

The City of Sydney Awnings Policy 2000



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This policy was adopted by the City of Sydney on 5 June 2000.

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Introduction

I

Awnings significantly affect the amenity and appearance of streetscapes and the pedestrian environment. Continuous awnings providing weather protection along primary pedestrian routes are required by the Central Sydney Development Control Plan and the Ultimo-Pyrmont Urban Development Plan.

The purpose of this document is to provide simple urban design guidelines to ensure that awnings are well designed, coordinated within blocks and streets, and make a positive contribution to the public domain.

1.1

Area to which Policy applies

The Awnings Policy applies to all development in the area covered by the Central Sydney Development Control Plan and the Ultimo-Pyrmont Urban Development Plan.

1.2

Related policies and instruments

Central Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1996
Central Sydney Development Control Plan 1996
Central Sydney Paving Design Policy
Sydney City Council Street Tree Policy
City of Sydney Outdoor Cafe Policy
Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 26—City West
Ultimo-Pyrmont Urban Development Plan
Ultimo Pyrmont Public Domain Technical Manual

This Awnings Policy supersedes the Awnings Policy 1993 and Draft Awnings Policy 1998

1.3

Background

Awnings mediate between inside and outside, between private and public and between individual buildings and the urban block. They are hybrids of ownership in that they are attached to private buildings yet extend into and over the public domain.



Figure 1 Awnings define and shelter pedestrian space (Castlereagh Street).

Apart from their most obvious function of providing weather and sun protection to pedestrians and building frontages, awnings also contribute significantly to the urban environment. Awnings define and shelter pedestrian space and have been characteristic of shops, cafes, hotels and other buildings reliant on pedestrian interaction from Sydney's earliest days. This is reflected in their historical association with the busiest pedestrian and commercial streets. Awnings also reduce the perceived scale of tall buildings and focus pedestrian views on street frontages and ground level activities.



Figure 2 Awnings on prominent corner buildings reinforce the urban form (Surry Hills).

The City of Sydney has regulated awning design since the 1870s, initially by requiring approval from the City Surveyor. By 1908 Council required awnings to be suspended, to prevent accidents caused by motor vehicles damaging the posts and to remove obstacles from the footpath. Retailers preferred the suspended style because it improved sight lines to window displays, especially from cars. Conventional suspended awnings created a generic appearance and consistent height that unified the various building frontages in busy commercial streets.

Between the 1920s and the 1970s a common suspended awning type developed with the following characteristics:

- > a predominantly horizontal appearance
- > a 600 mm setback from the kerb
- > a flat ceiling
- > a shallowly sloped roof draining towards the building
- > a substantial fascia concealing the sloping roof
- > a flush lining material concealing the structure and streamlining the appearance

Council adopted a standard awning design in the 1950s based on these principles and it is still the most common type of awning in Sydney. In many instances the basic form was subtly articulated and ornamented to suit a particular context or building use.

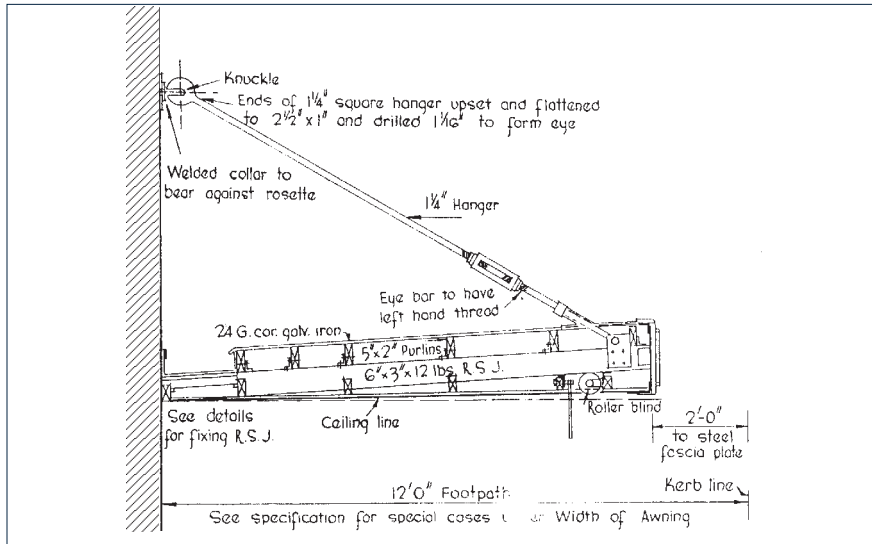


Figure 3 Council's Standard Awning Design from the 1950s.

Since the 1950s the character of Sydney has changed to become a city that also includes large tower buildings and block sized developments. These have led to newer modern interpretations of the traditional awning exploiting glazed 'skylights' and exposed decorative structural framing. The City aims to encourage these new awning design opportunities whilst ensuring that the city as a whole maintains a unity and consistency to awning design beyond individual property boundaries. Section 2 of this policy contains Design Guidelines for new awnings and Section 3 contains General Guidelines.



