

ELECTRIC LINE CLEARANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN **2016**

**ELECTRIC LINE CLEARANCE
MANAGEMENT**

PLAN SUBMITTED BY:

WODONGA CITY COUNCIL

VERSION 3

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Before 31 March in each year, a responsible person must ensure that a management plan relating to compliance with the Code for the next financial year is prepared.

The following sections are as per Regulation 9 of the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010.

a) Name, address and telephone number of the responsible person

Name: City of Wodonga

Address: P O Box 923, Wodonga, Victoria, 3690

Telephone Number: 02 6022 9300

Facsimile Number: 02 6022 9322

Name of Chief Executive Officer: Patience Harrington

b) Name, position, address and telephone number of the individual who was responsible for the preparation of the management plan.

Name: Michael Power

Position: Team Leader of Gardens

Address: P O Box 923, Wodonga, Victoria, 3690

Telephone No.: 02 6022 9377

Facsimile No.: 02 6022 9322

Email Address: mpower@wodonga.vic.gov.au

- c) Name, position, address and telephone number of the persons who are responsible for carrying out the management plan.

Name: Michael Power

Position: Parks Coordinator

Address: P O Box 923, Wodonga, Victoria, 3690

Telephone No.: 02 6022 9377

Email Address: mpower@wodonga.vic.gov.au

- d) The telephone number of a person who can be contacted in an emergency that requires clearance of an electric line that the responsible person is required to keep clear of trees.

Name: Michael Power

Emergency Telephone No.: 0439 312 736

Name: Brad O'Grady

Emergency Telephone No.: 0466 531 488

e) The objectives of the management plan,

The following are identified as the key objectives of this plan in fulfilling Council's duties set out in the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010 (the Code).

- Public Safety;
- Compliance with the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010;
- Management of vegetation to maximize the amenity value of the Council's trees;
- Improve the standard of Council's street tree stock;
- Protection of areas of important vegetation which may be deemed as such on the basis of those areas listed in a planning scheme to be of ecological, historical or aesthetic significance or trees of cultural or environmental significance and habitat of rare and endangered species;
- Minimize the adverse effects of street trees on residents, their properties and infrastructure services;
- Provision of a safe workplace for employees and contractors; and
- Community satisfaction with the manner in which the necessary works are carried out.

Council is committed to ensuring that interactions between street trees and electric lines is minimized and that reliable power supply to Wodonga's residents, visitors, industry and the fire safety of the town is not compromised by street tree electric line interactions.

- f) The land to which the management plan applies by the inclusion of a map;

The declared area for which the management plan applies includes the City of Wodonga. Maps of Wodonga Council's Declared Area are detailed in Appendix 1.

- g) The location of areas containing trees which may need to be cut or removed to ensure compliance with the Code and that are

i native

ii listed in the planning scheme to be of ecological, historical or aesthetically significant; or

iii trees of cultural or environmental significance.

There are no native trees located within the declared area of Wodonga within the vicinity of power lines that require pruning or clearing to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice.

There are no known trees of environmental or ecological significance listed in Councils declared areas.

There are no known trees of habitat significance for rare or endangered species listed in Councils declared areas.

(refer to section h) Habitat trees.

- h) The means which the responsible person is required to use to identify a tree specified in paragraph (g);

Areas of historical, cultural and aesthetical importance have not been identified throughout Wodonga. Council plans to conduct a study of significant trees in the future, at this time it would be expected that the only significant trees would be in parks and reserves, not in streets.

- **Tree age: All trees planted prior to 1960 are considered to be of significance.**
- **Tree size: All large trees, either in height or spread, are considered to be of significance.**

There are no known trees of environmental or ecological significance listed in Councils declared areas within the vicinity of power lines that require pruning or clearing to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice. Where these are identified in the future, all maps and information available to the Councils will be used to monitor these areas to ensure that minimal impact is made in the event of works being required.

