

Council Policy

Council policy title:	Street and Park Tree Management
Council policy ref no:	C/POL/CST/001
Council policy owner:	Director City Strategy
Adopted by:	Bayside City Council
Date adopted:	13 March 2012
Scheduled review:	Every three years commencing 06/2015

(Council Policy is a public statement formally resolved by Council, which clearly states Council's requirements in relation to a particular matter or issue. For Council policy approval process see Section 10 and Appendix 1 of the Policy Handbook.)

1. Policy intent

To provide guidance regarding tree services, the selection and planting of new trees, and the management of the street and park tree populations required to support the Council Plan action 4.1.2 “We will increase the extent of tree canopy of the municipality including the planting of more trees on public land”

2. Objectives

- Objective 1: To set service levels for the maintenance of the street and park tree populations to maximise benefits whilst reducing risks through the greening of public places.
- Objective 2: To protect trees from damage arising from works and activities occurring in streets, parks and on adjacent privately owned land.
- Objective 3: To guide decision making for the removal of street and park trees.
- Objective 4: To guide the selection of species and planting sites for trees in streets and parks.
- Objective 5: To guide decision making regarding valuing and removing trees affected by development.

3. Scope

This policy is applicable to all Council owned and managed street and park trees.

Trees are unique public assets and the largest and most conspicuous living element in urban areas. Trees are also very long-lived and can provide a continuing sense of character and identity to an area. They also contribute significantly to modifying the impacts of living in an urban environment, including reducing runoff into drains, reducing air temperatures, capturing dust particles and pollutants in the canopy, increasing property values, contributing to psychological well being, and providing habitat for local fauna.

Trees are the largest structural component of the ‘green infrastructure’ that, along with the ‘grey’ or built infrastructure, allow us to live in urban settlements. However, trees are living

organisms which respond to their environment as they grow and mature. Ultimately all trees in an urban environment will need to be removed. This can have a dramatic impact on a street or park and must be managed to ensure that the urban amenity and environmental benefits from trees are optimised.

Members of the community can become emotionally engaged with street and park trees. This presents challenges in managing a tree population when the focus is often on an individual tree and its role in a particular site, rather than its place as part of the tree population. Management decisions about individual trees need to be made within the context of the whole population and this needs to be communicated through community engagement processes.

As the density of urban development increases the number of large trees on private land is decreasing, therefore trees on public property are becoming the foundation of our 'urban forest' and the health and sustainability of these trees is becoming increasingly important.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Policy Development	Manager Environmental Sustainability and Open Space
Implementation	Manager Environmental Sustainability and Open Space Environmental Sustainability and Open Space
Evaluation	Environmental Sustainability and Open Space
Reporting	Manager Environmental Sustainability and Open Space
Review	Manager Environmental Sustainability and Open Space

5. Monitoring, evaluation & review

This policy will be monitored by the Environmental Sustainability and Open Space Department through the contract auditing program and customer service request system and these results will be evaluated annually.

The Policy will be regularly reviewed in response to legislative or organizational changes or, as a minimum every three years.

A report of tree planting, removals and pruning will be published annually on the Council website.

Policy statement

Objective 1: Service levels for maintenance of trees

Street and park trees are maintained to reduce risk, maintain physical clearances around the tree, minimise nuisance and to establish strong healthy trees for the future. There are approximately 60,000 trees in parks and streets, including trees in bushlands and plantations.

The following services are provided for trees; periodic inspection; power line clearance; canopy clearance over roads and footpaths, deadwood removal; watering of significant or establishing trees, structural and formative pruning and regular monitoring of high risk trees. These services are provided as either 'planned' maintenance on a predetermined cycle or 'unplanned' maintenance in response to resident requests and changes in tree condition, for example branches lost in a storm.



All maintenance is carried out in accordance with recognised industry best practice for the care of trees and to meet all legislative requirements. Every pruning cut causes damage to the tree and can make the tree more vulnerable to limb failure. Therefore pruning of trees is kept to a minimum and lopping will not be carried out under any circumstances.