Figure 4 Contemporary Awning Design at 400 George Street, 1999.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- > to improve pedestrian amenity by providing weather protection to footpaths in appropriate locations
- > to encourage the provision of awnings that have regard to awnings on adjacent buildings and the predominant awning form in that part of the streetscape
- > to encourage awning forms that achieve a high degree of consistency with those of adjacent buildings, that reduce visual clutter in the streetscape and that provide visual continuity to the pedestrian realm
- > to encourage awnings that possess a high quality of architectural design that reflects the architecture of its building while also complementing the streetscape
- > to encourage awning forms that provide good levels of lighting to footpaths and to ground floor spaces within buildings
- > to ensure that the awnings are designed to successfully accommodate utility poles, smartpolesTM, street trees, vehicular movement and pedestrian traffic

Awning Locations

In Central Sydney awnings are to be provided along the nominated streets indicated in Central Sydney DCP 1996 and according to its provisions.

In Ultimo/Pymont awnings are to be provided in the nominated streets and according to the Principles and Controls in the Ultimo/Pymont Urban Development Plan.

Where awnings are required they shall provide shelter from rain throughout the year and from heat and UV radiation during summer.

Awnings are not to be located on buildings with colonnades.

Awning proposals in streets not specified for awnings by the Central Sydney DCP 1996 and the Ultimo/Pymont Urban Development Plan 1999 will be considered subject to urban design and heritage considerations and should comply with all requirements of this Awnings Policy. Matters to be taken into consideration include:

- > predominant activities and building types in the street or area
- > the existence of other awnings and the compatibility of the proposed awning with those existing awnings
- > impact on existing street trees or on the provision of any street trees required by the City of Sydney Street Tree Policy
- > the degree of amenity that will be provided
- > compatibility of the design with the scale and architecture of the host building
- > impacts on the heritage significance of the building and adjacent buildings
- > impact on the potential for future street trees
- > existing colonnades in the building or the block

Form and Context

The City requires a high degree of consistency and continuity to be achieved by awnings. Awnings must complement and unify the streetscape rather than relate only to individual buildings.

The City encourages the provision of two main types of awnings depending upon the context of the building. These are illustrated in the following figures. The choice of awning type must have regard to awnings on adjacent buildings and the predominant awning form in that part of the streetscape where that awning form is consistent with the Policy.

A contemporary awning form is generally appropriate in the following situations:

- > for major developments that occupy a significant length of street frontage within a city block or corner
- > for other sites adjacent to such larger developments having a contemporary awning style

A traditional awning form is generally appropriate in the following situations:

- > adjacent to heritage items that have a traditional awning
- > where the existing streetscape is predominantly composed of traditional awning forms
- > where adjacent buildings have a traditional awning form

Steeply sloped, arched or barrel vaulted awnings are not permitted.

