



Light
Regional
Council

Tree Management Policy

Reference Number:	Section 8 No. 02
Responsible Department:	Infrastructure & Environment
Date of Adoption:	16 July 2002
Current Review Date:	30 August 2022
Resolution Number:	SCM-2022/171
Version Number:	Amendment 4
Applicable Legislation	Local Government Act, 1999 <u>Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016</u>
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Review Frequency:	Biennially

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction to the community on how Council will manage its street and reserve trees to ensure a diverse environment with risks minimised.

2. Scope

The policy covers:

- Programmed street and reserve tree management;
- Street trees planted as part of beautification/streetscape works;
- Reserve trees planted as part of beautification/amenity works;
- Remnant trees in road corridors; and
- All other remnant, significant, or regulated trees.

On Council road reserves, maintained reserves, land or other areas under its general maintenance responsibility.

This policy does not cover trees within private properties or trees not under Council's responsibility.

3. Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to implement consistent guidelines for the management of trees. This will include the maintenance, inspection & assessment, planting and removal of trees. The policy also recognises relevant legislation and the sustainability strategy action plan.

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this Tree Management Policy, a tree is defined as: -

- Any plant that has a height of more than 2.5 metres and/or a branch spread of more than 3 metres, and/or with a trunk diameter greater than 50 cm. (measured 1.3 metres from the ground). (Policy does not apply to tube stock or new saplings).

5. Policy Details

Maintenance of Trees

The allocation of resources by Council for managing trees will determine the extent of implementation of any maintenance programs developed for this purpose. Therefore, the implementation of maintenance programs will be prioritised based on the level of funding, available resources and any risk assessment undertaken on the trees.

Council's tree maintenance programs will aim to:

- Promote long term tree sustainability with health and habitat benefits;
- Promote biodiversity and conservation values where appropriate;
- Manage the level of risk to provide adequate public safety;
- Improve the amenity values provided for the community of all vegetation;
- Ensure the compatibility of proposed and existing trees with local infrastructure and site uses;
- Facilitate safe pedestrian movements on footpaths; and
- Preserve trees under this policy.

Requests for trimming or pruning of trees can be lodged in writing to Council marked to the attention of the General Manager, Infrastructure and Environment. All requests shall be assessed and prioritised for action as part of Council's annual tree trimming program.

Inspection & Assessment

There may be times when a tree concern is brought to Council's attention. Staff will attend to all concerns in a timeframe that aligns with the risk associated with the concern.

Planting of Trees

The selection and management of trees for planting in road reserves will be planned with great care and will have regard to local conditions, safety, and compatibility with existing plantings, and be designed to enhance the character and amenity of the streetscape and rural environment. Species used must come from the approved list of street trees (Appendix A)

New tree plantings will take into account:

- The surrounding vegetation composition and any environmental or aesthetic considerations;
- The capacity for planting a single tree species to develop and achieve a consistent uniform planting (an 'Avenue Effect') with trees having a similar size, shape and look where possible;
- The purpose of the road as well as the type of construction of the road and any impact the trees might have on it, or surrounding structures;

- The impacts the proposed trees may have on any services present, above or below the ground, taking into account Legislative requirements e.g. Sewerage Act 1929, Electricity Act 1996, Road Traffic Act 1961;
- The preference of the adjacent resident with regards to the tree species;
- The type of traffic using the road and potential impacts on road safety;
- The possible impacts on the safety of the public; and
- Any other matters which might be pertinent to the site.

Where Council has committed to significant roadworks within a street as part of its capital program, consideration will be given to a holistic approach for the installation and/or replacement of street trees in accordance with the following guiding principles:

Tree planting guidelines are based on the urban design concept that a strong visual effect can be obtained by using a bold and simple layout without complicated and numerous variations in style and materials. The following tree planting principles have been developed to address the various site conditions found in our streetscapes.

