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## **Council strengthens measures against tree vandalism**

Redlands City Council has strengthened the available options for fighting tree vandalism by including new surveillance measures in its revised policy on unlawful damage.

Ratified by Council earlier this month, the revised policy now allows Council's chief executive officer to authorise various forms of surveillance in order to increase the likelihood of successful prosecution of offenders.

Over 100 trees have been damaged in the city over the past five years and Councillors adopted the policy in response to repeated examples of damage to areas that have been revegetated, including areas that have been fenced off for protection.

A report to Council highlighted the success of video surveillance measures in other local government areas, with Sutherland Shire Council in NSW reporting a 96% decrease in serious illegal dumping and a 93% increase in prosecutions over a 12 month period, after installing hidden surveillance in an illegal dumping area.

Video surveillance as one of the surveillance options was also presented as a cost effective response when compared to the costs of revegetating repeatedly damaged areas.

The Council policy now allows a range of strong measure to be adopted to try and limit the amount of tree vandalism, including offering rewards and erecting screening in the place of removed or damaged vegetation to take away any advantage gained from the vandalism.

Mayor Melva Hobson welcomed the policy.

"Hopefully these measures will increase the level of successful prosecution of offenders", she said

"I also encourage the community to take on an active stewardship role in caring for trees in their neighbourhood and reporting damage and offenders."