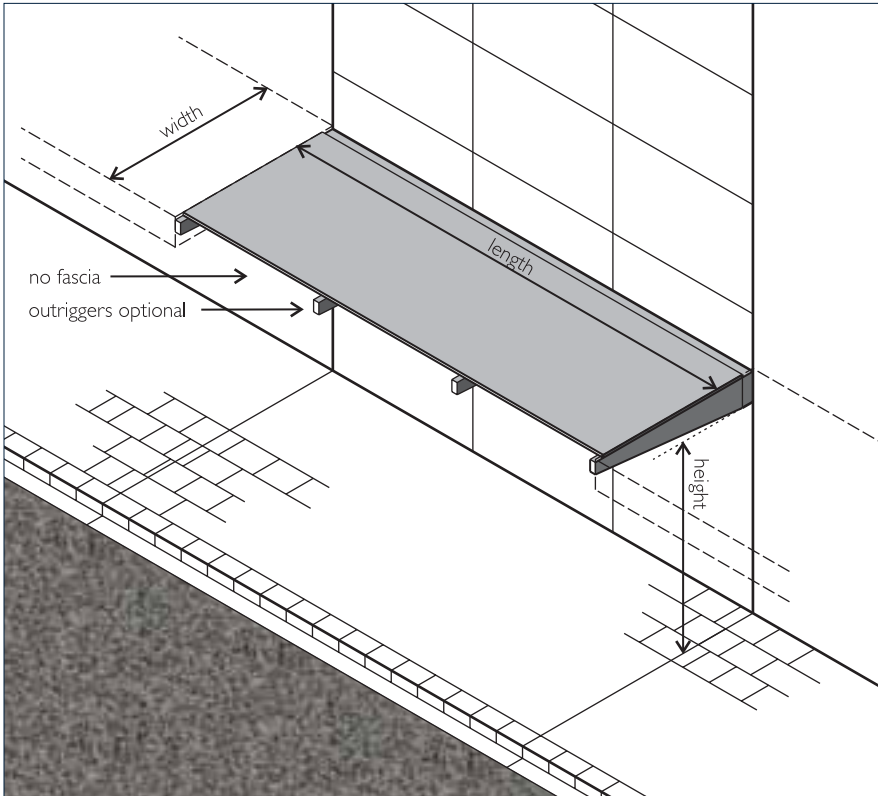


Figure 5 Contemporary awning design

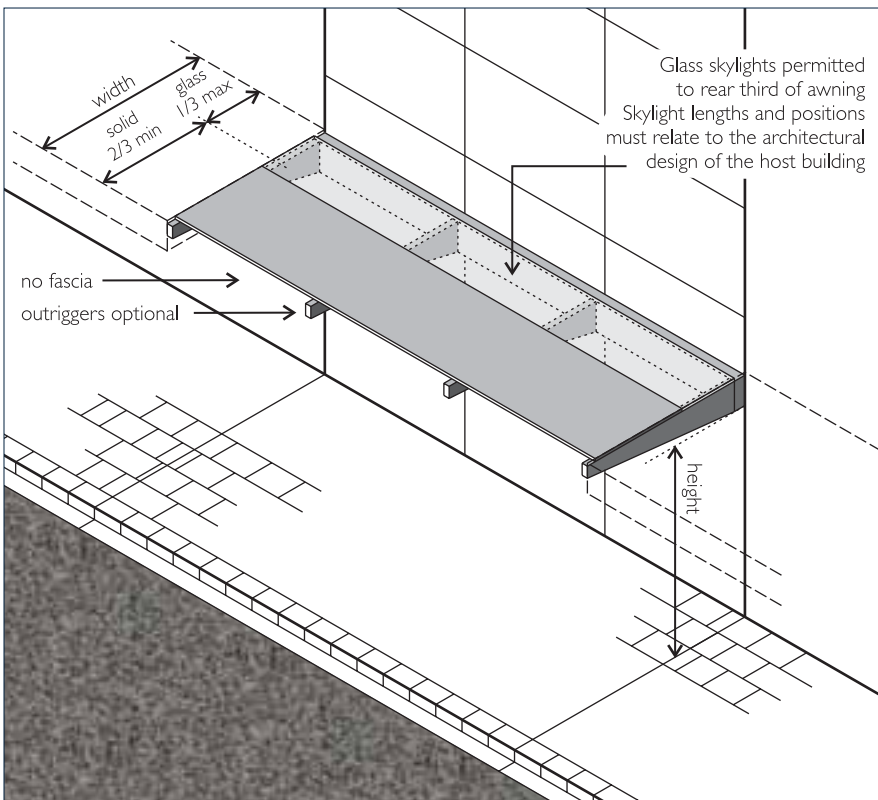


Figure 6 Contemporary awning design with skylights

Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the Contemporary Awning Form encouraged by the City. Refer to Sections 2.4 through 2.8 for height, width and other dimensional requirements.