All pruning will take place in accordance with AS4373, and where practicable, pruning may be undertaken using elevated work platforms or other similar methods in an effort to minimize overall site damage. Council will as far as practicable, restrict cutting or removal of native trees or of cultural or environmental significance to the minimum extent necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of the code, the schedule to the code or to make an unsafe situation safe.

Habitat Trees

No habitat trees for rare or endangered species are known to exist in the area to which the management plan applies. Where these are identified the following process will be followed: Where the Council intends to cut or remove a tree that has been identified as habitat for fauna listed as a) threatened in accordance with section 10 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 or b) listed in the Threatened Vertebrate Fauna List with a conservation status in Victoria of "venerable", "endangered" or "critically endangered", the Council will undertake cutting or removal of the tree outside of the breeding season for that species.

Where it is not practicable to undertake cutting or removal of the tree outside of the breeding season for that species, translocation of the fauna will be undertaken wherever practicable. All records will be filed at the Council Office and kept for a minimum of 5 years.

i) The Management Procedures that the responsible person is required to adopt to ensure compliance with the Code, which must include details of the methods proposed to be adopted for-

i managing trees; and

ii maintaining the clearance space, required by the Code, between electric lines and trees.

Identification of Work Required

A detailed inspection of trees located within the declared area is conducted annually by Councils nominated Vegetation Management Company in accordance with the Regulations and Councils maintenance program for maintaining the statutory clearance space between vegetation and power lines. Methods undertaken for the clearance of vegetation under power lines will be in accordance with the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010.

In making these evaluations and before deciding on the most appropriate method, due consideration is given to the site's specifics, including:

- the significance of the site as a natural habitat of endangered species of both flora and fauna;
- relocation of the power line from the vegetation evaluating the savings achieved by avoiding the recurrent costs of cutting and assessing the benefits of implementing available and practicable alternative construction methods;
- the significance and public value of the site's aesthetics;
- the impact on the tree's amenity and utility value if subjected to pruning versus removal;
- opportunity to replace with a more suitable species over time
- the environmental impact of proposed works;
- the sites suitability to accept more appropriate species as replacementsDetermining the most appropriate method of actioning the offending vegetation concerned.
- appropriate planning and scheduling;

Identification of Work Required

- identification and quantification of equipment and accredited personnel required;
- funding;
- community and customer consultation;
- All work is carried out in accordance to AS 4373 – 2007 Pruning of amenity Trees.
- **Clearance Cycle**
- Council has determined that electric line clearance pruning will be undertaken on a one year cycle. This period provides the greatest opportunity to maximize the amenity value of its street trees. A qualified, trained and experienced employee has been appointed to undertake annual inspections and provide a report of findings to Councils' Parks coordinator of any pruning requirements to ensure the street trees remain clear of electrical lines. Each inspection shall be fully documented and each street visited shall be identified. The non-conformities shall be noted and a record of the inspection shall be maintained at the Council Office for a minimum of 5 years.

Hazardous bush fire risk areas (HBRA) are audited at the same time of the annual inspection audit, which is conducted during November of each year and any follow up works are carried out during the months of November to January. The contractor is required to prune the street trees so that the clearance space is in accordance with the Regulations. The contractor will report to Council the extent of regrowth observed from each species. The Council will utilise this information to adjust the regrowth dimensions

The following outlines the decision making process with regard to maintaining line clearance.

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- **Clearance Cycle**

Are the branches of the tree going to penetrate the clearance space required according to line voltage and area category of the electric line during the period of the next pruning cycle?

If no:

Inspect the tree prior to next power line pruning cycle to identify unforeseen growth and hazards.

If Yes:

Can the tree be pruned to allow for appropriate clearance and regrowth within the pruning cycle without loss of amenity value or increase to public risk?

If Yes:

Prune tree according to AS-4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Vegetation (as amended)

If No:

Weigh options of a shorter pruning cycle, tree removal, or cable replacement with Aerial Bundled Cable or undergrounding, or other options as set out in the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010. The decision will be based upon costing of the options in terms of tree value, works cost and the surrounding environment of the tree.

