

1. Objectives

The Town of Cottesloe recognises the environmental and aesthetic value of street trees, together with the significance of providing canopy cover, and their contribution toward streetscape improvements.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Preserve and enhance the Urban Forest characteristic of verges, parks, reserves and playgrounds to achieve the Natural Areas Management Plan and Street Tree Master Plan objectives.
- Promote the use of street trees in open spaces and reserves to extend the habitat of fauna in urban areas whilst ensuring residents receive all the economic, environmental, social and health benefits of trees.
- Select, plant, maintain and protect all street trees in accordance with the Street Tree Master Plan.
- Create a setting in sympathy with the function and appearance of the adjacent land uses together with a safe and comfortable pedestrian and vehicular environment, while recognising the heritage value of mature, established and significant trees.
- Ensure all development considers and accommodates new, and preserves existing, trees where it is possible and practical to do so.
- Optimise planting within verges and public open spaces with the aim to increasing the district's canopy cover to provide shade particularly along road corridors of significance to maximise comfort for pedestrians and cyclist

2. Principles

The Town of Cottesloe is vested with the control of street and road verges. Street trees should be established on every street and road in the Town of Cottesloe. All trees with the majority (>50 percent) of its trunk growing from council land are referred to as street trees. Such trees are managed and administered by relevant Town of Cottesloe policies and local laws.

Proper protection systems together with watering and pruning regimes, should be in place to ensure the longevity of these trees.

3. Issues

- Many existing tree species in Cottesloe were poorly chosen in the past and these mature trees are causing a variety of problems.
- Planting not optimised along wide street verge widths where only one tree has previously been planted at these locations
- Ratepayers and residents vary in their attitudes to street trees and individual trees may suffer damage or die from 'unknown causes' in areas where they cause problems to houses, properties and views.
- Street trees can be a major source of public liability concerns due to root damage of drainage, paths, kerbing and crossovers on the verge and a variety of problems in private property.
- Lack of consideration by property developers towards preserving existing street trees
- Unapproved planting of species, inconsistent with the Street Tree Master Plan, by others within verges.

4. Policy

The Town of Cottesloe is responsible for the planting and maintenance of trees within the Council's 3.9 kilometre square boundary. Trees have the functional importance within the urban environment towards creating attractive open spaces. The continued commitment toward a high standard of street tree maintenance will provide ongoing preservation to the amenity and aesthetics of streetscapes.

This policy applies to all street trees that are owned or managed by the Town of Cottesloe. Elected Members, employees, residents, ratepayers, consultants, contractors, developers, visitors to the district and event organisers are all required to comply with the policy.

4.1 Intent

Street trees provide both economic and intangible benefits that include land value appreciation, air quality purifications, noise filtration, reduce the effects of climate change, and contribute to a sense of seasonal change, in addition to providing fauna habitat within the Perth metropolitan area.

The intent of this policy is to:

- Provide a consistent approach towards the management of street trees
- Increase the Town's tree canopy cover to reduce the urban heat island effect, improve air quality and contribute to greening corridors through proactive planting programs.
- Preserve and increase the long term viability of trees on verges, reserves, parks and playgrounds through protection and maintenance programs
- Provide safe, cool and green access ways for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles
- Reinforce, preserve and enhance the character of our suburbs
- Improve street tree establishment and survival rates
- Administer the maintenance and management of existing and new trees to ensure that they survive and thrive in the harsh urban conditions.
- Aim at producing a full canopy and continuity of shade

4.2 Street Tree Selection

Species to be planted at each location shall be in accordance with the approved Street Tree Master Plan. All variations require an application to Director Engineering Services for consideration. Arborist advice on the requested change is required. The cost of the Arboriculture referral mentioned will be at the cost of the person making the request. Director Engineering Services will consider the recommendation from the Arborist to make a final decision on the appropriateness of the variation.

As a guide, impact on views, personal dislike, litter or perceived problems associated with a particular species are not considered reasons to deviate from the Master Plan.

4.3 Tree Planting and Maintenance

4.3.1 Tree Planting

The Town of Cottesloe is responsible for the planting of all trees as identified under its annual programs, which include community tree planting, street tree planting (replacement and renewal) and requests from residents. Planting is generally carried out in the winter months by Council staff, to aid in the establishment of trees.

Street tree planting is undertaken to:

- Ensure a minimum of one tree is planted per verge adjacent to each residential property, including new developments
- Address missing trees or gaps within the streetscape
- Replace dead street trees that have been removed
- Meet resident requests for new street trees
- Wherever practical, to achieve a continuity of shade in the harsh summer sun

Notification will be provided to adjacent residential properties, prior to the commencement of verge planting. Feedback will be considered and the final decision on location will be made by the Manager of Parks and Operations with due regard given to optimising the number of trees planting on each verge particularly those that can accommodate more than one tree.

