Council Approved Policy

HUME CITY COUNCIL

Tree Management Policy

Policy reference No:	POL/202
File No:	HCC04/794
Strategic objective:	1.3 Safe and well-maintained places
Adopted by Council:	9 December 2019
Re-Adopted:	14 July 2025
Date for review:	14 February 2028
Responsible officer:	Manager City Parks and Open Spaces
Department:	City Parks and Open Spaces

1 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 This policy defines how Hume City Council will manage trees in the City and will assist residents, property owners, authorities, Council officers, contractors, developers and those working with Council to understand the City's requirements for the planning and management of street and reserve trees.

1.2 This policy is guided by aspirations expressed in the Hume City Council Plan 2021-2025, Hume's Urban Forest Principles 2020 and Hume's Open Space Strategy 2025.

1.3 Council currently has an average canopy cover across the municipality of 4%, which is very low when compared to other municipalities across Melbourne.

1.4 Trees contribute to the appearance of the City through their aesthetic value, by providing identity and character. In addition, trees contribute to improving urban environments by absorbing heat, providing shade, reducing solar radiation, providing habitat, utilising storm water run-off and assisting in air purification.

1.5 In order to sustain this contribution, trees need to be consistently managed according to current 'best practice' in arboriculture and Council's commitments, as documented in the Council Plan.

1.6 Tree management at Hume City Council includes tree planning, tree planting, managing tree health and structure and tree removal.

2 PURPOSE

2.1 The aim of this policy is to provide consistency with decision making in regard to planting, protection, pruning, and removing trees and to document Hume City Council's commitment to improving the natural shade and other benefits to the City through the maintenance and enhancement of its street and reserve trees.

3 SCOPE

3.1 The scope of this Policy covers the planning, planting, maintenance and removal of trees on Council owned parks, reserves, open space and road reserves.

In Scope	Out of Scope
Council owned and/or managed parks and open spaces. Council owned and/or managed road reserves as defined in the ***'Code of Practice Operational Responsibility for Public Roads'*** Crown land that Council is the gazette committee of management, to the extent of Council's obligations under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 Land to which Council has entered into an agreement/licenses/leases requiring management of tree.	Private land. Public land owned by other agencies where Council has no formalized agreement for tree management or maintenance. Vegetation planted for the purposes of being a hedge, shrub border or shrub garden, native revegetation or regeneration. Sites of ecological significance and natural areas, including those that are on legal road, currently or proposed to be managed in accordance with ecological principles. Crown or other land that the Council does not own or have a legal responsibility or agreement to.

4 OBJECTIVE

4.1 Tree Planning

4.1.1 Planning for new trees occurs continuously throughout the year and high profile avenues, parks and activity areas as well as areas with low tree numbers will be prioritized for large scale tree planting.

Resident requests for small scale, localised tree planting will be considered as a priority particularly when it is adjacent to their dwelling following a site assessment.

Community engagement is an important part of planning for the trees of the future. A replacement tree will be planted when a tree is removed in the same location whenever possible.

4.1.2 Any construction or other activity that affects street or reserve trees is to be conducted in collaboration with the City Parks and Open Spaces department to minimize the impact on trees.

4.1.3 Retained trees are to be protected from development in accordance with the Australian Standard AS4970 The Protection of Trees on Development Sites

4.1.4 Hard assets, e.g. indented parking bays, constructed on soil growing media on Council land should be done in a manner that minimizes the impact of the construction on the soil and tree roots, utilising permeable surfaces and a structural soil base to retain and enhance tree canopy where possible.

4.2 Tree Planting

4.2.1 Tree planting season is generally between the months of April – September as this has optimal climatic conditions to ensure planting success.

4.2.2 All tree planting undertaken on Council managed land throughout the City must comply with Council requirements

4.2.3 Council will select species of tree for planting that are suitable for, and perform well within the site, and that have the ability to contribute positively to the City's environment. A broad diversity of species is required to mitigate against climate impacts, pest and disease outbreaks, and to support local wildlife. Council's Recommended Species list provided guidance to land developers on suitable tree species and where they should be used in the landscape.