Maintaining the Clearance Space

Decision to be made by the Arboriculture Coordinator in consultation with other relevant authorities, with advice being taken from management as to the availability of funds for replacement works based on a clear cost benefit analysis.

All pruning works will be undertaken in accordance with Australian standards and best practice methods. Detailed assessment of the specific pruning requirements of each tree will be assessed and recorded during the initial inspection prior to line clearance works being undertaken. Councils work crew or contractor will be directed to prune each tree in accordance with the work instructions issued by Council. The clearance space provided beyond the minimum recommended clearance space detailed within the Code would be forecasted in accordance with species type, local conditions and pruning frequency. Re growth. Council's arborist is to document and re inspect to maintain problem areas. Council is to develop a Street Tree Strategy to recommend suitable tree replacements under power lines.

Notification and Consultation

Council will ensure adequate notice is given to affected persons in regards to programmed line clearance works. Notification of Council's program of works will be undertaken in accordance with the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulation's 2010. Where Council intends to cut or remove a tree that is on public land or within the boundary of a private property which the responsible person neither occupies nor owns or where the tree is of cultural or environmental significance Council as the responsible person will give notice of the intended cutting or removal to all affected persons in accordance with the regulations.

Notification and Consultation

Prior to the commencement of works notice will be given in writing or by publication in a newspaper circulating generally in the locality of the land in which the tree is to be cut or removed at least 14 days and no more than 60 days before the intended works.

Where the tree intended for cutting or removal is a tree of cultural or environmental significance, notice will include the impact of the cutting or removal of the tree and the actions to be taken to minimize that impact. Where the tree is

within the boundary of a private property, Council will where relevant consult with the occupier or owner of the property. Decisions on removal or “clearing” of trees will be in accordance with Council’s maintaining line clearance decision making process. Decisions on removal or “clearing” of trees will be in accordance with Council’s maintaining line clearance decision making process.

By maintaining the annual inspection and cutting program and allowing for growth for individual species no urgent pruning or clearing should be required. In the case of urgent cutting or removal being required, Council will ensure that the process identified under “Emergency Cutting and Pruning” is followed, in accordance with the requirements of the Code.

Emergency Cutting and Pruning

Council will undertake emergency cutting and pruning activities in the following situations:

- where a tree is identified as encroaching the clearance space due to unanticipated growth;
- as a result of a tree falling or becoming damaged so that it requires cutting or removal to maintain the required clearance space; or
- where a tree has been assessed by a suitably qualified arborist and confirmed to have an imminent likelihood of contacting the electric lines having regard to foreseeable local conditions.

After undertaking emergency cutting or removal in accordance with the regulations Council will as soon as practicable after completion of the works, give notice to all affected persons; occupiers of the land on which the tree was cut or removed and where appropriate, the owner of the land on which the tree was removed.

As part of such works Council will record where and when the cutting or removal was undertaken, identify why the cutting/removal was required and record when the last inspection of the tree occurred. All records will be filed at the Council office and kept for a minimum of 5 years.

Council will undertake its urgent works in accordance with the Regulations and not remove or cut anymore than one meter from the minimum clearance space around the electric line. Ongoing monitoring by visual assessment of the regrowth rates of

Council's trees growing under powerlines will be undertaken to ensure continued compliance.

Assessment of Regrowth Space

The Arborist will observe and record the rate of growth of species under the growing conditions, which prevail in the Municipality and apply these observations when determining the extent and frequency of pruning.

- Canopy refers to trees where the crown exerts apical control over the growth. This is regardless of whether the crown is natural or maintained by regular pruning.
- Growth refers to trees that have not established a stable crown or where major pruning works have been undertaken and the crown control over growth has been disrupted.

