



Tree Management Policy

2013



city of villages

Tree Management Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- establish the City of Sydney's commitment and future strategic direction for tree planting, protection, management and maintenance of its urban forest
- address tree management and maintenance issues faced by the City of Sydney
- provide a framework for decision making, documentation and standardised processes to ensure consistency in the management of the City of Sydney's urban forest.

The Tree Management Policy is one of a suite of documents used to proactively manage trees in the City of Sydney. The relationship between the tree management documents is illustrated in **Appendix A**.

Scope

This Policy applies to all trees located within the City of Sydney local government area (LGA).

Policy context

The City of Sydney covers an area of approximately 26km². Land use is diverse and ranges from the Central Business District, harbour foreshore edges, 19th century terrace housing, urban renewal residential areas (such as Green Square and Pyrmont), through to industrial, warehousing and commercial development located in the southern area of the LGA.

Within this intensively developed urban area is a tree canopy that has been reinstated over time. This canopy now contains a variety of tree species of different size, age and level of significance in the landscape.

These trees provide many social, economic and environmental benefits. They beautify and soften streetscapes, provide wildlife habitat and play a significant role in determining the urban character of our city. Trees are critical in the maintenance of a healthy urban environment as they produce oxygen, trap airborne pollutants and absorb carbon dioxide.

While trees play an important role in the urban landscape, it is also recognised that trees of the wrong type, or growing in the wrong place, can create problems and risks that are not reasonable in the urban environment.

Property owners and public authorities have certain obligations with respect to the protection of trees, and responsibilities for any damage or injury associated with the presence, failure or growth of trees.

Tree management in the urban environment is about balancing the various risks against the benefits that trees provide, to ensure the best community outcome.

Policy Objectives

The objectives of the Tree Management Policy are to:

- prioritise the maintenance and protection of the existing tree population
- broaden the emphasis of urban tree management to include urban forestry principles, with trees managed as a collective asset, to maximise the benefits canopy cover provides
- improve the quality and quantity of City of Sydney's canopy cover
- increase species diversity and improve the age spread of the urban forest
- recognise and protect trees considered significant due to heritage, cultural, social and ecological criteria
- increase awareness and educate the community, developers and Council staff on the value of trees in the urban landscape
- enhance the City of Sydney's reputation within the community as a steward and manager of trees.

Strategic Direction

The Tree Management Policy is divided into five key areas:

1. Tree Protection
2. Tree Planting and Selection
3. Tree Replacement and Removal
4. Tree Asset Management
5. Community Consultation and Engagement.

1. Tree Protection

The City of Sydney recognises the social, economic and environmental benefits that the urban forest provides. The protection of trees will therefore be given high priority in all aspects of the City's activities.

Tree Management Controls in the City's Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) provide the legislative tool for the protection of all trees located within the City of Sydney.

The following policy principles will apply to tree protection:

Issue	Policy statement
Tree Management Controls – Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP)	The City of Sydney will regulate tree pruning and tree removal through its Tree Management Controls. The use of assessment criteria by tree management staff will ensure a consistent approach to tree management.
Register of Significant Trees	The City of Sydney will recognise trees that contribute to the environmental, cultural and social character of the city through the Register of Significant Trees. The City will prioritise the retention and protection of these significant trees.
Development Applications	The City of Sydney will ensure that development applications include all necessary information to allow full assessment of potential impacts on trees to be retained and an appropriate standard for planting new trees.
Bonds	The City of Sydney will impose bonds on developers and event organisers to ensure protection of trees to be retained.
Development activities / events	Trees will be protected from construction works and other activities/events that threaten tree health and stability. The Australian Standard for the protection of trees on development sites (AS4970) will be used to achieve consistency in tree protection requirements.
Construction hoardings	The City of Sydney will ensure that construction hoardings are built in such a way to protect trees to be retained; trees will not be permitted to be removed for the provision of construction hoardings. The Australian Standard for the protection of trees on development sites (AS4970) will be used to achieve consistency in tree protection requirements.
Overhead powerlines/utilities	The City of Sydney will pursue measures to relocate infrastructure away from trees, to reduce the need for excessive canopy pruning, reduce root damage, or to increase new opportunities for tree planting.
Unauthorised Works / Poisoned trees	The City of Sydney will notify the community of illegal works and undertake site specific responses following tree poisoning or illegal tree removal. The City of Sydney will investigate unauthorised (tree pruning, poisoning/removal) and pursue enforcement action where appropriate in accordance with the Enforcement Policy.

2. Tree Planting and Species Selection

The City of Sydney will proactively identify opportunities to increase canopy cover across the local government area. Improving the quality of this canopy cover will be achieved through planting “the right tree in the right location”. This includes stock quality, installation, selection criteria and species diversity.

