Council Policy NB-P-46

Tree Management

Purpose

This Policy sets out the objectives and key principles for the sustainable and strategic management of trees on public and private land across the Northern Beaches.

Objectives:

The key objectives of the Policy are to:

- Recognise the significant benefit provided by trees to our local community in terms of air quality, soil protection, water quality and quantity, carbon sequestration, energy conservation, noise reduction, urban cooling, and habitat for local wildlife.
- Maximise tree cover by enhancing and promoting protection, increasing new or replacement planting, and improving rates of retention and long-term survival where trees are healthy and do not pose unacceptable risks to safety.
- Enhance canopy connectivity within and between natural areas (such as bushland, parks, and road reserves) and urban areas (including residential and commercial property) through the preservation of existing canopy trees, and the planting of trees and other vegetation.

Principles

Council has various responsibilities for the management of trees across the Local Government Area on both public and private land.

In relation to public trees including those in bushland reserves, parks, gardens and road reserves, Council seeks to retain trees and promote tree canopy having regard to environmental values, the management of risk and relevant statutory controls such as State Environmental Planning Policies.

The management of private trees is subject to the relevant statutory requirements and planning instruments and controls. Private tree works are typically authorised through a tree permit application under a planning instrument or control, through an approved development application, or in some cases may be undertaken without the need for approval where the works are considered exempt under a planning instrument or control (depending on the type of work, species, type and condition of the tree).

This tree management policy is founded on the following principles and measures:

Planting and Selection

- Suitable species will be selected for each location having regard to the surrounding built environment, provision of biodiversity habitat, potential damage to utilities, planned future works at or adjacent to the location, and the overall aesthetic appeal of the area.
- A spread of tree age classes will be maintained to minimise the impact of tree removals in a given area.
- Planting will be prioritised in areas of low or poor canopy coverage, areas that have had recent removals and where there are opportunities to create green links and connectivity between natural areas.
- Locally occurring native species are preferred unless there is reasonable justification for using other species.

General tree protection

- Maximising long-term tree retention is a key consideration when making decisions about proposed activities on public and private land.
- Public trees are to be protected as public assets.
- The removal of public trees (including pruning, root removal and total removal) is considered only when it is consistent with Council's policies, planning controls, risk policy and supporting framework, statutory responsibilities, and after other tree retention measures have been considered.
- Council supports the long term retention of trees on private land noting that tree removals can occur such as when they are an exempt tree species under a planning instrument, through an approved tree permit under a planning instrument or control, or through a development consent.
- Where any tree is proposed to be retained appropriate retention measures shall be put in place and maintained.
- The relevant Australian Standard(s) for the protection of trees (including AS4970:2009) shall be applied in relation to works.

Assessment of trees as part of a Development Application

- The assessment of a development application that proposes the removal or other work on trees (including iconic trees) will be guided by the prevailing planning instruments and controls such as a Development Control Plan or State Environmental Planning Policy (NSW).
- In the assessment of development applications, Council will consider opportunities for the protection, replacement and/or additional trees on private land where it is not inconsistent with the applicable planning instruments.
- Locally occurring native species are preferred unless there is reasonable justification for using other species.

Tree assessments under a Tree Permit Application or in relation to public trees

- Council's tree assessment methodology and processes will be:
    - mapped and documented.
    - undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced persons.
    - consistent with appropriate standards including AS4970:2009, and those of the Australian Institute of Arboriculture, and Arboriculture Australia.
- Where requests for the removal or pruning of trees are made, the supporting arborist assessments must be undertaken in accordance with Council's tree assessment methodology and procedures.
- In considering whether ongoing tree retention and/or rehabilitation is appropriate, staff will have regard for the long- term viability of the tree, overall risk, the costs associated with retention/rehabilitation, and the impact of deferring more suitable plantings.
- Where an iconic public tree has been recommended for removal, a review of the underlying assessment will be undertaken by a panel of internal subject matter experts, before a final

instruction is issued for removal. This does not apply in the case of trees that are at imminent risk of failure or in response to an emergency.

- On roads (or road reserves) where Council is the road authority, tree removal or pruning over roads or within road reserves will have regard to among other things the risks associated with the road classification and the use of the road.
- The removal or pruning of trees on public land will generally not be supported where it relates solely to supporting/enhancing advertising, to reducing the extent of normal leaf, flower, or fruit drop, to reducing the impact from any animal waste, noise, solar access, solar panels or for enhancement or restoring views from private or public property.
- The removal or pruning of trees on public land for allergies will only be considered if they can be medically proven and linked by a certified specialist.
- Council will have regard to its Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy and supporting framework in considering threats to public safety and/or utilities/assets before determining whether a tree should be removed.

Exemptions related to tree management

- In some cases works and types of trees species are exempt (i.e. does not require approval prior to pruning or removal).
- Council will maintain and regularly review a list of trees where approval for pruning and/or removal is not required (i.e. exempt trees). These exemptions will be reflected in Council's Development Control Plan.
- Other planning instruments and statutory controls may also specify exemptions in certain circumstances (such as the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008* NSW, and 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice for New South Wales, NSW Rural Fire Service)

Iconic trees

- Trees that Council considers iconic due to their environmental, social or cultural value will be incorporated into an Iconic Tree Register.
- The community can nominate a tree for Council's consideration for inclusion on the Iconic Tree Register.