Generally the annual growth of a species will be far greater in the *Growth* stage than in the *Canopy* stage. The intention of the pruning program is to establish and maintain street trees with a stable crown

During the inspection of the declared areas, locations adjacent to the clearance space or regrowth space will be also inspected for trees which could become a hazard under adverse weather conditions which could prevail in the area. The contractor will do inspections prior to annual pruning and also inspect any trees which could affect lines.

As part of the annual audit Council will seek to identify vegetation infringing on clearance space within the declared area in addition to any non-conformances. Council will record and program works on re growth trees. Hazards outside the clearance and regrowth spaces that may require assessment and correction will also be identified. Note: For the purpose of this Plan, a hazard tree is a tree that possesses hazardous faults which if not actioned, will negatively impact distribution assets. These trees may possess characteristics such large cavities, severe decay, major cracks etc.

Hazard Trees

The identification of Hazard Trees is determined through Councils inspection program and is actioned under the urgent works provision.

In a situation where Council identifies a tree that is likely to fall onto or otherwise come into contact with an electric line, Council will assess the tree using a suitably qualified arborist who holds the qualification of National Certificate Level IV in Arboriculture, including the "Assess Trees" module, or an equivalent qualification and at least three years of field experience in assessing trees.

In situations where the arborist's assessment confirms the likelihood of contact with the electric line having regard to foreseeable local conditions including weather and ground instability, Council will remove or cut the hazard tree as per the Code. In the event of a hazard tree being identified as a culturally significant, environmentally significant or habitat tree, Council will where possible minimize the impact on the tree or fauna as previously outlined, to ensure compliance with the requirements of the code, the schedule to the code or to make an unsafe situation safe.

Note: For the purpose of this Plan, a hazard tree is a tree that possesses hazardous faults which if not actioned, will negatively impact distribution assets. These trees may possess characteristics such large cavities, severe decay, major cracks etc.

Alternative methods that may be adopted to maintaining the clearance space

Wherever an affected person objects to the pruning or clearing of vegetation near powerlines, Council officers will consult with the affected person to determine alternatives, such as removal and replanting with suitable species and alternate pruning methods. Where an affected person requests the relocation or provision of alternate services such as aerial bundle conductor Council will refer the matter to the distribution company for further consideration.

Alternative methods that may be adopted to maintaining the clearance space

The following alternative methods may be adopted for maintaining clearance if a person objects to the methods proposed by Council:

- Reduced pruning cycle
- Removal/Replacement with suitable species
- Use of Aerial Bundled Cable
- Powerlines to be re-routed
- Undergrounding of powerlines
- Other engineering solutions

Dispute Resolution

For the purposes of this plan a dispute is a situation where the normal processes of consultation and negotiation relating to trees affected by powerlines fail to provide a satisfactory result. If a dispute arises between the responsible person for carrying out the plan and a member of the public, Council will initiate its internal dispute resolution procedure. If the dispute is not resolved by this method the dispute will be referred in writing to the Energy & Water Ombudsman (Victoria Ltd) or an alternative dispute resolution entity. All disputes are directed to the Parks coordinator, failure to resolve with refer the dispute to the Parks Manager. Further resolution sought will be directed to Council Executive.

A description of the measures that must be used to assess the performance of the responsible person under the Management Plan

The following list sets out the matters to be measured:

- The number of trees found in breach of the Code during the annual survey.
- A comparison of the number of trees cleared that meet versus do not meet the Code.
- The number of trees cleared to each pruning cycle and the average pruning cycle.
 - The number of pruned trees found to be below AS 4373-2007.
 - The number of customer requests for electric line clearance pruning.
 - The number of customer complaints
- The number of business cases developed for alternative approaches to normal pruning, and

Records of the above will be kept at the Council Office for a minimum of 5 years.

Details of the Audit Processes that must be used to determine the responsible person's compliance with the code.

A Council Officer will in conjunction with a contractor representative, conduct scheduled audits of Contractors and work completed, to ensure that all requirements outlined in this Vegetation Management Plan are being met and any non-conformity with the Code is identified and promptly resolve. As part of these audits, the Officer will record matters listed in section (j) above and document and discuss and issues or non conformances at monthly meetings, or as required.