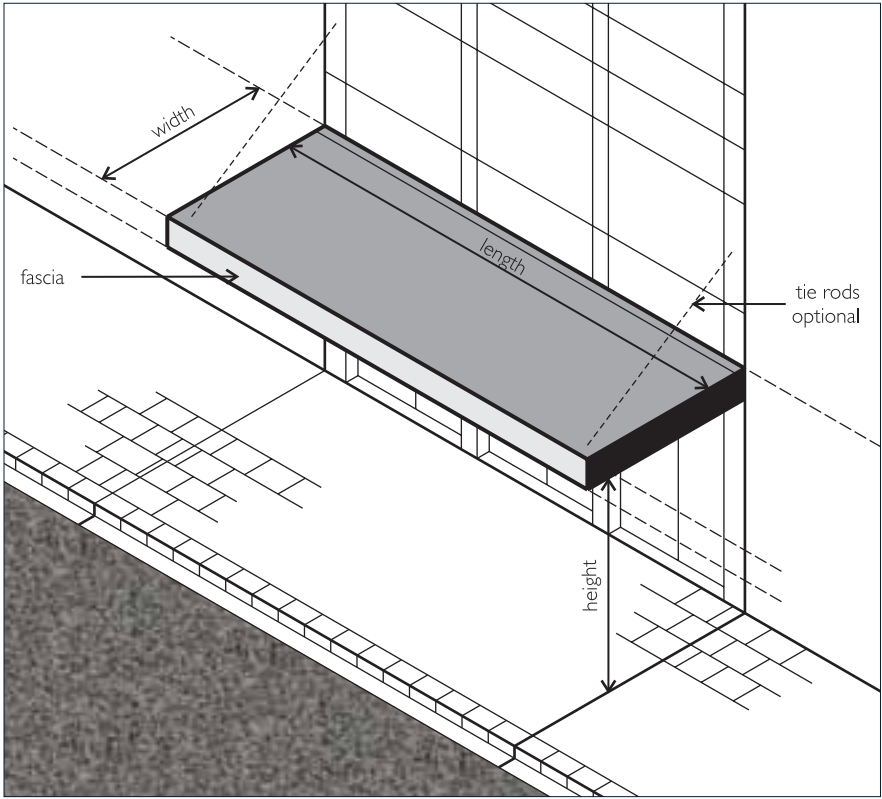


Figure 7 Traditional awning design

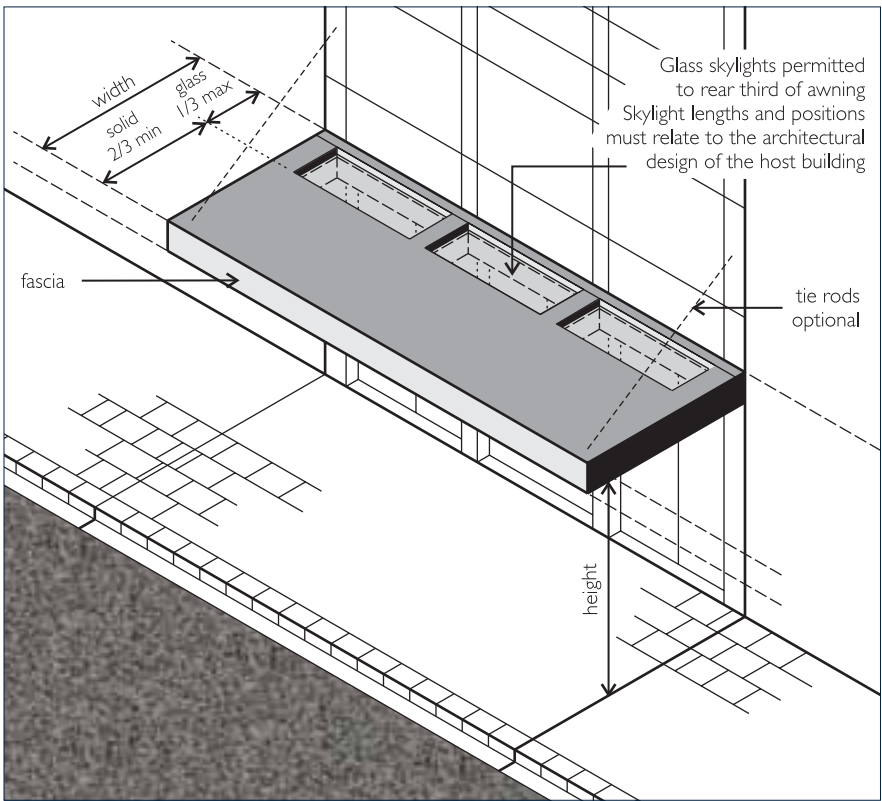


Figure 8 Traditional awning design with skylights

Figure 7 and Figure 8 show the Traditional Awning Form encouraged by the City. Refer to Sections 2.4 through 2.8 for height, width and other dimensional requirements.

Design

Awnings are to form a unified element within the streetscape, respond to the streetscape conditions and complement the architectural style of the host building.



Figure 9 The awning steps with the topography and highlights the corner location (cnr Bridge and George Streets) responding to the streetscape.

New awnings are to integrate with and achieve a high degree of compatibility with existing adjacent awnings where those adjacent awnings are consistent with this Policy. Adjacent awnings are to have a compatible form and finish to ensure visual continuity of awnings between separate buildings and to provide unbroken weather protection. Awnings are to be uncomplicated, regular forms constructed from high quality materials with simple detailing to reduce visual clutter in the streetscape and to provide visual continuity to the pedestrian realm. The view down onto awning roofs is also to be considered and the roofs of awnings are to be simple forms free of clutter and conduiting.



Figure 10 High quality materials with simple, regular forms and detailing are required to reduce visual clutter.

Awnings must possess a high quality of architectural design that reflects the architecture of the host building while also complementing the streetscape. Awnings are seen at very close range and elements should be sized accordingly, well detailed and scaled to human proportions.

Subtle design articulation is encouraged to:

- > modulate long awnings
- > indicate the entrance
- > highlight the building's location within the city grid and/or
- > reflect the architectural expression of the building



Figure 11 Awnings are to be well detailed and scaled to human proportions.

2.4

Height

Awning height is measured from the footpath to the underside of the fascia. On sloping sites, the awning should step down in horizontal steps to follow the slope of the street.

