

Tree Policy 2021

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1. Context	1
2. Scope	1
3. Policy Objectives	2
4. Policy Statement.....	2
5. Tree Protection Requirements.....	3
6. Risk Management.....	3
7. Tree Pruning and Removal Criteria	4
8. Bonds and Payments	5
9. Tree Roots and Infrastructure.....	6
10. Community Consultation and Involvement	6
Supporting material.....	7

1. Context

- 1.1. As set out in the Urban Forest Strategy, the City of Melbourne identifies its tree population as critical infrastructure and an asset that provides innumerable environmental and health benefits to the municipality.
- 1.2. All works that have the potential to impact public trees owned or managed by the City of Melbourne must abide by the protection and retention requirements outlined in this document.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This Policy applies to all trees in the municipality that are either owned or managed by the City of Melbourne, including but not limited to:
 - 2.1.1. VicRoads owned trees as contemplated by an Agreement under section 15 of the *Road Management Act 2004* ('the VicRoads Agreement') dated September 2005.
 - 2.1.2. Trees located on crown land and where City of Melbourne is the Committee of Management.
 - 2.1.3. Any tree which has a part of its trunk growing on council managed land and is known to the City of Melbourne.
- 2.2. All trees covered by this Policy shall be referred to as public trees.
- 2.3. Council currently manages over 80,000 public trees.
- 2.4. This Policy must be adhered to by any party that undertakes an activity that could negatively impact a public tree.
- 2.5. The practices and procedures detailed in this Policy are consistent with contemporary best practices in the arboricultural industry and are intended to promote healthy, structurally sound trees.
- 2.6. Subject to the City of Melbourne's Delegations Policy, a City of Melbourne Arborist may, at their discretion, apply this Policy so as to modify or add any condition,

practice or standard outlined, so long to do so would be within the parameters of best practice.

- 2.7. Privately owned trees are not covered by this Policy.
- 2.8. Tree planting and establishment is outside the scope of this Policy. This is covered by the Urban Forest Strategy, Urban Forest Precinct Plans and Tree Maintenance Contract.

3. Policy Objectives

- 3.1. To recognise the value and importance of public trees that comprise the City of Melbourne's urban forest and to provide adequate protection for those trees to ensure each tree has the best chance of growing to its full potential.
- 3.2. To promote the preservation of the existing tree canopy cover within the City of Melbourne's public urban forest.
- 3.3. To address the potential interaction between public trees and surrounding infrastructure.
- 3.4. To maintain and improve the long-term viability of public trees by ensuring that appropriate work methodologies, protection measures and maintenance requirements are implemented in accordance with best practice before, during and after construction or other events or activities that may adversely impact public trees.
- 3.5. To define the circumstances under which public trees may be pruned or removed.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1. In recognition of the Urban Forest Strategy, all public trees covered by this Policy will be:
 - 4.1.1. Protected from any activity, including development, events or other activity that impacts their health and/or longevity.
 - 4.1.2. Protected from infrastructure conflict, with priority given to the relocation of infrastructure away from Tree Protection Zones to reduce the potential for immediate or future damage wherever reasonably practical.
 - 4.1.3. Given a priority status when the City of Melbourne is considering an application that has the potential to impact a tree, prior to the approval of any permit wherever reasonably practical.

5. Tree Protection Requirements

- 5.1. Trees grow in a delicate balance with their environment and any change must be minimised if trees are to remain healthy and fulfil their maximum potential. It is rarely possible to repair stressed or injured trees so damage must be avoided during any works within a Tree Protection Zone. Tree root systems are opportunistic and often extend far beyond the drip-line of a tree's canopy, especially in a highly modified urban environment. The disturbance of a tree's growing environment can result in soil structures that will not support root growth, which in turn could lead to disease, decline, structural instability or premature tree death.
- 5.2. In accordance with Australian Standard 4970-2009 '*Protection of trees on development sites*' tree protection should begin in the planning and design stage of any works that are proposed that may impact a Tree Protection Zone. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) must be prepared by a suitably qualified and

experienced Arborist (minimum Australian Qualification Framework Level 5, Diploma of Horticulture [Arboriculture] and/or equivalent experience).

