



NSROC

Regional Tree

Management Policy

Policy No: 06/01

Adopted: 11 May 2006

Purpose

Trees are a vital component of the green infrastructure of our cities. They provide a crucial ecological, environmental and amenity resource in the urban environment.

It is of fundamental importance to urban society that this key natural asset is protected, nurtured and enhanced in order to make our cities sustainable and pleasant places in which to live - both now and for future generations. This goal will require a mix of visionary and realistic management strategies, supported by genuine and demonstrated commitment by the community and all tiers of government.

The purpose of this policy is to help achieve this goal by ensuring appropriate and consistent tree preservation and management within the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) region.

Applicability

This policy applies to member Councils of NSROC. As at the date of adoption, the member councils of NSROC are as follows:

- Hornsby Shire Council
- Hunters Hill Council
- Ku-ring-gai Council
- Lane Cove Council
- North Sydney Council
- Ryde City Council; and
- Willoughby City Council

Scope

This policy outlines the requirements and involvement of member Councils of NSROC in managing the tree infrastructure in both the private and public domain.

This policy supplements individual Council tree management policies with a co-ordinated Regional tree management policy based on common values and outcomes. This will assist councils in reviewing their current policies and in articulating common issues of concern to utility providers, state government agencies, individual residents, property developers and the like.

However, the policy does not replicate the comprehensive arrangements enacted by individual NSROC councils, nor reduce flexibility in the development and implementation of local policies and action-plans that meet specific local needs and deliver on local tree infrastructure outcomes.

Background

The NSROC region is recognised as having a substantial and diverse tree infrastructure, which is of great importance to its residents and the broader population of Sydney. The region is characterised by its established tree canopy; its substantial system of reserves, parks and holdings of remnant bush lands, and by the location within, and proximity to, substantial national and regional parks.

In recent times the NSROC region, like the rest of Sydney, has been under substantial and continual pressure to accommodate a quickly growing population. Residents in the region have been active in ensuring that the natural heritage values of the region are protected in the on-going push for further urban consolidation.

Increasing emphasis is being placed on the sustainable management of trees by Councils in the region. Sustainable management plans have sought to maintain and enhance the tree-scape through a comprehensive set of landscape practices; including tree plantings, tree preservation orders, the creation of bushland reserves, the adoption of tree-management policies and other tree-related measures.

This policy also recognises the low level of regional data available on tree management, the inherent difficulties in assessing the tree assets across the region, and the lack of resource assistance provided by state and federal governments in managing urban trees.

Values statement

The beautiful landscapes, diverse plant and animal habitats, healthy and clean environment, lifestyles and property values of the NSROC region are all to some extent made possible because of the substantial presence of trees on private and public land. It is not always obvious, and some may not appreciate these values, but overall there are many benefits for everyone in living with trees.

1. Trees are a major influence on streetscapes, contributing greatly to the appearance and value of property.
2. Trees have intrinsic values that make people feel closer to nature and remind them they are a part of it.
3. Trees filter out nutrients and contaminants from the soil, improving soil health and water quality.
4. Trees hold the soil together, preventing soil erosion and reducing siltation of streams.
5. Trees reduce noise and dust, and help reduce heat radiation.
6. Trees consume carbon dioxide and produce oxygen for us to breathe, helping reduce the greenhouse effect and slowing global warming.
7. Trees produce nutrients for other plants and provide compost for water conservation and soil protection.
8. Trees provide food and shelter for animals and plants, helping them survive in urban areas and preserving bio-diversity.
9. Trees moderate strong winds, providing shelter for property and people, and help reduce the risk of property damage.
10. Trees provide natural air-conditioning, and shade protection from direct exposure to the sun.
11. Trees help to ameliorate the effects of climate change and global warming.
12. Local indigenous tree species, and in particular remnant trees, are of particular ecological value and contribute to local area identity.

