

Vegetation Vandalism Policy

1 Purpose

This policy establishes commitments regarding responding to vegetation vandalism being experienced throughout the local government area and is supported by an internal Vegetation Vandalism Procedure. This is particularly apparent in the coastal zone where development pressure and conflicts between water views and vegetation has put vegetation on public land under the care, control and management of council at risk.

The Policy applies to public open space and road reserves that are under the care, control and management of Coffs Harbour City Council.

2 Policy

Vegetation vandalism has a significant and cumulative impact on Council assets and the environment. Particular impacts include reduced visual and community amenity, the loss of wind-breaks and erosion control in some locations, and the loss of wildlife habitat.

Such vandalism can have substantial financial and human resource costs for councils. These include the replacement costs of the vegetation, the cost of the investigation, rehabilitation and repair costs, and the cost of implementing potential punitive / deterrence measures.

2.1 Objectives

The objective of this policy is to:

- 1) Promote the value of, and need for, protecting vegetation on community land;
- 2) Provide consistency in deterring, investigating and responding to vegetation vandalism incidents;
- 3) Promote and guide broader community involvement in preventing vandalism, investigation and enforcement actions following vandalism incidents.

2.2 Principles

- 1) Council is committed to reducing/stopping vegetation vandalism
- 2) Council will consistently pursue, identify and prosecute perpetrators of public vegetation;
- 3) Vandalising vegetation on community and public land is a criminal offence;
- 4) The long term protection and management of vegetation on public land (including re-establishment in previously cleared areas) is integral to maintaining the economic, cultural, environmental and social values of the LGA. Vegetation contributes significantly to environmental health, and to human health and wellbeing;
- 5) In the absence of successful prosecutions, Council and the community must carry some responsibility for the prevention of further damage and the rehabilitation of damaged areas;
- 6) Community education is a key mechanism to promote the protection.

3 Definitions

Vegetation Vandalism: the unlawful destruction, damage or injury to vegetation on public open space and road reserves. Examples include poisoning, mowing, pruning, removal and ringbarking.

4 Key Responsibilities

<i>Position</i>	<i>Directorate</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Mayor	Council	To Lead councillors in their understanding of and compliance with, this policy.
General Manager	Executive	To lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and associated procedure.
Directors	All Directorates	To communicate, implement and comply with this policy and associated procedure.
Council Leaders	All Directorates	To implement this policy and associated procedure.
Responsible Officer	Sustainable Infrastructure	To implement this Policy and associated procedure
All Council officials	Council	To comply with this policy and associated procedure.

5 References

5.1 Related Legislation, Australian Standards, OLG Circulars or Guideline

- Local Government Act 1993
- Environmental Protection and Assessment Act 1979
- Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995
- Fisheries Management Act 1994
- Pesticides Act 1999
- Coffs Harbour Local Environment Plan 2013

5.2 Related Council policy or procedure

- Vegetation Vandalism Procedure

6 Details of Approval and revision

- **Approval date: 13/07/2017**
- **Responsible Section: Roads and Open Space**
- **Superseded policies/procedures: Tree Vandalism Policy**
- **Next review date: 13/07/2021**

Table of amendments

Amendment	Authoriser	Approval ref	Date