To maintain an aesthetically pleasing and sustainable tree population Council will review pruning frequencies regularly and increase the frequency when required.

The Community Engagement Framework and the Community Engagement for Park and Street Tree Works Procedure will guide interactions with residents.

Objective 2: Protection of trees.

Trees are valuable community assets that take many years to establish and mature. While all trees will need to be replaced at some time, unplanned removal as a result of accidental damage needs to be avoided. The protection of trees is therefore important because the amenity of a tree cannot be quickly replaced.

Trees need to be protected from:

- Damage to the trunk, branches and roots
- Changes in soil condition (e.g. compaction)
- Illegal removal (e.g. to create a view)

Trees will be protected by:

- Controls
 - Policy
 - Asset protection bonds.
 - Planning permit conditions.
 - Planning Overlays.
- Enforcement
 - Local Law
 - Planning and Environment Act.
 - Local Government Act
- Education
 - Web pages.
 - Pamphlets and guidelines.
 - Education programs.

Objective 3: Service levels for the removal of trees.

In a population of trees there should always be a mixture of age groups to ensure the sustainability of the population over the long term. In streets and public parks there are limited places to plant trees and achieving a sustainable, unevenly aged population will require some trees to be removed each year to make space for new trees to be planted. This will include dead or dying trees and those that have been damaged and become unsafe, but it may also include trees creating a high level of nuisance.

Street and park trees are removed when:

- Removal is the only option to mitigate a high or extreme risk identified by a Council arborist using the Risk Assessment Guide;

- The tree is dead or in decline with 80% or greater canopy loss (may be retained for habitat if it is safe to do so);
- The tree is causing damage to utilities such as water mains and there is no other option to resolve the issue and maintain the supply of water and power, etc;
- The tree is causing damage to infrastructure or private property and there is no reasonable option to otherwise resolve the issue (e.g. the cost of repairs outweighs the amenity benefits provided by the tree as valued using the 'Tree amenity valuation' method)
- Where a medical certificate is provided from a specialist in the relevant field to certify that a specific tree is causing a specific allergenic problem for a resident that significantly diminishes the quality of life that person enjoys and there is no other way of managing the problem; or
- The tree is affected by private development and has met all the criteria outlined in the Street and Park Tree Removal for Development procedure.

It is appropriate to expect that some degree of maintenance will be required in order to appreciate and retain the aesthetic and environmental benefits of having trees in an urban environment. In particular, it is reasonable to expect people living in such an environment might need to clean the gutters and the surrounds of their houses on a regular basis. The dropping of leaves, flowers, fruit, seeds or small elements of deadwood by urban trees will not provide the basis for ordering removal of a street tree.

Sometimes there are whole streets where the trees are identified by a Council Arborist as in decline or inappropriate for the location. In these cases the removal of trees may be required to facilitate renewal of the streetscape. These works will be prioritised and no more than 5% of streets in one neighbourhood will be upgraded in one year.

The Community Engagement Framework and the Community Engagement for Park and Street Tree Works Procedure will guide interactions with residents.

Objective 4: Selection of planting sites and species.

Council aims to have 100% of suitable sites planted with a tree. Due to the time lapse between the attrition of a tree and its replacement a minimum of 95% of sites stocked will be acceptable.

A suitable site is one where:

- The tree has adequate room to grow without causing unmanageable conflicts with street infrastructure or private property;
- The tree can be maintained to meet statutory requirements, including near roads and electricity lines; and.
- Maintenance of the tree is possible within available resources in order to retain it in the landscape.

Council selects trees for street and park planting that will suit the environmental conditions of the site, the design objectives of the landscape and the character of the neighbourhood. Some streets may have a specific landscape design; otherwise trees are selected and planted to perpetuate the existing landscape scheme in the street.