- > the underside of the awning is to be not less than 3200mm above the footpath
- > the majority of the awning ceiling and underside of the fascia is to match those of adjoining awnings and to be between 3200 mm and 4200 mm high
- > steps for design articulation and to accommodate sloping streets are to be a maximum of 700 mm

Awnings with sloping ceilings require special consideration to ensure sufficient integration with adjoining awnings:

2.5**Length**

Awning length is measured across the frontage of the building generally parallel to the kerb:

- > awnings are to extend across the entire building elevation

2.6**Pitch**

Awnings should be predominantly horizontal and flat throughout their length and width:

- > a maximum slope of 10% is to be used for the roofs and the ceilings of awnings
- > awnings are to have roofs that slope towards the building so that gutters are not required at the street edge

2.7**Width**

Awning width is measured between the building and the kerb. Where possible new awnings should match the width of adjacent awnings within the following guidelines:

- > new awnings are to be set back minimum 1000 mm from the face of the kerb to accommodate smartpoles™/utility poles and traffic/parking in the kerbside lane. In cases where traffic signs and signal are located on smartpoles™/utility poles further setbacks may be required (generally no less than 1100mm).
- > where street trees are required, the awning should be set back from the kerb along its entire length by not less than 1500mm to accommodate the trees. In some streets and laneways this will mean that awnings are not appropriate
- > cut out segments in awnings are not acceptable
- > the minimum width of an awning is to be 2000 mm
- > the Local Government Act restricts the width of suspended awnings to 3660 mm and applications for wider awnings require a separate approval from the Director General of Local Government

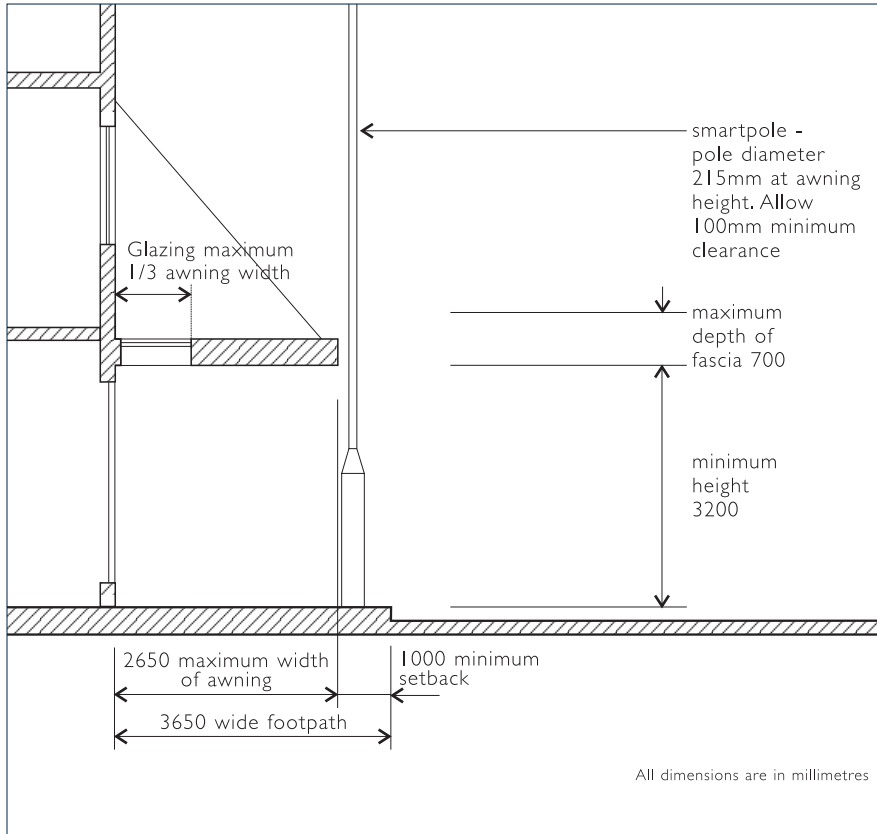


Figure 12 Relationship of awning to typical 3650 mm footpath.