While this list aids tree selection in Council's planting programs, there may be situations where non listed species/cultivars are selected for use i.e. where trials of new species and cultivars are undertaken and to maintain the integrity of existing landscapes.

4.2.4 Proposed tree planting for new developments and subdivisions must comply with Council's 'Recommended Species List' and 'Tree Planting and Establishment Specifications' and/or *HUME CITY COUNCIL LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES* - Landscape processes for developers, unless approved by City Parks and Open Spaces Department.

4.2.5 Residents are not permitted to plant trees within the nature-strip, sites within the road reserve or in a Council managed park.

4.2.6 The tree planting program will be listed on Council's website so the community can stay informed of upcoming planting activities. Residents within a tree replacement site will be notified via a mailout. Residents who live in the street where a renewal tree planting is planned may be consulted on the character of the street. The final decision as to the positioning and species of the tree will be made by the Council.

4.2.7 No compensation will be available to residents for the removal of trees planted by the resident. Notification will be given to allow residents to remove the tree. If not actioned within three weeks, Council staff or contractors will remove the tree to allow a new tree to be planted.

4.3 Tree Pruning

4.3.1 Tree pruning by Council will be in accordance with Australian Standard AS 4373- 2007 Pruning of amenity Trees or its successor.

4.3.2 Council will maintain tree clearances in accordance with the current and relevant State Government legislation (i.e. the minimum clearance between trees and services, road signs etc.). Council will prune trees under powerlines in compliance with the Electric Line Clearance Management Plan.

4.3.3 Tree height (of the tree crown) reduction pruning, or crown lifting (removing lower branches) will not be used to alleviate tree issues such as shading or debris (leaves, bark, fruit, flowers) unless the branches are within 2 metres of a building, or the establishment or retention or enhancement of views.

4.3.4 Council will undertake crown modification including crown reduction pruning of trees for:

- Trees with poor or very poor health and structure and it is appropriate that the tree be retained; or
- to provide clearance of overhead electrical conductors; or
- where there are environmental reasons for the retention of the tree (e.g. slope stability, habitat, providing shelter for new planting); or where an approved landscape plan requires trees to be pruned to meet specific landscape design outcomes.

4.3.5 Council will prune trees to alleviate identified hazards such as:

- overhead services clearance; and
- removal of broken, dead, dying, or diseased branches; and
- branches obstructing footpaths, cycle ways, carriageways, vehicle crossings, car parks; and
- any other pruning required to maintain the health and structural integrity of the tree; and
- emergency situations.
- Safety sight lines for traffic management.

4.3.6 Property clearance will be undertaken as part of cyclic maintenance pruning. This property clearance will include any tree branches that are within 2.0 metres of a building.

4.3.7 Property owners and residents may request a tree be inspected for additional pruning outside of the Council's planned cyclic pruning program. Additional pruning requirements will be assessed using the criteria listed above. Property clearance pruning will be done to a height of 3.5 metres from ground level where the tree is overhanging the property line.

4.3.8 Council has no jurisdiction over encroachment by private trees across private boundaries. This is considered a civil matter between private parties, however advice and assistance can be sought from Dispute Resolution Victoria on how best to handle these interactions.

4.3.9 Council's City Laws Department can enforce against some private tree encroachment but only when it affects the public realm or Council managed easements.

4.3.10 If a resident or property owner damages a Council street or reserve tree, causes a structural defect in the tree or reduces the aesthetics of the tree through inappropriate pruning, Council will, where possible, seek reimbursement of the lost amenity value of the tree. The cost of repair to the damaged tree will be based on the amended Maurer-Hoffman Formula as detailed in the Street and Reserve Tree Guidelines

4.3.11 While Council is a strong advocate for renewable energy, it does not support the pruning or removal of existing trees to facilitate solar panels and access.