The City’s urban forest is a mix of native, exotic, evergreen and deciduous trees. The City of Sydney recognises that low species diversity has the potential to create an unstable ecosystem that is vulnerable to pest and disease attack.

The following policy principles will apply to tree planting and species selection:

Issue	Policy statement
Street Tree Master Plan (STMP)	The City of Sydney will plant street trees in accordance with the STMP to ensure the coordinated development of streetscapes that are both attractive and coordinated.
Park trees	The City of Sydney will recognise, plan and respond to park tree planting opportunities in accordance with the park specific Tree Management Plans or through park upgrades.
Development Applications	Applicable Development Applications will be assessed using the DCP canopy cover requirements, to provide 15% canopy cover in private property, to guide and achieve long-term canopy cover requirements. Assessments will also ensure tree species selection is compatible with the desired landscape character for particular precincts or villages and tree planting achieves a consistent high standard throughout the City of Sydney.
Tree locations	The City of Sydney will continue to seek new tree planting opportunities in appropriate locations to maximise canopy cover and deliver ongoing environmental, economic and social benefits.
Tree selection criteria	The City of Sydney will plant the most appropriate tree species based on site suitability, aesthetic, functional and biological attributes, performance and the potential to contribute to landscape character.
Species diversity	The City of Sydney will increase species diversity by ensuring the street and park tree population does not comprise more than 40% for any particular family, 30% for any particular genus and 10% for any species.
Nursery tree stock specification	The City of Sydney will use only quality nursery stock according to latest best practice and standards. All trees supplied will conform to the NATSPEC guide “ <i>Specifying Trees – a guide to assessment of tree quality</i> ”.
Installation details	Standard technical specifications and installation techniques will be used by service providers and developers to ensure successful establishment of newly planted trees throughout the local government area.
Community involvement	The City of Sydney will encourage community involvement in tree planting activities and regularly promote the benefits of trees to the community.

3. Tree Removal and Replacement

Trees like all living things grow, age and eventually die. Whilst tree removal is a “last resort option”, public safety always takes priority.

Selective tree removal and replacement programs, over many years, are vital in managing canopy cover to ensure that the numerous benefits trees provide are sustained for future generations.

The City of Sydney will assess all trees proposed for removal in public and private property and implement tree removal and replacement programs as required.

The following policy principles will apply to tree removal and replacement:

Issue	Policy statement
Assessment	<p>The City of Sydney will use its tree assessment procedures to ensure consistency in the approach to determining tree removal, root pruning, and pruning applications.</p> <p>The retention of significant trees is a priority.</p> <p>Tree removal will not be permitted to facilitate views (including advertising signs), off-street parking, installation of solar panels or to reduce the extent of leaf / flower / fruit drop, or to reduce the impact from any bird / bat / other animal waste or noise.</p>
Emergency situations	<p>Risk to public safety and property will take priority in tree removal decisions in emergency situations.</p>
Poor performing trees	<p>The City of Sydney will remove and replace poorly performing trees to reinvigorate the urban forest.</p>
Weed species	<p>The City of Sydney will undertake the staged removal and replacement of trees classified as noxious or environmental weed species. The impacts to canopy cover will be a key consideration in removing trees as part of this process.</p>
Capital works improvements	<p>The City of Sydney will develop strategies for the installation of new plantings, where feasible, prior to tree removal required for capital work projects.</p>
Age diversity	<p>The City of Sydney will maintain a spread of tree age classes to minimise the impact of tree removals required in close timeframes and / or within specific areas.</p>
Private tree application-appeals and reinspections	<p>Where a private property tree removal application has been refused by the City, applicants can request an internal review by a different City arborist.</p>
Replacement stock	<p>The City of Sydney will ensure the installation of advanced tree stock that conforms to the NATSPEC guide “<i>Specifying Trees – a guide to assessment of tree quality</i>” when tree replacement planting is required.</p>

4. Tree Asset Management

The City of Sydney recognises that trees are a major asset, and play an important role in making Sydney a liveable, attractive and healthy city. Our trees are growing in a harsh urban environment, which requires specialised care and management.

The City of Sydney is committed to a high quality maintenance regime that provides adequate resources for the long-term health of its urban forest.