To select species, planting sites are evaluated and tree species rated according to specified criteria in the Tree Selection procedure. These criteria include:

- Management requirements, such as pruning tolerance;
- Site conditions, such as environmental and climatic impacts;
- Community expectation, such as whether the tree is indigenous, Australian native or exotic; and
- Site specific factors, such as proximity to bushland reserves or wildlife corridors.

To enhance the environmental benefits that trees provide the largest species appropriate for each site will be chosen.

The Bayside community values the environmental benefits of its landscapes highly and in certain areas of the city, particularly in the southern end, there is a strong focus on indigenous and native plant communities. To reinforce these plant communities a minimum of 80% of trees planted in the VPO3 area will be indigenous to the Bayside area, no trees inimical to bushland reservations will be planted within 15 metres of the reserve on public land and planting selection will consider any living links initiatives.

Residents are not permitted to plant trees in the nature strip. If trees are planted by anyone other than Council they may be removed.

The Community Engagement Framework and the Community Engagement for Park and Street Tree Works Procedure will guide interactions with residents.

Objective 5: Removing trees affected by development.

Bayside requires new developments to consider council owned or managed trees and adjust designs accordingly.

Street and park trees affected by development and adjacent land will be removed provided the Manager Environmental Sustainability and Open Space determines that they meet all the following criteria in the Street and Park Tree Removal to Facilitate Development Procedure:

- The tree has a Safe Useful Life Expectancy (SULE) of less than 5 years; and
- The tree has a value of less than \$30,000 calculated using the Tree Amenity Valuation Procedure; and
- It will be impractical to incorporate the tree into the design of the development; and
- The applicant agrees to pay the cost of removing the tree/s; and
- The applicant agrees to pay planting costs for replacement tree/s (including any applicable Tree Gain); and
- The applicant agrees to pay compensation for loss of amenity in the amount of the current value of the tree

If the tree does not meet these criteria but is valued at less than \$5,000 a process is in place to allow review of the decision.

If the removal of a street or park tree is approved to facilitate development applicants are required to compensate the community for the loss in amenity and the costs involved with of replacing the amenity prior to the removal. All money collected as compensation for street or park tree removals will be spent on improving the amenity of the Bayside tree population.



6. Related documents

Policies	Tree Vandalism Reward Policy
Strategies/plans	Electric Line Clearance Management Plan (annual)
Procedures	Street and Park Tree Removal to Facilitate Development Tree Amenity Valuation Community Engagement for Park and Street Tree Works Street Tree Selection
Guidelines	Tree Planting Guideline Tree Pruning Guideline Working near Council Trees
Planning Overlays	Vegetation Protection Overlay 3
Local laws	Local Law

7. Definitions & Abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Canopy clearance	To prune a trees canopy to allow clear access and site lines for pedestrians and vehicles over roads and footpaths.
Formative pruning	To prune a tree when juvenile to encourage good form and eliminate structural defects
Lopping	The indiscriminate cutting of branches or stems between branch unions or internodes resulting in decay and structurally weak branch development
Planned maintenance	The periodic inspection and pruning (when required) of every street and park tree in Bayside
Powerline clearance	To pruning of branches away from powerlines to a distance specified by the Electric Line Clearance Regulations.
Canopy clearance	To prune a tree's canopy to allow clear access and site lines for pedestrians and vehicles over roads and footpaths.
Stocking rate	The number of the available street planting sites in the municipality that contain a tree.
Structural pruning	To prune a mature tree to rectify a structural fault
Unplanned maintenance	The inspection and pruning (where required) in response to environmental changes such as storm damage or excessive growth.
Pollarding	The targeted cutting back of the upper branches of a tree to promote regrowth that is then pruned as required to maintain the reduced size of the tree.

Please note: This policy is current as at the date of approval. Refer to Council's website (www.bayside.vic.gov.au) or staff intranet to ensure this is the latest version.

