

Frankston's Urban Forest Policy

'Tree Policy'



opportunity » growth » lifestyle

Purpose

The aim of Frankston's Urban Forest Policy is to provide a framework for making structured, consistent and environmentally sound decisions for all trees within the municipality's "Urban Forest".



What is an Urban Forest?

The City's urban forest consists of all trees and vegetation located throughout the municipality irrespective of the tree species, location, origin and ownership.

Urban forestry can be described as the science and art of managing trees, forests and natural ecosystems in and around urban communities to maximise the psychological, sociological, economic and aesthetic benefits that trees provide for society (see Schwobb 2008).

Vision

Frankston City Council has a resilient, healthy and diverse urban forest providing benefits for the entire community, in the present and for future generations. The City's landscape character is defined by attractive treed streetscapes and open spaces that are well planned and well maintained. The urban forest enhances the liveability of our city and fosters a strong community connection with nature.



Objectives

1. Tree Preservation

The urban forest is recognised as a valuable asset for the City and its preservation is given high priority in the planning and implementation of all activities throughout the municipality. Its protection is governed by strong regulatory tools within both the planning scheme, local laws and to relevant Australian Standards (*AS4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites*). Trees of high significance will be identified to increase awareness of their importance within the community where the sensitivity of its location does not place the tree's values at risk (e.g. habitat or cultural values). Tree vandalism will not be tolerated and will be promptly investigated and wherever possible the tree cover will be re-established.



2. Tree Removal and Replanting

The City seeks to avoid removal of healthy trees wherever appropriate. There will be circumstances where tree removal is an acceptable management option. Tree removal may occur for tree health and human safety, to protect existing infrastructure, to facilitate approved development or rejuvenation of an area, to maintain a healthy urban forest or for ecological restoration. In all situations, assessment of the tree/s will be investigated by a suitability qualified and experienced council officer and all alternative options (such as project redesign, and/or pruning of trees) considered prior to a recommendation for tree removal. Tree removal will be actioned by priority based on an assessment of the level of risk. Fallen leaves, twigs, fruit and flowers are considered normal and expected tree behaviour and are not valid reasons for removal under this policy. Similarly, use by wildlife or failure to establish grass or other planting under a tree is not considered a valid reason for removal.

In those cases where removal is approved, replacement planting to the satisfaction of Council shall be provided as soon as practicable.

3. Tree Planting and Selection

Frankston City Council seeks to maximise opportunities to increase its canopy cover through tree planting in nature strips, parks and reserves and other Council owned and managed land. Council also promotes this objective through education programs and by increasing community awareness of the value of trees and tree planting programs.

Opportunities will be sought for planting iconic or signature trees to create boulevards and city gateways. Selection of tree species for planting will be diverse and based on their suitability to site conditions, potential to contribute to the landscape character and resilience to climatic changes and potential pests and pathogens.

All tree stock must be of good quality, appropriate size and planted and maintained in accordance with Council's specifications and Australian Standards (*AS2303-2015 Tree Stock for Landscape Use*).

4. Tree Asset Management

Council is responsible for the planting, removal and maintenance of trees in nature strips, parks and reserves and other Council owned and managed land. Additionally, Council has obligations under the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations (2015) to maintain street tree clearance from overhead electrical conductors in areas under the Code for Declared Urban Areas.

The maintenance of trees on private property is the responsibility of the land owner but must comply with Council's regulatory framework. This includes the Tree Protection Local Law 2016 and the Frankston Planning Scheme's vegetation protection measures.

Council has a routine maintenance program through which each tree under Council's responsibility is inspected every regularly to proactively manage risk, improve tree health, physical structure and to provide nominal clearances for pathways, roads, buildings and other essential infrastructure. Trees may be pruned or removed as a result of this inspection. All pruning shall be undertaken to Australian Standards (*AS4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees*).

Council maintains up to date and relevant information on trees on Council owned and managed land to facilitate decision making, prioritise resources and to maintain accurate historical data. Furthermore, this database is used to assist the Council in assessing claims for damages against Council owned trees.



5. Community consultation, education and engagement

Frankston City Council encourages consultation and communication with residents about planting, maintenance, removal and protection of trees within local areas and residential neighbourhoods. Up to date and relevant information resources on Council’s Urban Forest, including fact sheets, maintenance programs and community activities will be provided on Council’s website, social media, newsletters and local papers.

Council supports community planting days and tree giveaways through various events and programs. Where public trees are proposed to be removed for development purposes, adjoining residents will be notified and given the opportunity to make submissions. Submissions and objections will be considered as part of the decision making process.

Council may consider requests from the community for tree plantings in nature strips or open spaces and may allocate these sites to the following planting season where appropriate. Similarly, customer requests for pruning or removal of trees will be carefully assessed and considered within a timely manner.

Council has established good relationships with tree contractors that work within the Municipality to communicate any changes to tree protection controls and ensure compliance. Council actively promotes responsible tree care to the community to ensure private trees make a positive contribution to the Urban Forest.