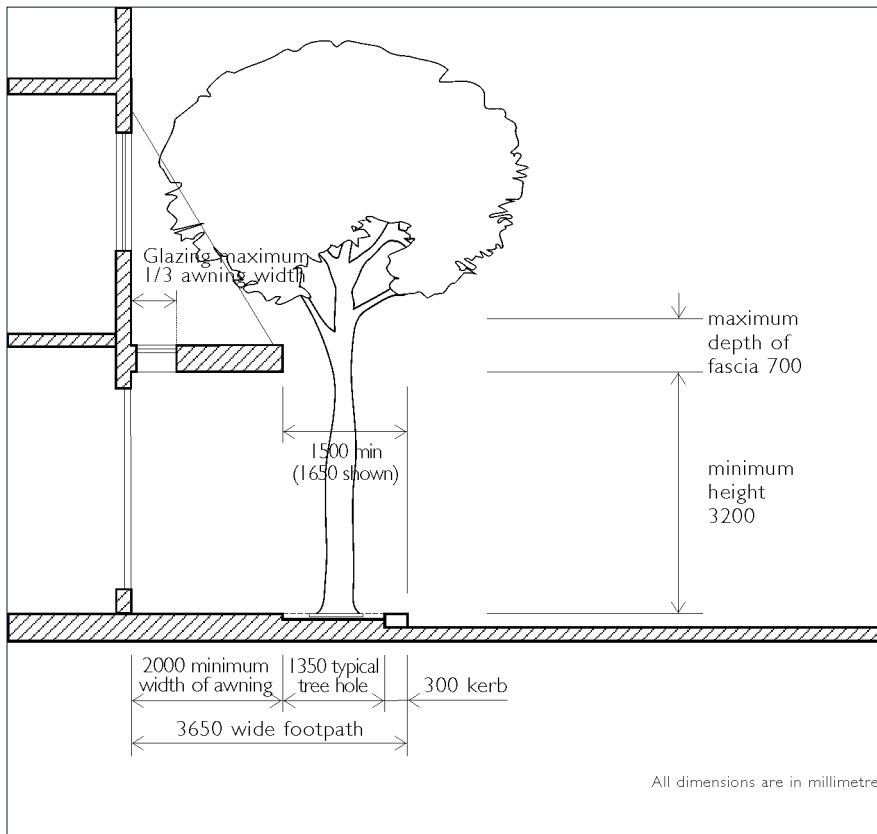


Figure 13 Relationship of trees and awnings in typical 3650mm footpaths.

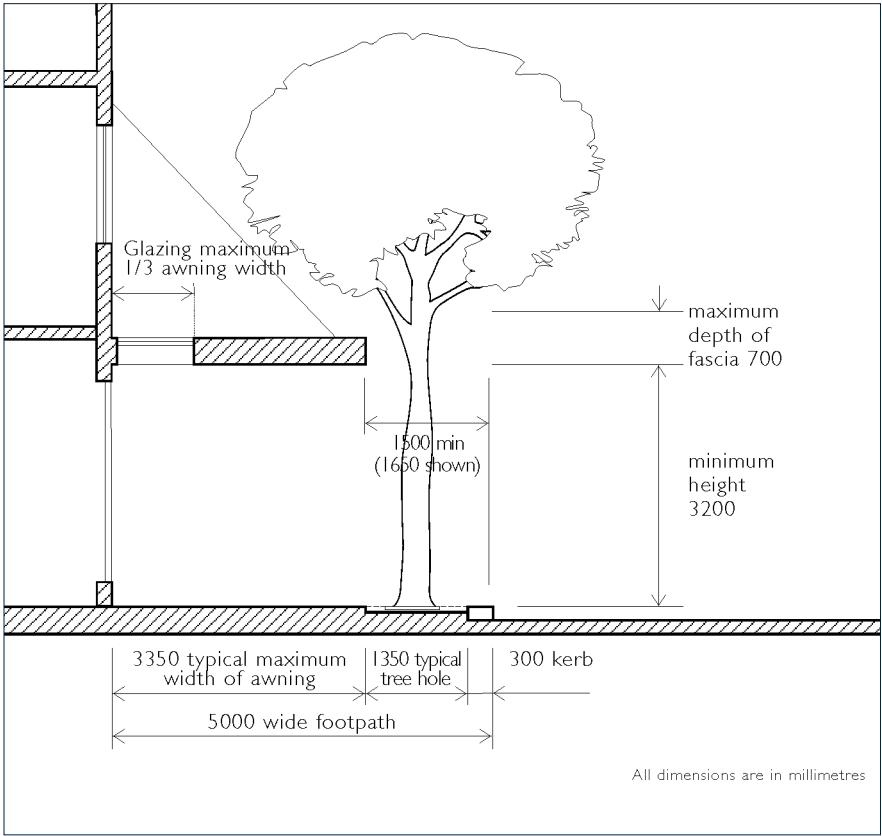


Figure 14 Relationship of trees and awnings in wider footpaths.