Vandalism and Unauthorised Removal

- Council will make every reasonable effort to investigate and address unauthorised activities that impact upon the Northern Beaches tree canopy within its authority and resources.
- All reported acts of vandalism or unauthorised tree removal or pruning will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation and Council's policies and directions including Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy and Guidelines.
- In the event of a tree on public land requiring removal or pruning or any other treatment due to vandalism, the Council will inform surrounding residents of the vandalism via letters and or the erection of a sign in the place of or near to the removed or vandalised tree identifying the reason for the removal or pruning.

Community Notification

- The community will be informed about public tree removal or mitigation works in their area where Council is satisfied that it poses an unmanageable risk in the context of relevant policies and directions including Council's Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy and Risk Appetite Statement.

- Feedback from relevant stakeholders will be sought where a proposal for revegetation or replanting of public open space may result in loss of local amenity, changes to public access (via designated trails) and or loss of view lines, and this will be considered as part of the decision-making process.

- Relevant stakeholders will be consulted (as part of the normal project process) where public tree removal is required for the purpose of capital works and maintenance works or where the tree removal is not related to an unmanageable risk to community safety or damage to property or infrastructure.

- Where a permit has been issued for the removal of a tree on private land, a copy of the permit must be displayed on the street frontage of the property for a minimum of 7 days prior to the tree's removal and a minimum 7 days after the approved removal.

- Consultation, notification and other communication with the community and other stakeholders will be undertaken in accordance with relevant Council policies including Council's Community Engagement Policy and Strategy.

Advocacy and Education

- Council will advocate to government and/or industry for improvements to tree protection where it assists in achieving the objectives of a Council policy or strategy.

- Council will produce and publish information that assists the community in understanding the value and positive benefits of trees and the various controls that apply to trees in the Northern Beaches Local Government Area.

Scope and application

This Policy applies to:

- All Council staff, contract workers, consultants and all residents and owners when dealing with all trees and bushland on public and private lands.

- Land under Council's care, control and management.

This Policy does not apply to:

- the management of trees for bush fire purposes as this is covered in the Bush Fire Management Policy.

- emergency situations such as storms, bush fires and natural disasters.

- tree management controls established under legislation, regulations, planning instruments and controls.

References and related documents (including those references updated, repealed and or adopted thereafter)

Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 No 63 (NSW)
Biosecurity Act 2015 No 24 (NSW)
Electricity Supply (General) Regulation 2014 (NSW)
Electricity Supply Act 1995 No 94 (NSW)
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 No 203 (NSW)
Roads Act 1993 No 33 (NSW)

Rural Fires Act 1997 No 65 (NSW)
Sydney Water Act 1994 No 88 (NSW)
Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Act 2006 No 126 (NSW)
State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021 (NSW)
State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 NSW
Greener Places Framework 2020, Government Architect NSW
Greener Places Design Guide (Draft) 2020, Government Architect NSW
10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice for New South Wales, NSW Rural Fire Service
Northern Beaches Compliance and Enforcement Policy NB-P-2025
Northern Beaches Compliance and Enforcement Guidelines
Northern Beaches Community Engagement Policy and Strategy
Northern Beaches Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy NB-P-05
Northern Beaches Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2040
Northern Beaches Local Strategic Planning Statement - Towards 2040
Northern Beaches Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plan
Northern Beaches Policy Framework NB-P-01
Northern Beaches Tree Canopy Plan 2023
Standards Australia (2007) *Australian Standard Pruning of amenity trees* (AS4373:2007)
Standards Australia (2009) *Protection of trees on development sites* (AS4970:2009)
Standards Australia (2015) *Tree stock for landscape use* (AS2303:2015)

Definitions

Public Land: Public land includes Council owned and managed land that has been set aside for open spaces, road reserves, parks and recreational areas, natural areas, and general greenspace.

Canopy coverage: an indicator of the quantity of Urban Canopy often used as a measure of an Urban Canopy's general capacity to provide economic, social, environmental and aesthetic benefits.

Habitat: defined as any tree, living or dead, that provides, or could provide habitat for wildlife.

Healthy tree: A healthy tree has vibrant growth, dense leaves, strong bark, and minimal pests or diseases. It shows annual new growth and a strong root system.

Green Infrastructure: describes the network of green spaces, links and water systems that deliver multiple environmental, economic and social values and benefits to urban communities.

Iconic tree is a tree that is, in accordance with the defined categories of significance including over 5.0m in height and has visual/aesthetic significance that impacts on the streetscape by virtue of its size, botanic/scientific, ecological, and historical, commemorative, cultural or social significance, appearance, type, age, trees of conservation significance or habitat value.

Risk Appetite: amount of risk an entity is willing to accept or retain in order to achieve its objectives. It is a statement or series of statements that describes the entity's attitude towards risk taking.

Responsible Officer

Executive Manager Parks and Open Space

Review Date

June 2029.

Revision History

Revision	Date	Change	TRIM #
1	18 February 2025	Draft Tree Management Policy – Council resolved to publicly exhibit the draft Policy (Resolution 033/25)	2025/081840
2	11 June 2025	Revised draft for Council consideration following public exhibition	2025/298783
3	July 2025	Adopted by Council – 15 July 2025 Policies revoked: • Tree Management Policy – T69 • Tree Preservation Order Policy – ENV PL 440 • Street Tree Planting Policy – PL 416 • Urban Forest Policy – PL 800 • Significant Tree Policy – No-118	2025/481060