

PUBLIC SPACE TREE POLICY

Responsible Department: Infrastructure Delivery
Responsible Section: Parks and Open Spaces
Responsible Officer: Manager Parks and Open Spaces

Objective

To provide guidance on the selection, tending and maintenance of trees in urban area public spaces.

Introduction

Trees are an important part of the landscape of Narrabri Shire. As living organism trees are variable in shape, size, robustness, fruiting behaviour, and longevity. It is therefore important to ensure that trees selected for public areas within the Shire are appropriate for the environment in which they are planted, well-tended and removed when the organism deteriorates or the environment in which they are planted changes.

Public safety is the paramount concern for the selection and ongoing management of trees in public spaces in Narrabri Shire.

Policy

1. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Tree	A perennial gymnosperm or angiosperm which when mature, has a top height greater than 2.5m.

2. Management Responsibility

2.1. Council will have responsibility for:

- (a) Ensuring that trees in high use urban areas are regularly inspected for hazards that could pose a risk to public safety;
- (b) Ensuring that trees are routinely pruned as required with the aim of protecting public utilities, enhancing public safety and urban amenity, and improving or maintaining tree health;
- (c) Undertaking major tree surgery work as required;
- (d) Undertaking remedial tree surgery and the removal of fallen or broken timber following storm events;
- (e) Ensuring that dead and dying or dangerous trees that are identified are removed and replaced;
- (f) Ensuring that trees are removed and replaced as the environment in which they are located changes;
- (g) Ensuring trees do not pose a risk to aircraft in the vicinity of aerodromes and airstrips operated by Council.

- (h) Management's responsibilities will be implemented through ensuring that: sites are appropriate for trees, suitable trees are selected, and appropriate decisions are made throughout the useful life of a tree.

3. Species Selection

- 3.1. Acceptable tree species are ones which are capable of surviving without routine assistance from Council staff (including minimal assistance at the time of establishment).
- 3.2. Suitable tree species will not require regular applications of pesticides or herbicides to ensure either their visual amenity, or survival.
- 3.3. Suitable species include those species which are locally endemic, native (but not endemic), or exotic.
- 3.4. Consideration will be given to the suitability of a given species for a site. Elements to be considered include:
 - (a) Physical characteristics of tree including (but not limited to): rooting habit, tree form, crown width, number of leaders, presence of thorns, toxicity via contact, top height, propensity to drop materials & size of discarded material, pollen discharge, tree seasonality, propensity to self propagate, smell, aesthetic charm, and ability to survive in a contaminated / high stress environment;
 - (b) Rarity of species;
 - (c) Purchase cost of tree;
 - (d) Maintenance cost of tree;
 - (e) Cost of removing tree when mature (maximum size);
 - (f) Presence of obstacles (buildings, footpaths, underground utilities).
- 3.5. A species which has been gazetted by an Australian State or Federal Government as a noxious or environmental weed will not be a suitable species.

4. Budget Requirements

- 4.1. Council will provide funds in its annual budget for the purchase, maintenance, removal and replacement of trees in public spaces in Narrabri Shire.

5. Trees and Powerlines

- 5.1. Only suitable trees will be planted beneath powerlines.
- 5.2. Where trees are already present beneath powerlines these will be maintained and replaced with suitable species if removed.
- 5.3. Trees planted adjacent to a powerline should be a minimum of 15m from the edge of the line or the same distance as the top height of the tree when mature (whichever is the greater).

6. Inspection

- 6.1. Trees in high use areas such as near children's playgrounds are inspected every one to two years.
- 6.2. When a member of the public is concerned about the safety or health of a particular tree on public land (i.e., where a customer service request is lodged), a site visit will be arranged and appropriate corrective action will be taken.

7. Limb Pruning

- 7.1. Priority is given to trees in areas of high public use, such as aerodromes, helipads, streets, car parks, shopping centres and picnic areas.

- 7.2. Formative pruning of young trees is carried out in the first five years following planting.
- 7.3. Multiple leaders on young trees are removed or reduced when they are considered to be a potential future hazard.
- 7.4. Trees are pruned to avoid interference with power lines, street signs, street lights and other services.
- 7.5. Lower branches up to a height of 3 to 5 metres may be removed in order to give clear pedestrian and traffic access and clear sight lines, particularly for vehicles entering and leaving driveways, or approaching intersections, or to provide kerbside access for waste collection vehicles.
- 7.6. On main roads and major streets, lower branches may be removed to a maximum height of 5m.
- 7.7. To minimise hazards caused by wind and rain, thinning of individual tree crowns, or tree stands, may be carried out.
- 7.8. Dead, diseased, cracked, hollow or otherwise unsound wood will be removed.
- 7.9. Pruning near aerodromes and helipads will generally entail reducing the height of the tree to an acceptable height for the safe operation of aircraft.

8. Root Pruning

- 8.1. In cases where tree roots are becoming invasive and root damage to existing infrastructure that poses a public risk, is evident or imminent Council staff are to take action to prune the roots using an approved method, to a depth of 1.2m (or refusal, i.e. rock) and install an effective root barrier.
- 8.2. Root Pruning must be carried out despite the possible long term ill effects on the tree, in preference to the immediate removal of a tree.
- 8.3. Limb pruning is to reflect an equal reduction of the root structure (i.e. 25% loss of root is to be balanced by 25% reduction of canopy).
- 8.4. Trees that are to be root pruned are to be photographed immediately prior to root pruning and their response monitored and documented. Should the trees condition deteriorate to a point where it shows symptoms of dying or becoming unstable an arborist is to inspect the tree and provide advice on how the tree should be managed.