In carrying out the audit special attention shall be paid to saucer or flat top pruned trees where remedial pruning has been undertaken.

Details of the Audit Processes that must be used to determine the responsible person's compliance with the code.

Where remedial action is required it can be carried out by Council staff or the Municipality's contractor, this work shall be dealt with as soon as possible. Where assistance is required by others such as the distribution company, then a consultation process shall be used to assist in attending to the non-compliance as soon as possible.

Following investigation of the non-compliance and the establishment of the cause, the importance of compliance with the management plan and the code will be drawn to the attention of the persons concerned.

- On the first occasion they will be given verbal instruction and the incident recorded on file.
- If a second occasion occurs the notification shall be in writing, and the incident recorded on file.
- After a third occasion, the training program will be reviewed and more serious action considered if it is the same offender.

The qualifications and experience that the responsible person must require of the persons who are to carry out cutting or removal of trees.

The Council shall ensure that all trees are pruned according to AS 4373 – 2007 Pruning of amenity Trees as a minimum standard where possible. They shall further ensure that all contractors and employees are appropriately qualified, experienced and trained and holding appropriate certificates for both themselves and their equipment that legally entitles them to undertake the work. A record of the sighting of these documents shall be kept by the Council and shall be updated annually.

The qualifications required by Council are identified below and must include the satisfactory completion of an ESV approved training course in tree clearing, specifically a current Limits of Approach (Electrical Systems Identification and Power line Clearance Distances, ESI Cert 2) qualification or equivalent.

All contractors engaged by Council are required to meet these minimum qualification and training conditions and must participate in a pre-commencement of works induction. Contractors or employees engaged to undertake tree clearance works are to have completed the following training; specific to their function:

- A First Aid Level 2 certificate/CPR
- Elevated Work Platforms (Licence Testing) NUE 657/VBH 027
- Current Limits of Approach (Electrical Systems Identification and Power line Clearance Distances, Module NUE260) qualification
- Chipper competency
- Industry white card
- Chainsaw Level 1 certificate
- Manual Handling Training
- Line Clearance Certificate: Safe approach distances
- ESI Cert 2

Councils Contractors must also follow the minimum distances specified in the Electricity Safety (Installation) Regulations 2009 (specifically outlined in regulation 318 and 319) when undertaking tree clearing works and comply with the limits of approach as outlined in the Blue Book. Notification of affected parties will also be undertaken as per the requirements of the code.

In a situation where a tree that is likely to fall onto or otherwise come into contact with an electric line is identified, this tree will be assessed by a suitably qualified arborist who holds the qualification of National Certificate Level IV in Horticulture and Arboriculture (including the "Assess Trees" module), or an equivalent qualification and at least three years of field experience in assessing trees.

The assessment will take into account foreseeable local conditions and consider the classification of the tree. Based on the arborist assessment and recommendations, the hazard tree will be actioned in compliance with the Code.

The Council shall inspect the work carried out by the contractor throughout the period that active pruning is taking place. A record of these inspections shall be kept, citing any evidence of sub-standard pruning practice and filed at the Council office as per the Code.

(9) Copy of the Electric Line Clearance Plan available to the public.

A copy of the management plan will be available for inspection by the public at Council Parks Depot, Kendall Street, during normal business hours (7.30am to 4.00pm).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Maps of Declared Areas

The land to which the Management Plan applies by the inclusion of a map.

The City of Wodonga is located in the North East of Victoria. The City comprises a geographical area of 434 square kilometers and the population in excess of 35,000.

The declared area that is the responsibility of the City of Wodonga comprises 19.75 square km. The land use for this area is classified mainly as residential with some industry. Approximately 15,000 trees are growing within the road reserve of which approximately 5,000 trees are situated within the vicinity of electric lines. Council's public open space reserves and parks have very few electric lines that traverse through them therefore only very few trees that could impact the power lines.

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Declared area of City of Wodonga

