



**Tree and Vegetation Vandalism Policy**  
Adopted December 2018  
Engineering and Works



# Policy Name

## 1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote a consistent approach to deterring and responding to the deliberate acts of vandalism to trees and vegetation on Council owned or managed land. Council is resolutely opposed to tree and vegetation vandalism on Council owned or managed lands.

This policy:

- outlines the actions that Council may take in response to tree or vegetation vandalism on public land
- provides council staff with guidelines for a consistent and appropriate response to acts of tree or vegetation vandalism.

## 2.0 Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- Promote the value of, and need for, protection of trees and vegetation on Council owned or managed land.
- Provide consistency in Council's deterrence, investigation and response procedures to tree and vegetation vandalism incidents.
- Promote and guide broader community involvement in the prevention of vandalism, and in the investigation and enforcement processes undertaken by Council when responding to such incidents.
- Provide guidance to Council's investigation officers in the legal use of covert surveillance cameras for the purpose of investigating and prosecuting tree and vegetation vandalism offences.

## 3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all trees and vegetation on Council owned or managed land and is to be read in conjunction with Kiama Development Control Plan 2012.

## 4.0 References

- Kiama Development Control Plan 2012
- Plan of Management for Council owned or managed land
- Customer request management system to record and monitor vandalism events

## 5.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this document, tree and vegetation vandalism means the unlawful ringbarking, cutting down, topping, lopping, pruning, removal, injuring, poisoning, burning, mowing over or willfully destroying any tree (regardless of height, trunk diameter or branch spread) or other vegetation on Council owned or managed land.

## 6.0 Policy

### 6.1 Prevention

Council will actively promote community involvement, including local community groups, in the stewardship and maintenance of high risk native vegetation community areas.

Council will, as required, use targeted prevention measures for high risk vandalism areas or areas of high sensitivity. This may include:

- Targeted community education in a localised area
- Increasing Council Officer presence in the area
- Implementing CCTV surveillance

- Monitoring site condition through photographs and aerial photographs
- Engage community groups in the targeted area
- Developing, reviewing and implementing plans of management for high risk or sensitive
- Installation of signage

Where new plantings, or a substantial change to the way existing vegetation is managed on Council owned or managed land is proposed, Council may communicate with the local community the purpose of the plantings or the change to vegetation management and the expected outcomes. Where specific Plans of Management are prepared/reviewed for Council owned or managed land, the public consultation process provides opportunities for the community to obtain feedback on the location and type of proposed vegetation.

## 6.2 Monitoring

Council will record tree/vegetation vandalism incidents and its response in Council's existing customer request management system and will use this system to

- ensure job is delegated to appropriate council officer
- allow an assessment of the cumulative impacts of vandalism
- identify high risk areas
- monitor the effectiveness of rehabilitation
- provide community education as required.

The following details about each tree/vegetation vandalism incident will be recorded as a minimum:

- a) The location of the offence.
- b) The area that has been impacted upon.
- c) Whether the vandalised tree(s)/vegetation was/were planted for amenity reasons, or was/were planted as part of a Landcare site, or was/were planted as part of contracted restoration works, or form(ed) part of a native vegetation community.
- d) Method of vandalism (eg cut, poisoned, burnt or unknown).

Council does not have the resources to monitor all areas within the municipality, therefore monitoring and incident reporting by community members is an integral part to reducing and acting upon acts of vandalism.

## 6.3 Response

### 6.3.1 Low impact incidents

Assessment Score of 2.63-6.25

*Examples may include; unauthorised pruning of small limbs, repeated removal/damage of recently planted seedlings/trees or landscaping/ removal/damage understorey vegetation.*

Response measures -

- Post letters to surrounding properties notifying residents of the vandalism and requesting information
- Investigate and interview relevant persons
- Install small temporary signs (A1) at the site pointing out the damage and requesting information from the public. Signs are to remain until replacement trees have been restored to council's satisfaction

- Rehabilitate the site or re-plant trees at a ratio of up to five replacement trees for every tree damaged
- Issue infringement notices where appropriate
- Implement CCTV to the affected area for large scale and persistent cases of vandalism or in highly sensitive areas.

### 6.3.2 High impact incidents

Assessment Score of 6.25-13.5

*Examples may include; poisoning, ringbarking or removal of mature trees or significant understorey vegetation, removal/damage to large areas of native vegetation, vandalism to highly sensitive areas or the vandalism has a significant visual impact to other residents and the public.*

Response measures -

- Post letters to surrounding properties notifying residents of the vandalism and requesting information
- Investigate and interview relevant persons as they are identified
- Place a notice regarding the vandalism in the local media.
- Erect a large sign (1.2m x 1.2m) on the ground and/or install large banners (3m x 1m) in the tree canopy/ground level. (Signs or banners are to remain until replacement trees have been restored to council's satisfaction)
- Where large trees have died from poisoning the tree will be labelled with a yellow "Poisoned" stencil
- Retain dead trees once safety concerns are satisfied by Council
- Re-plant replacement trees at a ratio of up to five replacement trees for every tree damaged
- Offer an appropriate reward (up to \$500) for information leading to a prosecution in accordance with council's Vandalism Reward Scheme
- Consider legal proceedings if sufficient evidence exists
- Implement CCTV to the affected area for large scale and persistent cases of vandalism or in highly sensitive areas
- Covert surveillance cameras may be used as a response measure for high impact vandalism incidents at the discretion of the General Manager.