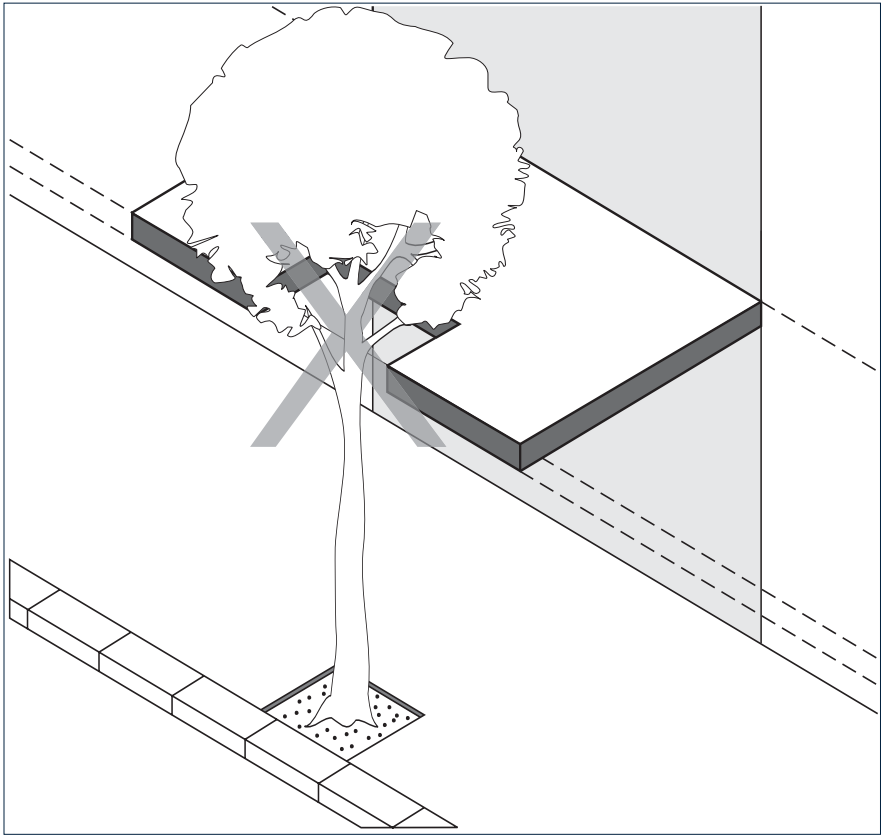


Figure 15 Cut out segments in awnings, such as to accommodate street trees or for any other reason, are not acceptable.

2.8

Fascia depth

New awning fascias must be coordinated with adjacent awning fascias to ensure a consistency and unity to awnings within a block. Traditional fascias are solid, flat and between 300 mm and 700 mm deep.

- > the maximum depth of the awning fascia is to be 700 mm

Awnings of a contemporary design that have thin, fine edges or which express their structure are permitted if they create a suitably unified relationship with adjacent awnings. Generally, awnings without fascias will not be permitted adjacent to existing awnings that have fascias.

2.9

Skylights and Glazing

Glazing to awnings is encouraged in order to ensure adequate levels of lighting under the awning and to allow improved natural lighting of ground floor spaces within buildings. Fully glazed awnings are generally not acceptable because they cause excessive glare and heat and cannot mask dirt or wind blown paper and leaves. Awning skylights must comply with the following guidelines:

- > awning skylights are to be made from glass. Acrylic, polycarbonate and other plastics are not acceptable glazing alternatives as they are not sufficiently durable
- > glass used in awnings is to comply with ASI 288 Glass in buildings – Selection and installation
- > glass in awnings is to be clear or very lightly tinted, and must also be patterned in a durable finish (such as a fritted, or seraphic glass finish) in order to mask dirt, dust and windblown debris



Figure 16 Glass in awnings is to be coloured either clear or very lightly tinted, and patterned to mask dirt. At significant places along awnings, such as at this major building entry pictured, additional glass may also be appropriate.

- > skylights/glazed portions of awnings are limited to a width no greater than one third of the total awning width
- > awning skylights/glazing need not be continuous and the length of glazed portions should respond to the architectural design of the ground floor (such as by aligning the location of glazed portions with ground floor windows or with ground floor columns)
- > at significant places along the awning such as at building entries additional glazing may be appropriate.
- > applicants must prepare a maintenance program for awning skylights to ensure that they are appropriately cleaned on a regular basis to Council's satisfaction
- > in the selection of the type of glazing to be used and its support conditions consideration should be given to the consequences of glass breakage

Fabric canopies

2.10

Fabric canopies are not generally permitted for buildings in streets where awnings are required by the Central Sydney DCP 1996 due their different character and shorter life span compared to regular awnings.

Fabric canopies may however be appropriate for cafes, food outlets and hotels particularly in areas adjacent to parks and public spaces and in streets without a consistent awning line as an alternative to providing an awning.

Fabric canopies may also be considered for heritage buildings that were originally designed without awnings because they can appear as a lightweight, impermanent addition to the building instead of as an incongruous major building element. Any proposal to add an awning or canopy to a heritage item can only be considered if supported by a Conservation Management Plan or equivalent document.

- > fabric canopies are to comply with the other requirements of this Policy relating to awnings
- > fabric canopies may be designed to be retractable
- > fabric for canopies must comply with the spread of flame indices and with specification C1.1 Clause 2.4 of the BCA and details of the spread of flame indices are to be forwarded to Council as evidence that the material complies
- > the design of a fabric canopy should have regard to its potential to impact on any future maintenance of the building (such as for example being able to be temporarily removed to enable scaffolding of the façade)



Figure 17 Lightweight fabric canopies can be appropriate for cafes adjacent to public places.



Figure 18 Lightweight fabric canopies can be appropriate to cafes adjacent to parks and public spaces and in streets without a consistent awning line.

General Guidelines

3

3.1

Construction

Awnings are to be constructed to Council's satisfaction and in accordance with good building practice:

- > awnings are to be supported from the building
- > awnings are to be structurally capable of withstanding all loads including self loads, live loads (including maintenance crews walking over them), lateral wind loads, impact loads (including being struck by a passing vehicle)
- > certification from an appropriately qualified practising structural engineer that the design and structure comply with the relevant clauses of the BCA is required with each proposal
- > materials are to be durable, low maintenance and appropriate for the city context
- > opaque, solid and non reflective materials are generally preferred
- > awnings built over an exit doorway from a fire isolated stairway are to be constructed of a non-combustible material

3.2

Drainage

Awnings must drain towards the building in order to eliminate gutters and downpipes at the street edge

- > awning gutters are to be constructed so that they are not visible from the footpath or are integral to the awning structure and coloured to suit
- > awning downpipes for drainage are to be fully concealed within or recessed into the ground floor frontage

3.3

Lighting

Lighting is required below all awnings to supplement existing street lighting and 'spill' lighting from shopfronts and other ground floor uses.

