

POLICY NO EP06 TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

DEPARTMENT: Works and Infrastructure

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: Manager Infrastructure and Development Services

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

To balance our use of the natural environment to ensure that it is available for future generations to enjoy as we do.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Best practice approach - Australian Standard for Tree Pruning AS 4373

OBJECTIVE: To provide a practical and balanced approach to tree management that seeks to maximise the abundance and health of trees on Council land while ensuring public safety and allowing controlled development.

POLICY INFORMATION: Adopted 19 March 2012 – Minute No 03/12.15.4.069
Amended 25 June 2012 – Minute No 06/12.12.3.153
Amended 19 August 2019 – Minute No 08/19.13.3.203
Amended 18 July 2022 – Minute No 07/22.14.7.148

POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Break O'Day Council has responsibility for the planning, establishment and maintenance of all street trees in the municipality. The Council is committed to providing a quality living environment for its residents, ratepayers and visitors and recognises the significance of street trees in creating streetscapes with purpose and appeal.

2. STREET TREE MANAGEMENT

Street tree management is a Council responsibility. Council recognises that all trees have a finite lifespan and aims to remove and replace trees at a point in time before they start to pose management risks.

A whole of life risk-based approach shall be adopted so as to effectively manage the physical risks associated with street trees and covers tree selection, planting, maintenance, risk management and removal.

Ongoing risk assessment in accordance with ISO31000 will form the basis of all decisions relating to the planting, maintenance and removal of trees with the objective of ensuring that the benefits of trees can be enjoyed by current and future generations.

Council shall maintain a "Tree Inventory" as a fundamental component in the management of tree assets. The inventory shall record trees greater than five (5) meters in height that are planted within urban road reserves, recreation grounds, parks and reserves. The inventory shall include Trees of Significance that have been assigned on the basis of horticultural, cultural and/or historical significance to the community.

Councils Works Department is to be consulted prior to any works occurring in the vicinity of any tree, including all infrastructure works.

3. STREET TREE PRUNING

Street tree pruning is determined through proactive tree asset maintenance based on a known needs basis, tree species and habit, by customer request or resulting from an emergency situation.

3.1 Tree Pruning Objectives

Council trees shall be pruned to:

- maintain public safety through the removal of structurally unsound limbs;
- maintain tree health through the removal of dead or diseased or pest infected material;
- maintain prescribed clearances from services
- maintain prescribed clearances over roads, footpaths and driveways;
- ensure traffic safety and visibility of street signs
- minimise future work requirements through the removal of potential problems at an early stage

3.2 Tree Pruning & Inspection Programme

An essential component of the management of Council's tree assets is the maintenance of individual trees in a safe and visually appealing condition. Once established, the major maintenance requirement of a tree is pruning.

The council will not undertake unnecessary pruning works where there is no good arboriculture reason to do so.

As a general rule, the pruning of trees should be minimised as all pruning cuts are potentially injurious and trees look more appealing when left to develop into their natural shape. Trees should only be pruned to achieve specific goals.

Scheduled inspections should be carried out on an annual basis and shall be inspected for the following:

- overhanging Limbs
- structural damage
- exposed tree roots
- root rot
- disease and pest infestation

3.3 Pruning Programs

Pruning within the Municipality shall be carried out on a programmed basis by qualified personnel. Trees that are located within higher-risk areas will be assessed and pruned at least once every three (3) years. In addition, individual trees shall be pruned as deemed necessary in response to legitimate complaints from residents or reporting of faults by Council Staff or external authorities.

TasNetworks is the relevant Tasmanian agency responsible for undertaking the pruning of street trees in the vicinity of overhead power lines in consultation with Council.

3.4 Pruning of Council Trees by Residents

Pruning of Council owned trees by anyone other than Council Staff or contractors engaged by Council shall not be permitted.

3.5 Pruning for Views

Pruning of Council owned trees to provide or maintain views from private properties shall not be permitted.

3.6 Pruning for Solar Access

Pruning of Council owned trees to provide or maintain solar access will not be permitted without due consideration of the ongoing health and ecological importance of the tree. Any costs associated with arborist activities for private solar access will be undertaken by Council but at the cost of the person making the request.

Council will consider each request for tree pruning/removal in line with a report and recommendation from a qualified arborist. Council will consider this request at the first ordinary Council Meeting following the receipt of the report from the arborist.

4 TREE REMOVAL

Removal of trees from nature strips and parks is potentially the greatest source of conflict in the management of Council's trees. Prudent tree management requires Council to assume that every tree, no matter how significant it may appear, is important to someone.