## 6.4 Regulation and Enforcement

Council may become aware of tree and vegetation vandalism in a variety of ways, from the proactive actions of Council staff to the receipt of complaints or requests from members of the public. Neighbouring residents and property owners are crucial for providing evidence that may lead to the identification and/or prosecution of vandals.

Complaints or requests alleging tree and vegetation vandalism will be recorded in Council's customer request management system. The request will be investigated and the impact of the incident (either low or high) will be determined using the Tree/Vegetation Vandalism Assessment Form. The assessment will include consideration of the number of trees and/or the size of the area of established understory that is involved, whether the tree(s) is/are part of a heritage item, whether the tree(s)/established understory is/are a part of an endangered ecological community and whether the

location where the vandalism of trees or damaged understorey vegetation has a significant visual impact on other residents and the public.

Penalty infringement notices will be issued by Council for minor offences, while more serious acts of vandalism may result in further action being taken through the Local Court or the Land and Environment Court.

This policy aims to cover responses to the most common and serious forms of vandalism within the local government area however, if the response measures outlined in this policy are not deemed sufficient the General Manager may give approval for alternate measures.

## 7.0 Attachments

### Tree/Vegetation Vandalism Assessment Form

Location:

Officer(s):

Date:

Species:

[0.125 weighting for each criteria]

Criteria	Tree 1	Tree 2
<b>Significance of Tree</b> (2 points for yes and 1 point for no)		
Historical significance		
Commemorative value		
Significant tree (DCP 2012)		
Very large tree (>0.8 dbh)		
Outstanding aesthetic quality		
Horticultural/scientific value		
Age of vegetation (exceptionally old or fine specimen)		
Valuable wildlife corridor or habitat		
Curious growth habit or physical appearance		
Localised population numbers (rare)		
Keystone species		
Contribution to landscape/community amenity		
<b>Total</b>		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>Life Cycle Stage</b>		
3 points for young, 10 points for semi-mature & 42 points for mature		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>Site Profile</b>		
1 point for low, 2 points for average & 3 points for high		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>Safe useful life expectancy</b>		
1 point for short, 2 points for medium and 3 points for long		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>Environmental effects</b> (2 points for yes and 1 point for no)		
Will method cause environmental problems (eg. poison contamination)		
Will method pose geological problems (eg. erosion)		
Will method cause other problem (eg. branches left on-site)		
Habitat Loss (eg. nesting site)		
Can the area be restored		
Does removed tree impact threatened species		
<b>Total</b>		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>Frequency of damage</b>		
1 point for occasionally, 2 for intermittently, 3 for frequently & 4 for constantly		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>Damage</b>		
2 points for major and 1 point for minor		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>Tree value and cost of remediation</b>		
Actual dollar value divided by 1000		
<b>Weighted Total</b>		
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		



# **TREE/VEGETATION VANDALISM SITE**

**THIS AREA HAS BEEN  
SUBJECT TO TREE/  
VEGETATION VANDALISM.  
THIS AREA IS UNDER CCTV  
SURVEILLANCE.**

**HEAVY FINES APPLY**

**Anyone with any information  
regarding this or any other act  
of tree vandalism is encouraged  
to contact Council on 4232 044**

*Example A1 Sign:* For low impact incidents and/or sites under monitoring.

**Note:** Depending on the site and incident, wording may vary to include importance of trees/vegetation (similar to 1.2 x 1.2 m sign) or extent of the site/vandalism.

# TREE/VEGETATION VANDALISM SITE

THIS AREA HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO  
TREE/VEGETATION VANDALISM. THIS  
VEGETATION PROVIDES HABITAT FOR  
NATIVE ANIMALS, EROSION PROTECTION  
AND AMENITY FOR THE COMMUNITY.  
THIS AREA IS UNDER CCTV  
SURVEILLANCE.

## HEAVY FINES APPLY

Please be vigilant and report  
any damage or clearing of  
vegetation to Kiama Municipal  
Council on 4232 0444



**Example 1.2m x 1.2m Sign:** For high impact incidents and/or sites under monitoring.

**Note:** Depending on the site and incident, wording may vary to include further details or extent of the site/vandalism.

# TREE/VEGETATION VANDALISM SITE

THIS AREA HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO TREE/VEGETATION VANDALISM.  
THIS VEGETATION PROVIDES HABITAT FOR NATIVE ANIMALS,  
EROSION PROTECTION AND AMENITY FOR THE COMMUNITY. THIS  
AREA IS UNDER CCTV SURVEILLANCE.

## HEAVY FINES APPLY

Please be vigilant and report any damage or clearing of  
vegetation to Kiama Municipal Council on 4232 0444



**Example 3m x 1m Sign:** For high impact incidents and/or sites under monitoring.

**Note:** Depending on the site and incident, wording may vary to include importance of trees/vegetation (similar to 1.2 x 1.2 m sign) or extent of the site/vandalism.

## 8.0 Document control

<b>Directorate:</b>	Engineering and Works
<b>Policy name:</b>	Tree and Vegetation Vandalism Policy
<b>Date adopted by Council or N/A:</b>	Draft approved for public exhibition
<b>Date endorsed by MANEX:</b>	N/A
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