- Symmetrical planting- similar tree species on both sides of the road. This is the preferred layout but is not always possible because of site constraints.
- Asymmetrical planting- different sized species and/or form on either side of the road. This layout is appropriate where powerlines occupy one side of a road, or where a narrow street allows planting on one side only.
- Formal planting - a formal streetscape is created where the roadway forms a grid pattern, usually at right angles to each other. Formal planting should be symmetrical and use a single tree species at regular spacing intervals.
- Informal planting - random placement of trees. Appropriate in some urban road settings where street locations have a direct or visual relationship to a natural environment, such as a river or bushland.
- Single tree species per street - generally a single street tree species is desirable, and should be pursued unless restricted by site constraints. Feature specimen planting may be considered at key intersections, central business zones, pedestrian crossings and the like.

In some situations, where overhead or underground services would limit the growth of the trees, Council may offer a suitable tree to the property owner for planting. These trees shall be planted in a position that is visible from the road and that will not impede any services in the future. The tree will become the responsibility of the property owner.

Council will also develop open space management plans that may incorporate tree planting. Tree planting within these plans will aim to provide a balance of shade and screening while allowing passive surveillance. While recognising the need to maintain adequate open space, Council may consider reserving land for development or treed corridors, linking and extending areas of native vegetation for wildlife, or for other passive recreational pursuits, following

appropriate examination of the circumstances in each case. This process will include a risk management assessment of the project.

In rural areas Council will develop a plan of tree plantings along road corridors to establish vegetated areas. All plantings shall give consideration to future maintenance, roadside hazards, visibility and the clearance envelope that will enable farming equipment to travel without restriction.

All requests for plantings along both township and rural roads shall be directed to the General Manager, Infrastructure & Environment.

Note: This policy does not cover the planting of vegetation by private parties on the Council verge. For further information on this please refer to Council's Verges and Footpaths Guide.

Removal

Council recognises that from time to time it is necessary to trim, alter and in some instances remove trees for safety, risk management or other reasons.

It is Council's policy to retain all trees which are growing on its land except in the following circumstances:

- The tree is considered by Council to be a danger to the public;
- The tree is dead or diseased and offers limited habitat for wildlife;
- The tree has caused or has the reasonable potential to cause damage to Council's assets;
- The tree affects public utilities in a way which requires such harsh pruning that will limit the future development of the tree;
- The tree obstructs the view of oncoming traffic such that sight lines in accordance with Austroads Guidelines cannot be achieved;
- A road is to be widened or re-constructed (or will be in the foreseeable future) and it is not possible to avoid the trees; and
- The tree is on a surveyed fenceline.

In addition to the above Council will also give consideration to removal of trees in the following special circumstance:

- A tree has been identified by a medical practitioner to have a detrimental effect on the physical health of an adjacent resident; and
- There is evidence that the tree roots have caused or are likely to cause significant damage to infrastructure on adjacent private land.

In these instances, Council will remove the tree at its cost and replace in accordance with the "Planting of Trees" section of this Tree Management Policy.

Request for Relocation of Trees

From time to time, trees on the road verge adjacent allotments may be located near a proposed building, driveway or impact the light distribution to solar panels. In these cases it is not uncommon for the landowner to request Council to remove the tree. However, Council will only remove and replace the tree or relocate it if the tree has been recently planted (within two years). Where older trees are requested to be removed or trimmed, a full cost recovery principle will be applied to the landowner. Council will not undertake removals such that a net loss of trees exists.

All requests for relocations shall be directed to the General Manager, Infrastructure & Environment with costs charged to the applicant at the rates shown in Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges (as updated annually).

Responsibility for the care, control and management of trees and shrubs on land under the care, control and management of the Council is vested in the Council.

It is an offence for any person to cut, saw or remove any tree or shrub on any land under the care, control and management of Council and may result in prosecution under the Local Government Act 1999 or Development Act 1993.

7. Review and Re-evaluation

Biennially or as determined by Council.

Policy History

1. Policy adopted at Council meeting 16 July 2002, Minute Reference 14.2.1, Page 2002/290.
2. Policy Amendment 1 adopted at Council meeting 20 August 2002, Minute Reference 14.2.1, Page 2002/326
3. Policy Amendment 2 adopted at Council meeting 27 April 2011, Minute Reference S&P9.4.7/2011, Page 2011/51.
4. Policy Amendment 3 adopted at Council meeting Tuesday 26 May 2015 Minute Reference IC9.5.2/2015, Page 2015/156.
5. Amendment No. 4 adopted by Council on 30 August 2022, Resolution Number SCM-2022/171.