Decisions regarding tree removal, however, do become necessary in response to applications by residents, developers and external authorities or through observation of problem trees by Council staff.

Council will consider removing a street tree only in the instances where:

- a tree is dead,
- a tree is in a state of decline and to a point that survival advised by a qualified arborist is unlikely, e.g. typically as a result of structural failure, disease, pest damage or other human interference,
- a tree is causing a proven level of invasive damage to infrastructure or services, as well as presenting an unacceptable level of risk to surrounding infrastructure,
- the retention of a tree is not possible due to an approved development.

It is Council's desire to maximise the possibility of retaining any street tree.

All requests received for the removal of street trees will be assessed in accordance with an independent arborist's assessment and written report.

Council will not remove a tree or undertake unnecessary pruning works where there is no sound arboriculture reason to do so.

5 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Council will consult with affected stakeholders during the planning stages of specific streetscape replanting programs.

Notification will provide written notification to the adjoining resident/stakeholders in cases where a tree is required to be removed and replaced, unless in an emergency situation.

6 TREE PLANTING

Tree planting by Council is required to provide a quality living environment and to create functional and aesthetic streetscapes, parks and reserves.

Council will consult with the community on the broader strategic or specific project or development plans relating to the planting of trees on Council owned land and reserves under management by the Council.

Individual tree planting will be undertaken by Council's Works Department.

6.1 Species Selection

The following applies to Council operations and submissions received from local residents, community and land care/environmental groups.

The overarching principle in the selection of a tree species is the *'right tree for the right location'*.

Tree species will be assessed on the basis of being appropriate to the local environmental conditions and the constraints of the planting location with specific consideration given to the following:

Streetscape character

To maintain the existing streetscape character or to align with a new desired streetscape character (e.g. a streetscape reconstruction or new subdivision).

Public Safety

Species that have an inherent potential to develop structural flaws shall not be selected for planting near roads, footpaths, recreational areas or any building or any other location deemed to present an unsatisfactory level of public risk, such as in a position that restricts sight distance for pedestrians or motorists.

Impact on Infrastructure

Species with invasive root systems that have an inherent potential to damage underground infrastructure and private property will not be selected.

Tall street trees with large canopies are not permitted to be planted in the vicinity of overhead power lines.

Environmental Compatibility

Species must be able to grow in the local environment. Selected species must have a demonstrated ability:

- to withstand known weather elements and events. Given the long life of street trees, consideration shall also be given to a species capacity to survive with longer term changing climatic conditions.
- to not have a detrimental effect on native flora and fauna populations. Consideration shall be given to the impact of berry and seed germination, invasive and competitive root systems and fruit and leaf toxicity. Noxious & Invasive Species (trees and plants) are not permitted to be planted at any time.

- to grow in the available space. Species that require large amounts of space to maintain a strong root system or canopy will not be selected for planting in areas of existing condensed trees or adjacent or in close proximity to any infrastructure.
- species requiring excessive maintenance such as pruning and watering will not be selected

Native Trees & Plants

The planting of native trees and plants (including rare or endangered species) in urban public areas that are endemic to a local area is encouraged.

6.2 Planting by Residents

Planting of street and park trees by residents should only be undertaken in consultation with Council Officers. Unauthorised planting of street trees by residents shall be discouraged, but recently planted trees shall be allowed to remain provided that they are:

- of a suitable species that are compatible with stated species selection criterion
- good quality specimens
- planted correctly

Where a tree does not meet these conditions, the resident shall receive a written request to remove the tree. If this request is not complied with, within ten (10) working days of a letter being sent to the resident Council staff will act to remove the tree.

6.3 Resident Opposition to Tree Planting

The establishment or maintenance of a consistent planting theme can sometimes require Council to plant a tree in a nature strip against the wishes of the resident immediately adjacent. This is a difficult situation that calls for Council to make a judgement regarding the rights of the wider community over the individual resident.

When making such a decision, it should be kept in mind that a major factor in the survival of a newly planted street tree is the cooperation of the nearest resident in maintaining that tree.

The decision on planting shall be made by the Works Department in consultation with local residents.

6.4 Planting Parks

Where a community group or resident has requested tree planting in a particular park, the park will be assessed and prioritised according to:

- existing tree cover;
- a demonstrated level of community interest and support for a requested/proposed planting
- level of park usage

7. DAMAGE CAUSED BY TREES

The response by Council to damage caused by trees will vary according to the type and extent of the damage.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years in line with the Council's Policy Framework or earlier in the event of major changes to legislation or related policies, procedures or if deemed necessary by the General Manager.