- 5.3. An AIA must be submitted at the application stage for any permit issued by the City of Melbourne that has the potential to impact public trees.
- 5.4. Any AIA proposing public tree removal must demonstrate that requirements of Section 7 - Tree Pruning and Removal Criteria has been met (see below).
- 5.5. The AIA must be used to prepare a site specific Tree Protection Plan (TPP) to the satisfaction of a City of Melbourne Arborist. The TPP must be prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced Arborist (minimum Australian Qualification Framework Level 5, Diploma of Horticulture [Arboriculture] and/or equivalent experience).
- 5.6. The TPP must be submitted to a City of Melbourne Arborist for approval prior to the commencement of any works (including demolition and construction). Once the TPP is accepted, a tree protection bond must be provided in accordance with Section 8 - Bonds and Payments.
- 5.7. A Tree Protection Zone must be established and maintained for the duration of any works that have the potential to impact the viability of any public tree.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1. The City of Melbourne will actively manage its tree population and the risk trees may pose to persons, property, surrounding assets and public safety in accordance with best practice tree risk assessment methodology and City of Melbourne Risk Management Corporate Policy (2015).
- 6.2. All public trees will be maintained in accordance to City of Melbourne's Tree Maintenance Contract.
- 6.3. All reasonable tree risk management controls will be considered to ensure public tree risk is within the City of Melbourne's accepted range.
- 6.4. All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise the potential impact of tree root damage to private infrastructure as detailed in Section 9 - Tree Roots and Infrastructure (see below).

7. Tree Pruning and Removal Criteria

- 7.1. The City of Melbourne will monitor its tree population in accordance with its Tree Maintenance Contract by undertaking general tree maintenance activities such as tree risk assessment inspections, tree pruning, tree removal and tree replacement where deemed appropriate.
- 7.2. Tree pruning or removal will not occur in any form without the written authority of a City of Melbourne Arborist.
- 7.3. Pruning of roots and branches will be in accordance with the Australian Standard AS 4373-2007 '*Pruning of amenity trees*', or any more recent standard.
- 7.4. All options for tree retention must be explored and exhausted to the satisfaction of a City of Melbourne Arborist before public tree removal is approved.
- 7.5. Tree pruning or removal will not be considered in the following circumstances:
 - 7.5.1. If there are practical means for canopy or tree retention.
 - 7.5.2. If the purpose of the pruning or removal is to reduce the height or size to minimise obstruction of views, vistas or commercial advertisement signage.
 - 7.5.3. To reduce leaf and fruit litter or debris from the tree or any fauna that may be inhabiting the tree.

- 7.5.4. For solar access to private property, gardens or solar panels.
- 7.5.5. For unjustified property damage claims.
- 7.5.6. For causing minor allergenic or irritant responses.
- 7.6. Tree pruning or removal will be considered by a City of Melbourne Arborist in the following circumstances:
 - 7.6.1. A tree poses an unacceptable level of risk to people or property following a tree risk assessment and there is no practical arboricultural intervention that could effectively reduce the risk.
 - 7.6.2. A tree is dead, dying or in severe decline from natural causes or irreversibly diseased, unless it is determined that it should remain in the landscape for habitat provision or other purposes.
 - 7.6.3. A City of Melbourne Arborist considers that a tree may be an inappropriate species for a location, having first consulted with the community and considered the strategic objectives of City of Melbourne's Urban Forest Strategy and Future Urban Forest documents.
 - 7.6.4. A City of Melbourne Arborist considers that all possible design solutions or construction and works methodologies to retain a tree have been exhausted and documented and the required permit documents have been issued.
 - 7.6.5. A City of Melbourne Arborist considers a tree is found to be causing damage to private infrastructure and there are no reasonably practical options to mitigate future damage.
 - 7.6.6. A City of Melbourne Arborist considers a tree is the primary cause of inducing severe allergenic or health response.
 - 7.6.7. A tree is defined to be a poor arboricultural specimen and contributes little amenity or ecological services.
 - 7.6.8. Property clearance pruning with consideration to tree health, structure and pruning dose as defined in AS 4373-2007 '*Pruning of amenity trees*'.
 - 7.6.9. If a development project results in an improvement to green space/infrastructure that would not be possible without the removal of existing trees.