The following policy principles will apply to tree asset management:

Issue	Policy statement
Tree Management Plans	The City of Sydney will prepare Tree Management Plans for our 19th century parks, other iconic parks and streetscapes. The Plans will provide long term strategies that will guide short term activities to ensure the health and amenity of tree assets.
Tree maintenance	<p>The City of Sydney will ensure that best practise tree management is applied across all street and park trees.</p> <p>Audits of street and park trees will be undertaken on an annual basis to ensure that high quality delivery standards are maintained at all times.</p>
Tree Asset Database	The City of Sydney will maintain a Tree Asset Database for its park and street trees to facilitate decision making, prioritise resources and to maintain accurate historical data.
Risk management / insurance claims	The City of Sydney will proactively manage tree risk management issues. This includes using the Tree Asset Database to limit risk management issues.
Pests and diseases	The City of Sydney will monitor and treat pest and disease issues, using best practice control techniques, as part of the tree maintenance program.
Tree pruning	The City of Sydney will undertake street and park tree pruning to improve tree health, structure and to provide nominal clearances for pathways, roads, buildings and other essential infrastructure. The City will not prune tree/s to facilitate views (including to advertising signs) or to reduce the extent of leaf / flower / fruit drop, or to reduce the impact from bird / bat / other animal waste or noise.
Tree information systems	The City of Sydney will keep abreast of new technology in the field of arboriculture and urban forestry, and incorporate technical tools into management and maintenance techniques where appropriate.

5. Community Consultation and Engagement

The City of Sydney values its community's opinion and will encourage consultation and communication about tree management and the urban forest.

The following policy principles will apply to community consultation and engagement:

Issue	Policy statement
Community notification	<p>The City of Sydney will inform and consult with the community about all street and park tree removal (except where emergency works are required), major tree planting projects and any other specialised projects impacting on its street and park trees.</p> <p>The City of Sydney will provide information, regarding new street trees planted, to the residents located adjacent to the planting.</p> <p>The City of Sydney will notify adjoining property owners of the removal of trees from private property that are listed on the City's Register of Significant Trees.</p>
Community involvement	<p>The City of Sydney will develop programs to encourage community involvement in the ongoing care of its urban forest. This includes the promotion and implementation of the Tree Donation Policy.</p>
Community information	<p>The City of Sydney will increase community knowledge about the benefits of trees and the urban forest through the City's web page, the local media and tree information leaflets.</p>
Neighbouring Trees	<p>The City of Sydney will accept applications for the pruning of a tree located in a neighbouring property, under the Tree Management Controls within the LEP and DCP, however applications for the removal of a tree in a neighbouring property will not be accepted without the tree owners' written consent. The City does not resolve disputes between neighbours.</p>
Resident requests	<p>The City of Sydney will consider and assess resident requests for tree planting in streets, parks and open spaces. Any planting undertaken will be in accordance with the Street Tree Master Plan, Park Tree Management Plans or other relevant Council documentation.</p>

Responsibilities

The City's Arboricultural Services Manager will be responsible for implementation of the Tree Management Policy.

Consultation

The Tree Management Policy was placed on public exhibition from 19 November to 21 December 2012.

References

Laws and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Environmental Plan (LEP)• Development Control Plan (DCP)• The Australian Standard for pruning of amenity trees (AS4373)• The Australian Standard for the protection of trees on development sites (AS4970)• Specifying Trees – a guide to assessment of tree quality (NATSPEC)
Policies and procedures	<p>For implementation guidelines refer to the following strategies, plans and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greening Sydney Plan• Tree Management Controls (LEP and DCP)• Urban Forest Strategy• Park Tree Management Plans• Street Tree Master Plan• Register of Significant Trees• Tree Donation Policy

Approval

The Council approved this policy on 25 February 2013.

Review

Review period	Next review date	TRIM reference
The Director City Operations will review this policy every ten years.	February, 2023	2013/061458

Appendix A: Relationship between Tree Management documents

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK	<p>Tree Management Policy</p> <p>Provides the strategic framework for the management of trees in City of Sydney's urban forest in the following five key policy areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Protection • Tree Planting/ Selection • Tree Asset Management • Tree Replacement/ Removal • Community Consultation & Engagement 	<p>OPERATIONAL PLANS</p> <p>Tree Management Controls</p> <p>Included in the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP).</p> <p>The Tree Management Controls identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the land to which the controls apply • the trees to which the controls apply • the Exemptions • applications • penalties and offences <p>Urban Forest Strategy</p> <p>The Urban Forest Strategy outlines the City's strategic directions and provides guidelines for the development and management of a resilient, healthy and diverse urban forest that will contribute to the future health and well-being of the City and its communities.</p> <p>Street Tree Master Plan</p> <p>The Street Tree Master Plan 2011 provides a guide to the provision and planting of street trees throughout the City of Sydney.</p> <p>Register Of Significant Trees</p> <p>Identifies and recognises the significant trees in the City of Sydney and guides their management to ensure their protection for future generations.</p> <p>Park Tree Management Plans</p> <p>Provide proactive and effective management strategies for the maintenance and conservation of the parks' tree populations and long-term strategies for tree removal and replacement programs.</p> <p>Tree Donation Policy</p> <p>Assists organisations and the community to donate trees to be planted in the City of Sydney's public domain.</p> <p>The policy outlines the framework for planting locations, tree selection, tree maintenance and participation in tree planting.</p>
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