



## INTRODUCTION

### 1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 Street and reserve trees contribute to the appearance of a place through their aesthetic value by providing identity and character. In addition, trees positively contribute to the environment by absorbing heat, providing shade, reducing solar radiation, providing habitat to fauna and flora, utilising storm water runoff, maximising carbon storage and assisting in air purification.

Healthy street trees provide a community with many valuable benefits that can be measured in tangible terms, namely;

- *Economic Benefits* - Street trees make a broad economic contribution to the economic vitality of the community by presenting an image of a progressive liveable town. Trees contribute to the enhancement of real estate values, attract tourists and contribute to making our townships and villages desirable places to live and work. Studies have shown that the presence of trees within or around urban residences can increase property values.
- *Social Benefits* - Trees contribute to the mental and physical health of our community by providing green scenery that has been shown to speed up patient recovery in hospitals and reduce stress generally. Street trees and parklands with tree plantings provide a great place to exercise or relax, providing natural areas for activities such as walking, cycling, jogging, picnics and quiet reflection.

Street trees provide psychological benefits, with aesthetically pleasing surroundings aiding increased enjoyment from everyday life and a greater sense of meaningful connection between people and the natural environment.

- *Stormwater Management* - Trees slow stormwater runoff, reducing the volume of water that must be managed in built-up areas. Trees reduce stormwater flows by intercepting rainwater on leaves, branches and trunks. This in turn slows the movement of water into drainage channels and streams. Stormwater volume is further reduced because intercepted water soaks into the soil or evaporates into the atmosphere.

The net effect is a reduction in peak flows and potential flooding, a critical issue during heavy rains. During light rains, trees provide benefits by promoting soil permeability to facilitate infiltration into the soil and groundwater recharge. Reducing impervious surfaces and increasing tree cover promotes the movement of water into the water table.

- *Microclimates* - Street trees assist the amelioration of climates at the microclimatic level, and help mitigate the impact of human-created 'heat islands' associated with paved areas. Street trees have been acknowledged as improving both air and water quality within the street environment. They help reduce pollution through the direct absorption of gaseous contaminants such as ozone, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, and through the interception and deposition of particulate matter onto their leaf surfaces. Through shading and atmospheric cooling trees lower temperatures.

For Council to sustain this contribution, it must plan for and manage all stages of a tree's life from planting through to maintenance and eventual removal and replacement.

The community generally accepts that street trees are highly desirable and can transform streets into an aesthetically pleasing spaces. Nevertheless, quite serious problems can arise if careful thought is not given to both the types of trees selected for street planting and their location. Trees may become dangerous over time and can pose a risk to personal safety and property depending on their location. In addition, essential services such as sewerage, public mains and private drains/septic tanks can be blocked by tree roots. Both overhead and underground electricity and water supplies can be interrupted and street infrastructure such as kerbing and footpaths can be damaged. If trees are not adequately managed this can lead to injury, considerable inconvenience, expense and ill feeling both to property owners and to public utilities.

## **2. PURPOSE**

2.1 This policy is directed at establishing a framework/guide for managing trees planted on Council streets and public land, or other naturally grown trees of significance. It will assist in determining acceptable levels of risk through the development of a tree risk management program while recognising and promoting the value of trees in contributing to the amenity of the Southern Midlands, in both streets as well as recreation grounds and reserves. Well-developed maintenance programs for public trees are important for maintaining tree health, ensuring that public safety is not compromised, and protecting infrastructure from damage. This policy outlines current directions for the management and maintenance of trees on Council land.

## **3. OBJECTIVES**

3.1 The objectives of tree management are to enhance the landscape, to maintain a safe and sustainable canopy, and to conserve the natural environment. This management responsibility involves adopting a systematic approach to reducing the risk of injury to people and damage to property to levels that are considered acceptable in accordance to Council's policies and practices, and includes:

- a. Developing and implementing a tree management program that, for example, includes such criteria as:
  - i. Identifying trees that represent a significant consequence if they fail.
  - ii. Ensuring that trees in high use areas are regularly inspected for hazards that could pose a risk to public safety.
  - iii. Ensuring that trees are routinely pruned with the aim of protecting public utilities, enhancing public safety and amenity, and improving or maintaining tree health and facilitating pedestrian and vehicle movements.
  - iv. Complying with approved fire management strategies and plans.
  - v. Complying with relevant Australian standards.



