

SEPTEMBER 2019

# Street Tree Policy

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Facilitate the protection, management and expansion of the urban forest throughout the City of Stonnington, consistent with the principles, objectives and commitments set out in the *Urban Forest Strategy (2017)*.
- Inform the future selection, siting, planting, maintenance, removal and replacement of street trees.
- Ensure that Council can effectively and efficiently deliver on its commitment to grow the urban forest through increased street tree plantings.
- Enhance the character, identity and liveability of the municipality through street tree planting and management.
- Formalise Council's established practices relating to street tree planning and management.
- Inform Council's engagement with residents, businesses and the community in relation to street tree planting and management.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Recognise the value and benefit of street trees as part of the City of Stonnington urban forest.
- Facilitate the expanded urban forest committed to in the *Urban Forest Strategy (2017)*.
- Support the protection and management of street trees, including those adjacent to construction, works and other activities that can impact tree health.
- Support Council to plant and manage street trees in a consistent and fair manner.
- Improve community understanding of Council's commitment to expand the urban forest and the basis on which Council makes decisions regarding the planting and management of street trees on public land.

### 3. CONTEXT

The City of Stonnington is characterised by its tree-lined boulevards, leafy streetscapes and historic parks. There are approximately 55,500 trees within the City of Stonnington's streets, parks, reserves, gardens, Council facilities, car parks and other public open spaces.

Trees on Council land are an important community asset and provide essential environmental services along with extensive social and economic benefits. These values and benefits increase significantly with tree age and maturity. Larger trees have more sizeable canopies which provide greater shade, remove more air pollutants, capture more rainwater and have a greater visual impact on the streetscape.

Council manages a mature and diverse population of 31,500 street trees that is central to the character and amenity of the municipality. Council's *Urban Forest Strategy (2017)* highlights the importance of the urban forest, including street trees, for liveability, the environment and prosperity. The vision articulated in the *Urban Forest Strategy* is:

*The City of Stonnington will have a healthy, resilient, diverse and valued urban forest that will continue to be a core element of the character and liveability of the City. The urban forest will underpin the health and wellbeing of the community, increase biodiversity and environmental outcomes and help strengthen economic activity.*

The *Urban Forest Strategy* commits Council to eight key directions, as follows:

1. Protect and value existing trees
2. Sustain and support a healthy and safe urban forest
3. Renew ageing trees
4. Grow the urban forest
5. Create feature Boulevard plantings
6. Create habitat
7. Manage the interface between trees and infrastructure
8. Increase the cover of alternative Green Infrastructure

The *Urban Forest Strategy* notes that with increasing levels of development and housing densification on private land, corresponding with a progressive loss of trees and reduced opportunity for future tree growth, there is an increased importance of maximising the planting of canopy trees on public land.

Benefits of establishing and maintaining street trees in the City of Stonnington include:

- Street trees are a significant element of the character and identity of the municipality and substantially enhance streetscape amenity.
- Street trees contribute to improved air quality, cooler streets, reduced UV exposure and enhanced community health and wellbeing.
- Street trees cycle nutrients, store carbon, improve water urban management and provide habitat and food sources for wildlife.

Key challenges with establishing and maintaining healthy street trees include competition for limited space in the streetscape, conflict with surrounding infrastructure and utility services, community perceptions and acceptance of street trees and a changing climate.

## 4. POLICY STATEMENT

The following sets out a series of Council policy positions relating to the planning, planting, removal and management of street trees throughout the city. These are consistent with and support Council's *Urban Forest Strategy*.

### 4.1 URBAN FOREST EXPANSION

Council is committed to expand the urban forest across public and private land in order to increase canopy cover and maximise the community, environmental and economic benefits provided by trees.

Council will:

- Maximise the planting of street trees to the extent possible.
- Prioritise the creation of increased tree canopy cover throughout the city.
- Prioritise planting in areas of low canopy cover; vacant planting sites; streets with no trees; streets with trees that warrant removal and replacement; streets being reconstructed or upgraded; and areas of high urban heat island effect exposure.
- Proactively develop a program to identify priority planting sites each year.

### 4.2 STREET TREE PROTECTION & RETENTION

Council is committed to the protection and retention of existing trees in the urban landscape.

Council will:

- Promote the value and importance of retaining trees in urban landscapes.
- Maximise the retention of high-value trees and established trees with large canopies.
- Require adequate tree protection of street trees during construction works. This may include entering into a Deed with Council and provide it with a bank guarantee as security against a failure to protect the health of tree(s) to be retained.
- Prioritise the retention of established street trees when considering requests for vehicle crossovers – see Council's *Vehicle Crossings Policy*.
- Only support the removal of healthy, established trees when there is a compelling arboricultural, community safety or public value reason to do so.

Council will work collaboratively across departments to ensure effective compliance in relation to street tree protection and retention.

### 4.3 STREET TREE PLANTING: LOCATIONS, SITING & SPACING

Council is committed to planting as many street trees as possible that will maximise tree canopy cover across the city, deliver maximum environmental and community benefit and enhance streetscape amenity.