Issues

NSROC Councils are confronted with the following tree management issues that need to be addressed as a priority:

1. Development pressures in the NSROC region

There are a number of development pressures impacting on tree numbers and viability, including:

- Declining availability of land due to larger building footprints and increased hard surface areas, including paved outdoor living areas and driveways.
- Increased pressure to develop open space areas on public and private land for active use and other intensive use purposes.
- Reduction in space available for large tree plantings - which will affect the scale of the future tree infrastructure.
- Changing fashions in landscape design, with formal style gardens becoming increasingly popular, and a reluctance to plant big trees.
- Movement towards trees being located predominantly on public land, rather than on private property.
- Removal of existing mature trees to accommodate urban consolidation and site development.

2. Managing trees, including risk assessment of trees:

Key areas to consider include:

- Property owners and public authorities need to be aware of their legal rights and obligations to protect trees, and also the consequences of damage to property or injury associated with trees.
- Trees of the wrong type or growing in the wrong place can create problems in the urban environment and therefore removal, reduction or replacement may be appropriate in these circumstances.
- The declining condition of the existing tree canopy due to ageing, stress from disturbance, prolonged drought, environmental changes and other factors.
- High maintenance cost for trees, and the need for Councils to have adequate funding for tree management.
- The impact of risk minimisation requirements, such as Planning for Bushfire Protection guidelines, public liability management, and other legal issues.
- The loss of biodiversity, particularly habitat-rich mature trees, which puts increased pressure on remaining ecosystems.

3. Planning for additional and replacement trees:

Planning to include:

- The replacement of tree avenues and landmark trees as they mature and age, and managing community reaction to this process.
- The need for large trees in the landscape - and the regular maintenance of these trees throughout their life cycle.
- The primacy of local indigenous species as replacement and additional tree stock as appropriate to site conditions.
- The selection and sourcing of suitable replacement trees.

4. Conflicts with built infrastructure

The major conflicts are:

- Damage caused by trees to aging, poorly maintained or constructed water and sewerage pipes, often exacerbated by inappropriate tree species selection and location on both public and private property.
- Damage caused by trees, and the perceived threat of damage, to existing buildings and associated structures, often exacerbated by inappropriate tree species selection and location on both public and private property.
- Poor pruning practices and inappropriate species selection of trees under overhead services.
- Damage done to trees by the construction and maintenance of roads, footpaths and associated infrastructure, including enlarged, relocated or additional driveway crossings.
- Damage done to trees during the course of development and building works, particularly on private property.
- Problems caused by the installation and maintenance of other utility infrastructure, such as gas and data cables.

5. Developing awareness in the community and balancing community outcomes.

The major needs to consider include:

- The necessity to have professional and well-trained tree management staff due to the increasingly complex nature of urban tree management.
- The need for more community education and awareness about the value of trees in the urban environment.
- The need to raise community awareness about the need to manage trees properly throughout their life cycle, especially trees on private property.
- The need for authorities and service providers to recognise the true asset value of

trees in the urban environment, and to be more committed to management strategies that consider this value.

- The need for the private sector tree industry – from nursery to arborist – to improve the standard of product and service delivery.
- The balance that councils must achieve in managing the various risks and benefits of trees in the environment, in order to achieve the best community outcomes.

Policy Guidelines

Northern Sydney Councils have a range of policies, planning instruments, and legislation that provide the framework in which trees are managed. This policy does not seek to duplicate or replace this existing framework. Instead, it recognises the need for the coordinated and sustainable management of the NSROC tree infrastructure. This will assist councils in reviewing their current policies and in articulating common issues of concern to utility providers, state government agencies, individual residents, property developers and the like.

1. Regional Tree Management Principles

- 1.1 Each NSROC council has comprehensive policies, action plans, professionally trained staff and adequate resource provision to manage trees to current best practice and contribute to the sustainability of the NSROC tree assets.
- 1.2 NSROC councils are committed to ensuring consistency in terminology, definitions and sustainable practices.
- 1.3 NSROC councils will consider and continue implementing joint initiatives for better management of trees, including; joint training, sub-regional and regional tree management projects, information sharing, developing and maintaining tree management networks, and pooling resources for improved regional tree management.
- 1.4 The all NSROC councils recognise the financial, social, environmental and ecological value of the regional and local NSROC tree-scapes and work actively on behalf of the community to ensure that they are sustainably managed for future generations.
- 1.5 NSROC councils will seek to maintain the tree infrastructure of the NSROC region and the recognised leafy character of the NSROC urban environment - while recognising that not every individual tree in the region can or should be preserved.