- b. Establishing an effective maintenance program and arboricultural work practices that address issues relating to risk, health and replacement of trees. The maintenance program may, for example include such criteria as:
- i. Identifying trees of significance.
  - ii. Adhering to a replacement tree strategy – planned and reactive.
  - iii. Giving priority in pruning to trees in areas of high public use, such as streets, car parks, shopping areas and picnic areas. This may include carrying out formative pruning of young trees in the first five years following planting, removing or reducing multiple leaders on young trees when they are considered a potential future hazard, pruning trees to avoid interference with power lines, street signs, street lights and other services or removing lower branches up to a height of 3 to 5 metres in order to give clear pedestrian and traffic access and clear sight lines, particularly for vehicles entering and leaving driveways, or approaching intersections.
  - iv. Adhering in pruning to Australian Standards (AS/NZ 4373).

## **4. PLANNING, PLANTING AND MAINTAINING**

### **4.1 Village Areas**

4.1.1 Planning - Trees will be selected in accordance with any existing approved street and landscape plans. In the absence of a plan, they are to be consistent with the general tenor of the existing streetscape and comply with the requirements of the tree risk management program. In particular, trees to be planted on nature strips and trees on public land that are within 15 m of a building or public walkway are to be of a species that:

- a. provides a shade canopy in summer;
- b. grows, or can be kept to, a maximum height of 10m;
- c. are not prone to interfere with overhead, above or below ground infrastructure; and
- d. can have a clear trunk to 2.5m when mature.
- e. are sensitive to maintaining existing significant views from the surrounding area. In new developments, developers may, at the discretion of Council, be required to ensure that a landscape plan is prepared, implemented and maintained for a period of 3 years in accordance with this policy.

4.1.2 Planting - Trees will be planted in accordance with approved arboricultural work practices having regard to maintenance program requirements. Council will be solely responsible for the planting of trees to ensure the agreed objectives are met. Any requests from the public to plant trees will be considered by Council in the context of this policy and if approved will be carried out under the direction of Council if members of the public wish to be involved.

4.1.3 Maintaining - Tree maintenance will be carried out in accordance with the maintenance program and approved arboricultural work practices. Inspecting trees regularly ensures that structural defects and/or other risk factors are identified and dealt with in a timely and targeted manner in accordance with a recognised risk assessment method. The pruning, removal and replacement of trees on nature strips and public land will be undertaken by Council. All tree surgery work will be carried out by qualified Council staff or their contractors. When a member

of the public is concerned about the safety or health of a particular tree on public land, a site visit is arranged and the tree assessed. Clearing from private property of vegetation which overhangs footpaths, right of ways etc., is the responsibility of the property owner. If the owner does not undertake the necessary work Council will and a charge will be negotiated.

## 4.2 Natural Areas

Natural Area vegetation communities will be managed to conserve and enhance the habitat, conservation, biodiversity and recreational amenity values of those communities, whilst minimising risks.

4.2.1 Planning - Trees to be planted in natural areas are to be local provenance seedlings, where possible, as a means of replacing trees when revegetating disturbed natural areas. Any future plan for a natural area will have regard to existing Land Management Plans, approved Fire Management Strategies and local area Activity Plans. Community input will be sought in the development of plans.

4.2.2 Planting and Maintaining - Planting and maintenance work will be carried out in accordance with approved plans and approved arboricultural work practices. Volunteers may be involved in undertaking this work under Council supervision.

## 5. REMOVAL AND PRUNING

5.1 This removal policy applies only to trees on Council land that are not subject to a Natural Area Assets Code or Historic Heritage Code under the current Planning Scheme or other statutory obligation. Notwithstanding this provision any tree that reaches an unacceptable level of risk which constitutes an actual risk to pedestrians and/or vehicular movement will be removed or have necessary remedial work undertaken.

5.2 *Retention and Removal* - A conservative approach is adopted towards the removal of live trees on public land. However, healthy trees will be removed if they are an actual risk to public safety or property, including infrastructure. Additionally, trees can be removed if they do not conform to an approved streetscape or landscape plan, subject to availability of funds. Otherwise healthy trees will be considered for removal only if they pose a significant concern to an adjacent property owner. The grounds can include:

- a. Unsuitability of the tree to the immediate residential area,
- b. Shading causing solar access issues,
- c. Maintaining existing significant views from the surrounding area ,
- d. The tree has reached an unacceptable level of risk as raised by adjacent residents,
- e. Significant nuisance caused by shedding material,
- f. A tree will be removed if it is dead or in irreversible decline unless particular circumstances warrant its retention.

5.3 Prior to removal Council will give consideration to whether the:

- a. tree is listed on the natural heritage register or has historical significance;
- b. tree is part of a significant native community identified in the Natural Assets Inventory, or under the Rare and Threatened Species Protection Act;
- c. tree is recognised as part of a heritage site listed under the planning scheme or the Historic Buildings Register;
- d. tree is recorded as to be retained on an approved Master Streetscape Plan; Landscape Plan, or Land Management Plan;
- e. tree is required to be retained as part of a development approval;
- f. provisions of the Planning Scheme prohibit the removal;
- g. tree is within an area covered by the Regional Forests Agreement;
- h. tree is located on Land leased by Council, e.g. Crown Land, where the land owner's authority is required; and
- i. the extent of neighbourhood opposition to the removal of a tree.