9. Watering

- 9.1. Trees will only be watered to ensure their establishment and survival.
- 9.2. Residents are encouraged to water young trees in their neighbourhood to help them become established in the landscape.

10. Fertilisers

- 10.1. Fertilisers Trees will only be fertilised at the time of establishment to ensure their survival and maximise their growth following planting.

11. Spraying

- 11.1. Tree selection and management aims to minimise the use of pesticides.
- 11.2. Tree species are selected on the basis of their resistance to pests and diseases.
- 11.3. Trees are only treated with pesticides during the establishment period (1 to 3 years).
- 11.4. In any case trees greater than 5 metres in height are not sprayed and Eucalypt species are not sprayed specifically for the control of sawfly larvae.

12. Tree Removal

12.1. Council will endeavour to provide advice 14 days prior to the removal or major maintenance of a tree, (excluding a response to storm or other damage leaving the tree in a hazardous state) as follows. Advice will include the proposed replacement tree, if any.

Normal Street Tree	Resident affected (i.e. property owner adjacent to the tree).
CBD Street Tree	Business affected (i.e. business owner adjacent to the tree), Chamber of Commerce, and a notice in the local paper.
Park or Reserve	Notice in the Local Paper.
Playing Fields and Surrounds	Notice in the Local Paper.

12.2. Appeals against tree removal or major maintenance must be made in writing to the General Manager 48 hours before the nominated action date, and will only be upheld if contravention to this policy can be demonstrated; in which case action will be taken to ensure the policy is upheld.

12.3. Tree removal will be approved where:

- (a) In the opinion of an arborist and or Council staff it is dead, damaged, unstable or in irreversible decline;
- (b) In the opinion of an arborist and or Council staff it is dead, damaged, unstable or in irreversible decline as the result of root pruning in accordance with this policy;
- (c) In the opinion of the Director of Engineering Services the tree poses an imminent high risk to public safety;
- (d) In the opinion of the Director of Engineering the tree constitutes a traffic hazard or other identifiable hazard to public safety which cannot be corrected by limb pruning;
- (e) In the opinion of the Director of Engineering the tree penetrates, or is about to penetrate the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces of a Council operated aerodrome or airfield, or otherwise pose a risk to aviation;
- (f) In the opinion of the Director of Engineering the tree is located in a position which would interfere with the ability of Council to install new infrastructure required by the community or, the new infrastructures integrity;
- (g) In the opinion of the Director of Engineering the tree has disturbed below-ground services such as power lines or water pipes and root pruning, in accordance with this policy is not physically Possible (ie the tree is on top of the service or the trunk is within 2m of the impacted service);
- (h) The tree is a part of a dense planting which requires thinning to, in the opinion of an arborist, and or Council staff promote the health of the remaining trees; and
- (i) The tree is less than 5m tall.

12.4. Tree removal must be specifically approved by Council where:

- (a) The tree is an unsuitable species for where it is planted, such as poplars and willows near storm water lines, or is in conflict with the design intent of the landscape;
- (b) The tree was designated as temporary in the original landscape design and has reached the end of its intended life span;
- (c) The tree interferes, or has the potential to significantly interfere with a floodway;
- (d) The tree is in the main street precinct of Boggabri, Narrabri or Wee Waa, is greater than 5m tall, and in the opinion of the Director of Engineering is not posing an imminent threat to the public; and

- (e) The tree is within the boundary of a sporting complex of Boggabri, Narrabri or Wee Waa, is greater than 5m tall, and in the opinion of the Director of Engineering is not posing an imminent threat to the public.

12.5. Trees will not be removed for reasons such as:

- (a) Householder preference for no street trees, or for a different species;
- (b) Complaints about appearance (unless these are related to very poor tree health);
- (c) Complaints about leaf litter or twigs; or
- (d) Complaints relating to tree roots protruding above the ground or competing with lawns.

13. Tree Replacement

- 13.1. Trees will be replaced with regard to the current and perceived future use of a site. Trees will only be purchased within the allocation provided for the purchase of trees in Council's annual budget.
- 13.2. When Council plans to plant more than six trees at any one time (either new or replacement) in a Main Street, or Playing Field and Surrounds area, it will advertise for Public Comment (28 days) on the species to be planted, and the species to be planted will be determined by Council.
- 13.3. Trees will be planted in accordance with current best practice and root barriers installed where appropriate (mandatory in a street environment).

14. Qualified Arborist

- 14.1. Council will seek expressions of interest from suitable qualified and experienced consulting arborist to become Councils "Qualified Arborist" to provide professional recommendations on the management and removal of trees.
- 14.2. The Qualified Arborist is to be independent from any tree removal contractors engaged by Council.
- 14.3. Any reference to an arborist in this policy is a reference to Council's qualified arborist.

15. Review

- 15.1. This policy will be reviewed within 12 months of an Ordinary Council Election or from time-to-time on an as-needs basis.

References

- *State Records Act 1998 (NSW).*

History

Minute Number	Meeting Date	Description of Change
150/2007	March 20, 2007	Adopted
340/2008	June 17, 2008	Reviewed
26/2012	February 21 2012	Reviewed
210/2013	April 2, 2013	Reviewed
	August 31, 2021	Rebranded
336/2022	October 18, 2022	Adopted