



TREE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

2025



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COUNCIL'S TREE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Shellharbour City Council's Tree Management Framework guides how trees are cared for across our city. It aims to balance community safety, environmental sustainability, habitat protection and appropriate urban design. Trees play an essential role in keeping neighbourhoods cool, supporting wildlife, improving air quality, reducing stormwater runoff and making our city more attractive and liveable.

The maintenance of trees on private property is the responsibility of the landowner. In most cases, pruning or removing a tree on private land requires Council consent through a **Vegetation Removal Application (VRA)**. These guidelines explain when approval is needed and how residents can help protect Shellharbour's natural environment while managing trees safely and responsibly.

These guidelines do not apply to tree works approved by a Development Consent.



Council Staff

WHEN A VRA IS REQUIRED

Council will only issue approval for works on a Declared tree, such as pruning of branches or removal, if the tree has been assessed as dead, dying, dangerous or requires remedial pruning.

Vegetation is considered Declared if it meets ANY of the following criteria:

- 5 metres or taller
- Trunk diameter 30cm or more at ground level
- Contains hollows actively used by wildlife for shelter, roosting or nesting.
- Required to be retained by development consent
- Heritage listed or in a heritage conservation area
- A threatened species or located in threatened species habitat

In certain circumstances tree works will be allowed to provide more flexibility to landowners to manage trees on their land.

The Criteria includes:

- Any tree within 3 meters of an approved habitable dwelling, measured from the wall to the trunk centre at ground level. (Excludes other non-habitable structures e.g. sheds, decks)
Except:
 - » The tree is not in a heritage item or in a heritage area;
 - » Where the trees are required to be retained by development consent;
 - » Not a threatened species
- Any Exempt Species Listed in Council's Development Control Plan that has a trunk diameter greater than 30cm at ground level

WHEN A VRA IS NOT REQUIRED

Some trees are small or low-risk and can be removed or pruned without approval. These rules help make simple maintenance easier while still protecting valuable vegetation.

- This will apply where the tree does not meet the requirement for a VRA to be submitted
- It is listed on the DCP Exempt Species List with a trunk diameter at ground level less than 30cm.
- Are a noxious weed under the Biosecurity Act 2015
- Removal of dead branches attached to trees.
- Works carried out by SES, RFS or other emergency authorities
- Works required by other legislation (e.g. Rural Fire Act and Roads Act)

Important: Trees over 30cm trunk diameter are not exempt.

Residents should take photos before removing any exempt tree.

What cannot be approved?

Council cannot approve tree pruning or removal for:

- Improving or restoring views
- Leaf, fruit or seed drop, or debris in gutters
- Minor root uplift or movement in lawns or paving
- Shading of lawns, gardens or outdoor areas
- Minor interference with private structures

HOW COUNCIL ASSESSES A VRA

When you apply for tree work, Council looks at a range of factors to make sure the decision balances safety, environment and amenity. This helps ensure every application is treated fairly and consistently.

These factors for consideration include:

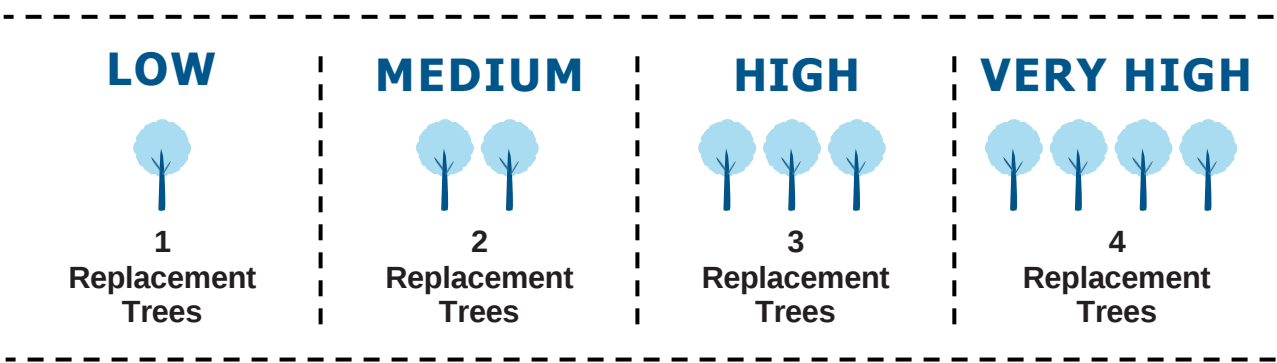
- **Health** – condition, pests, disease
- **Structure** and safety – likelihood of failure
- **Habitat value** – hollows, nesting, wildlife use
- **Amenity** – shade, appearance, contribution to the area
- **Location** – proximity to structures, visibility, risks

Arborist reports, site inspections and recognised assessment methods may be used.

REPLACEMENT PLANTING & OFFSETS

If a tree is approved for removal, you may need to plant new ones on your property or pay an offset fee for Council to plant trees on public land. This helps maintain the city’s tree canopy and preserve shade, habitat and character.

OFFSET RATIOS



If Residents choose the plant on their land, they must:

- Plant replacements within the timeframe set in the permit
- Select suitable species
- Ensure the new trees establish successfully

Council may inspect replacement plantings.



WHAT YOU NEED FOR A VRA

Providing the right information up front helps Council assess your application quickly. Clear photos and supporting documents help show exactly what is happening with the tree.

VRA Application Requirements

To avoid delays, include the following with your application:

- Clear photos of the whole tree
- Close-up photos of issues (cracks, leaning, fungus, dead limbs)
- Arborist report if requested
- Site plan showing proposed replacement planting
- Shade analysis if claiming solar impact. Solar access is not an acceptable reason for removal of a tree however minor pruning may be considered if it does not adversely affect the tree.

Council aims to assess applications within 30 working days. Approvals are valid for two years.

PERMIT CONDITIONS, PENALTIES & COMPLIANCE

If your application is approved, you must follow all permit conditions. This keeps people safe, protects the environment and ensures works meet recognised standards.

This includes:

- Pruning/removing must be done by an AQF Level 3 arborist
- Only approved works may be completed
- Replacement planting must be carried out as specified or payment of levy
- Tree roots must not be cut or disturbed without approval

Penalties for unauthorised works may include:

- Fines
- Remediation orders

NEIGHBOUR TREE DISPUTES

Most tree issues between neighbours are private matters best solved through discussion or mediation.

Residents should:

- Discuss the issue with their neighbour
- Consider mediation
- Seek legal advice if needed



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