4.3.12 Council may consider, pruning in exceptional circumstances, a tree directly adjacent to their property for the purpose of improved solar access. Pruning will only be considered where the following criteria have been met:

- The resident provides verifiable photographic evidence of shading of more than 50% of their solar panels using a date and time stamped photo from between 12:00pm – 2:00pm
- The pruning of the tree will not impact the structural integrity or health of the tree

The final decision on tree pruning for solar rests with the Coordinator Urban Forest

4.3.13 The impact of mature, establishing and future tree planting should be considered by the solar feasibility assessment prior to the installation of solar panels by the potential owners.

4.4 Tree Removal

4.4.1 Council will only remove trees if one or more of the criteria set out in its 'Tree Removal Criteria' in 4.4.5 or 4.4.7 are met.

4.4.2 Council will inform and consult with residents on non-urgent street tree removal decisions, when appropriate. When consulted, residents may be given 7 days to respond. Residents may make a submission about the decision to remove a tree, which will be considered before any works occur.

4.4.3 If a tree is found to be in poor or very poor condition and/or presents an imminent risk to the public the tree will be removed within 7 business days

from the date of Council's assessment, and the nearest resident will be notified.

4.4.4 Tree removal must be approved by a suitably qualified Council arborist from within the urban forest team if the tree meets one or more of the criteria set out below. Safety is the priority, however, aesthetic, and ecological factors, including wildlife habitat will be considered when making all tree management and removal decisions. The tree or tree group will be inspected and assessed by a suitably qualified Council arborist from within the urban forest team for tree health, structure, Useful Life Expectancy (ULE), potential risk and species appropriateness.

4.4.5 Trees and groups of trees may be removed when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- The tree is in a poor or very poor condition, except where a tree is indigenous or in a conservation site.; or
- Infected with a pest or disease where the recommended control is not applicable, and removal is the recommended practice to prevent transmission; or
- Poses a high or extreme safety hazard that cannot be corrected by pruning, transplanting or other treatments; or
- Severely interferes with a neighbouring tree or tree group to the extent that neither tree can develop to its full potential. The more desirable tree will be preserved; or
- The tree is contributing to damage, Private nuisance to public or private property and there are no arboricultural, engineering or property maintenance options or viable abatement available; or
- The tree or group of trees is included in a Council approved Precinct Plan; or the street tree rejuvenation program as identified by Council's City Parks and Open Spaces Department; or
- Any invasive species of tree under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.
- Non-approved tree plantings.
- Where the Chief Integrity Officer, Manager Customer Experience and Manager City Parks and Open Spaces considers there are exceptional circumstances, and the tree should be removed.

4.4.6 Council acknowledges that some residents have concerns with leaf litter, fruit, bark, or other debris that trees may shed over the seasons. However, it also recognises that trees drop leaves, bark, sticks, flowers, fruit and sap as part of their normal life cycle. They are natural occurrences therefore tree removals will not be authorised based on this reason alone.

4.4.7 Trees and groups of trees may also be removed when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- Council approved work improvements or infrastructure repair or maintenance required to be made around the tree (s) will kill or render the tree(s) a risk or significantly impact on the tree(s) condition and useful life expectancy, and there are no arboricultural, engineering or alternative maintenance solutions available to retain the tree; or
- Vehicle crossings, indented parking bays, footpaths and road upgrades where tree removal has been approved by a suitably qualified Council arborist within the Urban Forest team.

4.5 Cost Offset for Tree Removal

4.5.1 The cost offset for tree removal is calculated using the industry standard method of Amenity Tree Valuation based on the Maurer-Hoffman Formula. The formula equals Tree Removal Costs plus Amenity Value plus Tree Reinstatement Costs. The tree removal costs, and the replacement costs can be found in the Schedule of Fees and Charges in the Hume City Council Annual Budget Report. These fees and charges are subject to change and will be set at the commencement of the new financial year.