- > lighting is to comply with requirements for pedestrian areas in the current AS/NZS 1158
- > lighting must be recessed into the awning and be integral to the awning's structure and form
- > all associated wiring and conduits are to be completely concealed
- > light fittings should be readily accessible to support their regular maintenance
- > the City may impose conditions on any awning lighting requiring it to be switched on or off between certain hours.

3.4**Signage**

Signs are to be consistent with the overall design of the awning and in Central Sydney must comply with the Central Sydney Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan, and in Pymont/Ultimo with Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 26—City West and Ultimo-Pymont Urban Development Plan: refer to Central Sydney Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan for controls relating to signage

- > signs require their own Development Application and signage approval is limited to 3 years
- > associated wiring and conduits for any lit signs are to be completely concealed. This may preclude consent being given for signage on contemporary awning designs that have exposed structures and areas of glass without having made an allowance for signage conducting.

3.5**Colour**

Awning colour is to suit the architecture of the host building and the adjoining awnings

- > light colours are preferred for the underside of the awning
- > colours and finishes that fade or are easily damaged by climatic exposure are not acceptable.

3.6**Maintenance**

Awnings are to be maintained to a high standard and to Council's satisfaction. A maintenance plan must be submitted for approval prior to commencement of construction indicating the proposed methods of cleaning and a detailed maintenance schedule to ensure the structural integrity of the awning. The maintenance plan and schedule are to include:

- > annual inspection of steel work, connections and supports
- > triennial repainting of the awning
- > regular cleaning of drains and the footpath under the awning
- > regular cleaning of and replacement of defective lighting
- > regular cleaning of any skylights or awning glazing (with cleaning to occur every six months as a minimum or more frequently depending upon the needs of individual cases)

Awnings as verandahs or balconies

For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions apply:

Awning - A cantilevered horizontal or predominantly horizontal roof-like structure projecting from a building and providing shelter to the footpath.

Verandah - An awning supported on posts rather than cantilevered.

Balcony - A horizontal projecting platform on a building (whether cantilevered or supported on posts) enclosed by a balustrade.

Awnings may be converted to verandahs only on heritage buildings and only if such a conversion reconstructs an earlier significant verandah and is based on documentary or physical evidence supported by a Conservation Management Plan. On other buildings verandahs are not permitted.

The conversion of awnings or verandahs to balconies is not encouraged and is generally not permitted. Adding balustrading increases the bulk of the awning, adversely affecting its proportion in relation to the host building and the streetscape. It can also obscure the architectural character of the building above the awning. Balconies can be appropriate on buildings in low-rise neighbourhoods (lower than four storeys) as the resulting form is highly compatible with traditional balconied terraces and corner shops. Balconies may also be appropriate in some specific pedestrianised areas such as Pitt Street Mall where the balcony can provide additional pedestrian interest and focus, but only subject to the whole façade composition achieving a very high level of design quality. Any proposal for a balcony conversion will be assessed against the following criteria:

- > the existence of high quality precedents in the block
- > achieving a very high degree of compatibility with the streetscape, with particular consideration to the pedestrian character of the street.
- > the height of the host building and the streetscape
- > the suitability to the location
- > impacts on the heritage significance of the building or streetscape in question
- > achieving a very high level of design quality for the balcony
- > the suitability of the building in question, including its structural capacity
- > local traffic and street use conditions (eg proximity to busy intersections, bus stops etc)
- > the method of draining the balcony



Figure 19 Reconstructed verandah, Pitt Street Mall 1999.

3.8

DA requirements

Awnings require DA approval from Council. A development application for a proposed awning shall be accompanied by:

- > a completed development application form
- > coloured plans elevations and sections of the proposed awning at scale 1:50
- > a street elevation at scale 1:100 or photomontage showing the relationship of the proposal to the building and neighbouring awnings, and showing the location of all street trees, smartpoles™, utility poles and traffic signs in the vicinity of the awning
- > a statement of environmental effects indicating how the proposal complies with the Awning Policy, and the Central Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1996 and Development Control Plan 1996 or the Ultimo Pymont Urban Development Plan
- > full details of proposed materials, finishes and colours
- > a signage strategy for the awning indicating appropriate locations for signs, including details as to how these are to be attached to the awning structure and how power is to be delivered to any signs proposed to be illuminated
- > any other information specified in the development form, and
- > a development application fee in accordance with the City's schedule of fees

Development Application forms can be obtained from Council's One Stop Shop at Level 2 of Town Hall House, telephone: 9265 9255.