Council will:

- Identify and determine suitable locations for planting street trees on public land under its management.
- Consider the following when determining suitable planting locations:
  - Available space – above and below ground.
  - The objective to maximise the number of trees and tree canopy cover.
  - The presence of underground and above ground utility and emergency services.
  - The presence of tram, bus and other infrastructure in the road way and road side.
  - The location of pedestrian entrances to private property.
  - A safe distance from intersections and driveways.
  - The need for adequate sight lines of vehicles, pedestrians and traffic signage.
  - Impact on parking.
- Consider planting street trees where there is overhanging tree foliage from adjacent private property, with the aim of ensuring maximum tree canopy and ensuring there are established trees in the public domain, should adjacent trees on private land be removed at a later date.
- Consider planting street trees in road ways, where there is limited space in the road side or footpath to grow canopy trees suitable for the long-term.
- Space planting locations to maximise long term canopy spread.
- Endeavour to maximise the uniformity of spacing of street trees in a given street or section of street to optimise the consistency of planting and streetscape amenity.
- Consider options available to plant trees into optimal underground growing environments, such as strata cells or tree pits with structural soils.

Resident objection to a new or replacement street tree being planted on public land in front of their property will not prevent Council from planting street trees in line with its commitment to grow the urban forest and maximise tree canopy cover. See section Community Engagement (4.7).

### 4.4 SPECIES SELECTION

Council is committed to building and maintaining a diverse and resilient urban forest, comprised of a wide range of tree species in its streets, parks, gardens and other open spaces.

Maintaining a diverse tree population enhances environmental, social and economic benefits and lowers the risk of significant tree loss from extreme environmental events or from pests and disease.

Council will:

- Identify and determine suitable tree species to plant as street trees.

- Maintain and increase the diversity of tree species planted in the public realm, including both native and exotic species.
- Select tree species for planting in streets that:
  - Will provide maximum tree canopy cover over time. This may include selecting different tree species for each side of a street where there are power lines present.
  - Will provide the maximum benefits to the community and the environment.
  - Are suitable for current and future climatic conditions.
  - Are suitable for the location, surrounding environment, growing conditions and surrounding infrastructure.
  - Contribute to Council meeting commonly accepted tree diversity targets for metropolitan Councils of no more than 30% of any one family; no more than 20% of any one genus; and no more than 10% of any one species.
- Avoid species that are known to have poor structural architecture as mature specimens.
- Seek to achieve uniformity of species planted within streets or discrete sections of streets, where achievable, to create a defined character with the feeling of a planned landscape.

While strongly supportive of the objective of achieving species uniformity in a street or section of a street through new and replacement plantings, Council does not automatically support the removal of healthy, established street trees, simply for the purpose of achieving species uniformity and aesthetics alone.

## 4.5 STREET TREE REMOVAL & REPLACEMENT

Council is committed to an ongoing program of renewing street trees that are ageing, in poor condition or provide an unsatisfactory contribution to the urban forest.

The planned and proactive removal and replacement of suitable street trees enables Council to maximise the extent and quality of the urban forest and ensure a stable canopy cover over time.

Council will:

- Identify and determine street trees for removal and replacement.
- Proactively review the age profile of Council-managed street trees to identify renewal and replacement priorities.
- Identify street tree removal and replacement opportunities as part of road reconstruction and other civic infrastructure projects.
- Consider for removal and replacement street trees that:
  - Have reached the end of their useful life.
  - Are in poor structural condition and health.
  - Have failed to thrive and achieve optimum or potential growth.
  - Are assessed as presenting an unacceptable risk or impact that cannot be mitigated by arboricultural practices.

- Provide a limited contribution to the urban forest.
- Not consider for removal and replacement healthy, established street trees:
  - On the basis of species uniformity and aesthetics alone.
  - On the basis of seasonal traits, such as fruit, seed or litter drop alone.
  - Due to the presence of insects, parasites, animals or pathogens.
  - On the basis of personal preferences for a different type of tree.
  - In order to facilitate development on an adjacent site.
  - To accommodate a new vehicle crossover where alternative options exist – see Council’s *Vehicle Crossings Policy*.
  - To increase local car parking.
  - To reduce or minimise the obstruction of views, advertising or signage.
  - To allow solar access.

Council will work collaboratively across departments to ensure effective compliance in relation to street tree removal and replacement.

## 4.6 STREET TREE INSPECTION, PRUNING AND MAINTENANCE

Council is committed to delivering a comprehensive, proactive and best practice system for the management and maintenance of trees for which it is responsible, including the management of tree related risk.

Council manages the existing tree population to minimise risk and maximise tree health, vigour and structural condition.

Council will:

- Identify and document which street trees it is responsible for on public land throughout the City of Stonnington.
- Proactively and routinely inspect all street trees for which it is responsible, at a set frequency based on a risk assessment and documented in Council’s Tree Risk Management Framework.
- Undertake routine pruning of street trees at set frequencies to meet electric line clearance obligations set by the State Government.
- Prune street trees to minimise risk and maximise tree health, vigour and structural condition.
- Respond to reactive requests relating to street trees in a timely manner.
- Maintain newly planted trees to optimise long-term structure and health, including a two year establishment program of watering, pruning and pest and disease control and a 10 year program of formative pruning.
- Prune in accordance with Australian Standard *Pruning of Amenity Trees AS4373-2007*.