Amenity Value is a base value modified by tree condition, tree location, tree impact on the landscape and tree species suitability. The values used in the formula will be updated from time to time according to variations in the cost of living and consumer price index. The cost offset value must be calculated by a qualified council arborist.

The decision as to whether or not the tree is removed remains the sole discretion of the Manager City Parks and Open Spaces or qualified arborists from the Urban Forest Team.

The Manager City Parks and Open Spaces has the sole discretion to waive or reduce Cost Offsets applicable in this Policy.

4.6 Protected Trees

4.6.1 Trees with tree controls listed on sites within the schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the Hume Planning Scheme must not be removed without the approval of Council. Residents must first apply for a planning permit through Council on these sites as per the Victorian State Planning and Environment Act 1987.

4.6.2 Trees within the Significant Landscape Overlay, Environmental Significance Overlay or Vegetation Protection Overlay in the Hume Planning Scheme must not be removed without the approval of Council. Residents must first apply for a planning permit through Council on these sites as per the Victorian State Planning and Environment Act 1987.

4.6.3 The destruction or lopping (pruning) of native vegetation including trees is not permitted without the approval of Council and is governed by Victorian statewide policy. Residents must first apply for a planning permit through Council to obtain permission to lop (prune) native vegetation as per the Victorian State Planning and Environment Act 1987.

4.7 Community Engagement

4.7.1 Council is aware that there is widespread community interest in tree

management decisions therefore community engagement is an important consideration.
In line with Council's Community Engagement Policy POL/289 the engagement processes scales depending on the expected level of community interest i.e. if only a single tree is affected or Council is replacing trees then Council may just inform the directly affected resident.

Whereas if a whole or significant part of a gateway or boulevard is affected, and the character of the area may be changed then directly affected and broader community views may be sought through a project consultation process.

4.8 Tree Related Complaints/Private Nuisance/Property Damage Handling

4.8.1 Tree related complaints are handled in line with the Hume City Council's Complaints Policy POL/299.

4.8.2 Private Nuisance/Property Damage Handling

All private nuisance and private damage need to be referred to Council's Risk Management Team for assessment and review on a case-by-case basis.

5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

5.1 Related Policies

5.1.1 Complaints Policy POL/299

5.1.2 Community Engagement Policy POL/289

5.1.3 Open Space Strategy 2025

5.1.4 Parking on Narrow Street Policy POL/184

5.1.5 Vehicle Crossings Siting Policy POL/205

5.1.6 Hume Planning Scheme

5.2 Guidelines

5.2.1 Street and Reserve Tree Guidelines

5.2.2 Electric Line Clearance Management Plan

5.2.3 Landscape Guidelines

5.2.4 Code of Practice Operational Responsibility for Public Roads

6 DEFINITIONS

Easement - A property right to make limited use of land by someone other than an owner.

Growing media – a substance through which plant roots can grow and extract water and nutrients.

Infrastructure – relates to infrastructure on public land and includes:

- In-ground services (Utilities)
- Cross overs
- Roads (including traffic devices) and Footpaths
- Electrical wires and power poles

- Street Lighting
- Drainage systems

Native vegetation - plants that are indigenous to Victoria, including trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses.

Renewal tree planting – replacing a tree that was removed or placing a new tree in a location that is substantially different to the previous tree or streetscape.

Replacement tree planting – replacing a tree that was removed with the same or similar species

Risk (trees) – made up of three components the likelihood of impact, the likelihood of failure and the consequences of impact.

Structural defect (tree) – feature, condition or deformity of a tree that indicates a weak structure or instability that could contribute to tree failure.

Private Nuisance - A private nuisance is when your use and enjoyment of your land is affected by another person's act or omission. A private nuisance can only be decided at court

Date Adopted	9 December 2019
Date Re-Adopted	14 July 2025
Review Date	February 2028

An administrative update was made to this policy on 20 May 2026, to align it with the Council decision made on 14 July 2025 to adopt the policy.