2. Specific Tree Maintenance Guidelines

- 2.1 Tree management in the NSROC region recognises the proprietary rights of property owners and their legal obligations.
- 2.2 Tree management recognises risk management and harm minimisation strategies that are necessary for councils to fulfil their legal and statutory obligations.

- 2.3 NSROC Council Tree Management policies will be ongoing and adhere to professional, sustainable and responsible practices.
- 2.4 NSROC Councils recognise that tree management is a proactive rather than a reactive management process, and will work towards securing funding for survey work, remedial tree maintenance and replanting works.
- 2.5 NSROC Councils will operate with an underlying philosophy that all trees are worthy of preservation, unless proved otherwise.
- 2.6 NSROC Councils recognise the important contribution trees make to the character, value and appearance of a location and ensure that proposed development recognises this contribution.
- 2.7 NSROC Councils will emphasise the value of *significant* trees and recognise them as a legitimate constraint to development.
- 2.8 NSROC Councils will follow the precautionary principle in respect of tree management, which involves the implementation of cost effective measures to retain and protect trees, unless there is a proven justification for pruning or removal.
- 2.9 NSROC Councils will adhere to tree selection policies that value a diverse range of tree species and forms, with particular recognition of the ecological contribution of locally indigenous and remnant trees.
- 2.10 NSROC councils recognise that urban tree management overlaps with bushland and biodiversity management.
- 2.11 NSROC Councils will adhere to tree planting policies that seek to replenish and enhance the existing tree infrastructure.
- 2.12 NSROC Councils will use appropriately qualified and/or experienced persons for all tree management tasks, including tree assessment, pruning and removal works.

Related Policies and Documents

The following is a list of the policies, plans and planning instruments which NSROC Councils use, consider or follow in the tree management process:

Hornsby Shire Council

- Tree Management Plan October 2000;
- Street Tree Strategy September 1997;
- Significant Tree/Significant Tree Group Assessment Procedures;
- Heritage Listed Trees under Schedule D of HSLEP.

Hunters Hill Council

- Policy and Schedule for Street and Reserve Tree Plantings in Hunters Hill;
- Tree Preservation Order;
- Guidelines, Recommendations and Policy for Trees and Vegetation;
- Significant Tree Register.

Ku-ring-gai Council

- Ku-ring-gai Council Tree Management Policy 1999
- Tree Preservation Order 2003
- Proactive Tree works Policy 2003
- Street Tree Masterplan 1997
- Tree Notification Policy
- Various policies within DCPs

Lane Cove Council

- Tree Preservation Order, July 2004;
- Tree Preservation and Landscape Policy; 2004
- Various Landscape Policies within DCPs;
- Street Tree Planting Policy; 1991
- Significant Tree Policy; June 2003

North Sydney Council

- Tree Preservation Order 2001;
- Significant Tree Register;
- Street Tree Strategy 2005.

Ryde City Council

- Tree Preservation Order and Tree Management Plan.

Willoughby City Council

- Willoughby LEP 1995
- Tree Preservation Order
- Landscape provisions in various Development Control Plans
- Willoughby Natural Heritage Register
- Street Tree Policies

All Councils

- Species and communities scheduled under *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1997*;
- Plants scheduled under *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* and other Environmental Weeds lists;
- Statewide Best Practice Manual (Version 2, May 2003) or other related publications and advices as provided by Council's insurers.

Policy Authority

This policy is authorised under the direction of the NSROC Board by:

Dominic Johnson
Executive Director
Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

(contact details provided below)

Getting Help

For interpretations, resolution of problems and special situations relating to this policy please contact:

Dominic Johnson
Executive Director
Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
P: (02) 9911 3595
Email: djohnson@lanecove.nsw.gov.au

Policy Review

It is anticipated that this policy will be reviewed within **five (5) years** from the date of adoption.

Adopted by NSROC

Date: 11 May 2006

Resolution/Minute No.:06/01