## 4.7 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council is committed to ensuring the City of Stonnington community is appropriately informed and engaged in relation to the planning, planting, removal and management of street trees throughout the city.

Council will:

- Provide current, relevant and timely information about Council's tree management on the City of Stonnington website and via other communication channels.
- Inform and engage residents as follows for different street tree planning, planting, removal and management activities:

Activity	Engagement	Timing
<b>Planting</b>		
Replacement planting	See below under 'Removal' for correspondence on removal and replacement	See below
Planting vacant sites in streets that currently contain trees - with same species as the rest of the street.	Notification card in letter boxes that tree planting has occurred and rationale.	At the time of planting
Planting vacant sites in streets that currently contain trees - with different species from the rest of the street.	Letter to residents outlining proposal. May include invitation for feedback on new species options.	1+ month prior to planting
New planting in street with no existing street trees	Letter to residents outlining proposal. May include invitation for feedback on new species options.	2+ months prior to planting
New planting configuration – for example full replacement of street trees, planting in road way or other change of siting, spacing or species.	Letter to residents outlining proposal. Request for resident feedback on proposed reconfiguration and new species options.	3+ months prior to planting
<b>Removal</b>		
Urgent, immediate tree removal due to risk	Notification card in letter boxes that emergency tree removal has occurred.	At the time of removal
Priority tree removal due to risk – not urgent or immediate	Letter to residents to explain pending tree removal and rationale.	1+ days prior to removal
Planned removal – whether permanent or for replacement	Letter to residents to explain planned tree removal, rationale and any planned replacement.	1+ month prior to removal
Resident proposal or petition for tree removal and replacement – where removal considered justifiable by Council	Letter to residents to explain proposed removal and replacement and request for resident feedback on proposed reconfiguration and new species options.	3+ months prior to removal
<b>Pruning and other management intervention</b>		
Routine pruning in accordance with Council's published Electric Line Clearance Management Plan	Public Notice in local newspaper	2+ weeks prior to pruning.
	Notification card in letter boxes that tree pruning scheduled for coming 4-6 week period	2+ weeks prior to pruning.
Extraordinary pruning or management intervention	Letter to adjacent residents to explain pending tree works and rationale.	1+ week prior to works

## 5. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Council owned and managed street trees on public land in the City of Stonnington.

A street tree may be located in ground, in a tree pit or in planter boxes in the road way or road side.

This Policy does not apply to trees located on private property or Council owned and managed trees in parks, open spaces and Council facilities.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in this Policy.

Term	Definition
<b>Council land</b>	Means all land: (a) owned, leased, managed or occupied by Council; or (b) vested in Council or under the control of Council and which it has a duty to maintain.
<b>Street trees</b>	Includes all Council owned and managed trees in Council managed road reserves and listed in Council's Tree Register. A street tree may be located in ground, in a tree pit or in planter boxes in the nature strip or in the road.
<b>Urban forest</b>	Comprises all trees, shrubs and other vegetation growing across public and private land.

## 7. RESPONSIBILITIES

### Chief Executive Officer

The CEO's responsibilities include the following:

- Support the City of Stonnington to meet the objectives of this Policy and Council's *Urban Forest Strategy 2017*.
- Consider and make decisions in relation to grievance claims made under this Policy.
- Refer street tree related matters to Council for decision where appropriate.

### General Manager Assets & Services

The General Manager Assets & Services' responsibilities include the following:

- Approve changes to this Policy.
- Support the City of Stonnington to meet the objectives of this Policy and Council's *Urban Forest Strategy 2017*.
- Provide decision making support in relation to the planning, planting, removal and management of street trees.

## Manager Parks & Environment

The Manager Parks & Environment's responsibilities include the following:

- Manage the application and review of this Policy.
- Oversee the Arboriculture unit and all planning, planting, removal and management of street trees.
- Provide decision making support in relation to the planning, planting, removal and management of street trees.
- Consider any community complaints made in relation to street trees in the City of Stonnington.

## 8. RELATED POLICIES & STRATEGIES

The City of Stonnington Street Tree Policy should be read in conjunction with related Council policies, strategies and procedures as follows:

Reference
City of Stonnington - Urban Forest Strategy 2017
City of Stonnington - Tree Risk Management Framework 2019
City of Stonnington - Electric Line Clearance Management Plan 2019/20
Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2015
City of Stonnington - Road Management Plan 2017
Road Management Act 2004
City of Stonnington - Vehicle Crossings Policy
City of Stonnington - <i>General Local Law 2018 (No.1)</i>
Standards Australia - Australian Standard <i>Pruning of Amenity Trees AS4373-2007</i>

## 9. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If a member of the City of Stonnington community is aggrieved by the application of this Policy and is unsatisfied with the outcome reached with Council staff, they may raise their concern in writing.

## 10. REVIEW

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Manager, Parks and Environment every four years (or earlier if required).