8. Bonds and Payments

- 8.1. Where any works have the potential to impact public trees, a tree protection bond must be provided to the City of Melbourne.
- 8.2. The bond will be held for the duration of the works against the successful implementation of a City of Melbourne approved Tree Protection Plan (TPP), as confirmed by a Project Arborist Completion Report and released when any outstanding invoices for remedial works have been paid.
- 8.3. When a tree pruning or removal application is approved in accordance with City of Melbourne's Delegations Policy and Section 7 Tree Pruning and Removal (see above), all associated costs for the value of the tree must be agreed to in writing by the property owner or representative and paid prior to the pruning or removal of the tree(s).
- 8.4. The value of each tree will be calculated by a City of Melbourne Arborist using the City of Melbourne Tree Valuation Method.
- 8.5. The costs associated with removal of a tree include:

- A – Removal Costs: amounting to the fees incurred by the City of Melbourne for physically removing the tree.
 - B – Amenity Value: calculated in accordance with Council’s Amenity Tree Valuation Formula.
 - C – Ecosystem Services Value: calculated in accordance with the i-Tree Eco tool.
 - D – Reinstatement Greening fee: calculated to cover the cost to the City of Melbourne to reinstate the growing environment to enable a replacement tree to grow to its full canopy potential, either in the same location or if the plot is lost, in an alternative location within the municipality.
- 8.6. If pruning to facilitate any project exceeds compliance with the City of Melbourne’s Tree Maintenance Contract or legislative requirements, the associated costs must be agreed to in writing and paid by the applicant prior to the pruning occurring.
- 8.7. The costs associated with pruning will include:
- 8.7.1. Cost of works based on City of Melbourne’s Tree Maintenance Contract Schedule of Rates.
 - 8.7.2. The value of the portion of the canopy removed by pruning, beyond the contract specification. The value will be determined as a percentage of total tree value (Section 8.5) assuming the pre-pruning canopy represents 100% of calculated tree value.

9. Tree Roots and Infrastructure

- 9.1. Tree growth is strongly influenced by below-ground conditions. Tree root growth is opportunistic and will proliferate wherever moisture, aeration, nutrition and soil structure are favourable. Tree root growth in the urban environment is highly modified and is not governed by property boundaries. The City of Melbourne will consider the need for tree root abatement measures such as tree root pruning or tree root barriers in certain circumstances where required and at the City of Melbourne’s discretion.
- 9.2. The City of Melbourne will comprehensively investigate claims of property damage that are alleged to be a result from public trees.
- 9.3. The property owner is responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of pipes to the legal point of storm water discharge or sewer connection point.
- 9.4. The City of Melbourne will seek to resolve tree root conflicts in the following manner:
- 9.4.1. All claims of tree root damage from public trees will be investigated.
 - 9.4.2. The City of Melbourne will consider the need for tree root abatement measures such as exploratory trenches, tree root pruning or tree root barriers in certain circumstances where deemed required and at the City of Melbourne’s discretion.
 - 9.4.3. Tree removal will only be considered if no practical arboricultural or engineering solution can be determined to mitigate proven damage to private infrastructure.
- 9.5. Claims of property damage from tree roots must comply with the City of Melbourne ‘Guidelines for submitting a claim for damage to private property’.
- 9.6. The City of Melbourne will not remove public trees for unsubstantiated claims of storm water pipe damage, sewer damage or theoretical zones of influence.

10. Community Consultation and Involvement

- 10.1. The community is passionate about its trees and relies on the City of Melbourne to ensure the maintenance and preservation of public trees for the long-term benefit of the city. The City of Melbourne will:
 - 10.1.1. Inform the community of scheduled notable public tree removals prior to removal occurring.
 - 10.1.2. Provide the community an opportunity to comment or request information on proposed tree removals.
 - 10.1.3. Utilise appropriate notification methods including: signage on site, site meetings, direct contact or letters to directly affected residents.
 - 10.1.4. Methods of notification will be determined in accordance with a number of factors including; the prominence of the location, the significance of the tree, the size of the tree, the number of trees and impact of removal.
 - 10.1.5. Provide the community with the reasons for public tree removal if prior notification cannot be undertaken.
- 10.2. Removal of public trees that are deemed to present an immediate, significant hazard to public safety will be undertaken immediately and may not necessarily provide a period of notification and community consultation.

Supporting material

City of Melbourne Delegations Policy (2020)
City of Melbourne Urban Forest Strategy (2012-2032)
City of Melbourne Urban Forest Precinct Plans (2012-2025)
City of Melbourne Tree Maintenance Contract Specification (2021)
City of Melbourne Risk Management Corporate Policy (2015)
City of Melbourne Tree Protection in the City of Melbourne (2019)
City of Melbourne Tree Valuation Method (2021)
City of Melbourne Code of Practice for Building and Works (2021)
City of Melbourne Guidelines for submitting a claim for damage to private property (2019)
Australian Standard 4970-2009 '*Protection of trees on development sites*'
Australian Standard AS 4373-2007 '*Pruning of amenity trees*'
American National Standards Institute A300 (2017)
Minimum Industry Standards (MIS) Arboriculture Australia
ISO AS/NZS 31000:2018 Risk Management (2018)

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