5.4 Trees will not be removed solely for reasons such as:

- a. adjacent landowner preference for no street tree or for a different species;
- b. complaints about appearance (unless these are related to very poor tree health);
- c. complaints about small quantities of leaf litter or twigs; or
- d. complaints relating to tree roots protruding above the ground or 'competing with lawns'. If it is necessary to remove individual living trees from nature strips, regardless of whether the tree was planted by the Council or the adjacent landowner, the adjacent landowner will be consulted as to the reasons why the tree is to be removed. Where a group of trees is to be removed, the level of consultation will be more extensive. Where the removal of a street tree is necessitated for reasons associated with a redevelopment of a block it will be replaced with a new tree of an appropriate species in a similar location.

5.5 *Process for Removal and Pruning* - Where a request for pruning and/or removal of trees is made and there is an actual risk issue, the tree will be dealt with immediately. If the tree is on an imminent future year replacement schedule or does not conform to an approved plan, the availability of funds and the relative priority will determine when the tree is removed.

5.6 In other cases, the following process will be undertaken:

- a. A Request for Tree Removal or Pruning Application is to be made by the adjacent landowner and must cite one or more of the reasons set out in Section C 1 above.
- b. The validity of those reasons is to be assessed by Council Officers within 30 days from the date of the receipt of a Request for Tree Removal or Pruning Application, before any provisional approval or refusal is granted. The assessment, where appropriate, will include a risk analysis.
- c. In making that assessment, Council Officers may seek advice from contracted professionals with appropriate expertise (including, where relevant, professional arborists - holding a Certificate 4 or above in arboriculture and hold a qualification in tree risk assessment), and are to consult with neighbours and those likely to be affected.



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- d. Once the assessment is completed, Council Officers will issue a Notice of Intent to Approve or Refuse the Tree Removal or Pruning Application.
  - e. Such Notice will be placed on the tree for public exhibition for not less than fourteen days. Community members will then be able to complete a Application for Retention if they feel strongly that the trees should be retained.
  - f. The Notice, together with the completed assessment, the advice (if any) obtained from contracted professionals, and with the results of neighbourhood consultation along with any Applications for Retention is to be reported in the following Council Weekly Briefing Bulletin.
  - g. To enable Councillors, by Motion on Notice, to overturn the Notice of Intent to Approve or Refuse, no tree is to be removed until four weeks have elapsed from the publication of the Officers' recommendation in the Weekly Briefing Bulletin.
  - h. If the Notice of Intent to Approve or Refuse is not overturned by Council within four weeks, an approval/refusal will be issued by the General Manager, or his delegate.
- 5.7 Where a Council tree impinges on an adjoining property, be it branches or roots the property owner shall formally advise Council of the issue. Council will within 30 days undertake an investigation and determine a course of action to remedy the issue, then formally advise the property owner. Council or its Contractors will undertake any action required as a response to the investigation. The property owner shall not undertake the works.

If a private tree impinges on public space, the private land owner must prune the tree after receiving a formal notice from Council to undertake the works.

## **6. REPLACEMENT**

- 6.1 Replacement - Tree replacement is an important part of the maintenance of the public landscape. The timely replacement of dead or missing trees in newly developed landscapes, regular replacement of established trees, and replanting programs that follow the removal of ageing trees ensures that the original landscape design intent is not only initially achieved but is also retained for future generations. The community will be informed about the reasons for replacement where appropriate.
- 6.2 Ageing trees - Ageing trees in parks and streetscapes are subject to strategic tree replacement programs. Parks and streets where ageing trees need to be removed and replaced are identified and subject to funding, these sites are included on the annual tree replacement program. This ensures that the original landscape design intent is retained for future generations. The community will be informed about the reasons for removal where appropriate.
- 6.3 Routine Tree Replacement - Trees in parks or streets that have been removed for the reasons above or are missing are recorded and routinely replanted in a later planting season. This procedure ensures that the original landscape design intent is retained as plants mature. Depending on the availability of funding, missing trees are replaced with the same or similar in accordance with an arborists recommendations.



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## **7. WILFUL DAMAGE**

7.1 Wilful damage to trees on Council land will be treated in the same manner as damage to other Council assets. Where sufficient evidence exists of wilful damage it may be reported to Tasmania Police.

## **8. DOCUMENT ADMINISTRATION**

This Instruction is a managed document and is to be reviewed every three years or as directed by the General Manager.

This document is Version 3 effective 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018. The document is maintained by Community and Corporate Development for the Southern Midlands Council.