas.

Selection of appropriate species, sourcing good quality plant stock, determining the best planting sites and ensuring ongoing maintenance are crucial components of plant establishment and will largely influence the viability and success of the plantings.

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, natural reserve areas will be planted with indigenous species only.

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 Council staff or by community groups, schools and individuals with prior consent and coordination with the Council.

## **15 TREE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM**

The Council has a Tree Replacement Program; this means for every tree removed through the Council's Tree Assessment Program at least one tree will be planted in its place. The location of the replacement planting and tree species is determined on a case by case basis.

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 is 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 WEEDS**

Weeds form an unwelcome component of the vegetation community, due to their invasive nature and ability to adapt, weeds can be found right across the municipal area – on Council and private land, Crown land and within the boundaries of utilities such as TasWater, TasRail and State Growth land. Weeds can be found along roadsides, in nature strips, cracks in footpaths, open space and park areas and within natural bush/coastal and riparian reserves.

The Council is legally bound by the *Tasmanian Weed Management Act 1999* and weed control targets and priorities are set by the Central Coast Council Weed Management Team under the guidance of the Central Coast Council Weed Management Plan (2017). The Council attempts to manage weeds strategically, according to long-term priorities and wherever possible cooperatively with other land managers.

## **17 SPRAYING**

The Council will identify priority weeds in accordance with the Central Coast Weed Management Plan 2018 and appropriate control requirements needs consideration prior to spraying. In some cases, the promotion of desirable vegetation and the use of mulch 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 until such time as the target weed is controlled.

## **18 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.

## **19 GREENWASTE DISPOSAL**

All suitable green waste produced from vegetation maintenance works will be chipped into mulch for further use within the Council's parks and gardens. Mulch contaminated with weed species will be disposed of responsibly to avoid the spread of weeds. Illegal green waste dumping is monitored according to the Green Waste Dumping Signage Policy 2018.

## **20 HAZARDOUS VEGETATION**

Hazardous/high risk vegetation or vegetation relating to an emergency such as storm damage may be removed as soon as practical by authorisation from an appropriate Council officer.

## **21 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. Please refer to the Council's Work Health and Safety Fire Abatement Policy 2016.