An application to Director Engineering Services is required for all street tree planting exemptions. The following reasons do not justify an exemption:

- Loss of a view
- Planted species is disliked
- Property alterations
- Perceived to be inappropriate for the location due to a variety of reasons

Each exemption application will be considered by the Director Engineering Services on a case by case basis using the following as a guide:

- potential risk of future damage to services, property and road infrastructure
- no garage on property and reliance towards on street parking
- traffic safety
- northern light impacts

Notwithstanding the criteria above, planting exemption must be avoided where possible. The Director Engineering Services can approve the variation to the tree species planted and this must be in accordance with section 4.2 – Street Tree Selection. Residents may be permitted to plant a verge tree in front of their properties on application to the Manager of Parks and Operations. The selection of species shall be consistent with the Street Tree Master Plan or such variation as approved in accordance with section 4.2 of this Policy. Ownership and maintenance of the street tree becomes the responsibility of the Town.

4.3.2 Tree Watering

Unless agreed between the Town and the resident/owner, the Town is responsible for watering, until all newly planted trees are established.

4.3.3 Tree Pruning

The Town is responsible for the pruning of street trees under the discretion of the Manager Parks and Operations. Any person carrying out unauthorised pruning of street trees may be liable for prosecution.

Street tree pruning shall be aimed at producing a full canopy typical of the species, while still addressing legal obligations and the preservation of public safety. This may be carried out under the following circumstances, as determined by the Manager of Parks and Operations:

- Eliminate potential hazard to pedestrians, cyclists, road traffic, or damage to buildings or structures
- Preparation for storm season
- Maintain safe sightlines near road intersections, driveways, crossovers and footpaths
- Remove dead, dying, diseased or pest infested limbs, branches or abnormal growth
- Prune low growing branches that impede parking control signage and/or street signs
- Prune the canopy from overhead power lines, electrical feeder lines to individual properties and other essential services.
- Prune to under crop the tree to allow northern light
- Aim at producing a full canopy and continuity of shade

Following requests from residents for tree pruning, a site inspection will be conducted by Council staff to determine if pruning is required. The resident/ratepayer will be informed of the outcome following the site inspection.

Major pruning may require the Manager Parks and Operations to seek professional advice and/or services. Where pruning is requested by a resident to allow northern light, or in other cases where considered appropriate, the Manager Parks and Operations may require that the cost of such professional advice and/or services and the cost of pruning shall be borne by the resident.

4.4 Unauthorised Planting

Unauthorised planting shall constitute any one of the following:

- A tree planted without an application to the Town
- A tree planted of an inappropriate species for verge planting
- A tree planted out of alignment in relation to the Town's verge planting specifications

Where an unauthorised street tree planting is identified, the Director Engineering Services shall determine whether the planting should be removed. All thriving and established unauthorised planting shall remain.

Ownership and maintenance of retained unauthorised street tree becomes the responsibility of the Town of Cottesloe.

4.5 Tree Removal

The Town of Cottesloe is responsible for the removal of street trees. Unauthorised tree removal of any street tree is not permitted. The Council prioritises street tree retention and removal is only considered when no other reasonable alternative exists or has been exhausted. The compensating solution and approaches must lead to a more superior outcome.

Notwithstanding the above, the Director Engineering Services can authorise the removal when a street tree is:

- Certified by a suitably qualified horticulturist as dead, damaged, post mature and diseased, or in decline and no further remedial techniques are appropriate.
- Certified by a suitably qualified horticulturist as a noxious street tree or classified as an invasive weed, and Cottesloe found on the Coastcare website <https://cottesloecoastcare.org/dir/weeds>.
- Causing significant damage to property or public utilities and the cost of ongoing remedial works becomes uneconomic, and there is no further alternative solution.

- Causing an immediate safety hazard to the public.
- Certified by a suitably qualified horticulturist as structurally unsound.
- Unauthorised street tree (subjected to section 4.4 of the Street Tree Policy).
- Has been affected by infrastructure works and the tree cannot be retained.
- Identified within a property development plan that has been approved by Council. The replacement trees must be of an appropriate size and species as determined by the Town of Cottesloe.

There are unlikely instances whereby, developers, for constructability reasons require the removal of trees additional to the Council approved plans. The Director Engineering Services will determine the appropriateness of each request on its merits in making the final decision.

All property development related street tree removals approved by Council or Director Engineering Services must:

- Offset such removals by planting a minimum of three (3) verge trees along the same street that the trees are removed. Manager of Parks and Operations shall approve the position of these trees and the timing of planting, with priority given to planting on the verge from which the trees were removed.
- The developer will be responsible for the supply, planting and two year maintenance of these offset trees.
- The offset trees shall be of a size as determined by the Director Engineering Services, with a view to replacing the canopy lost by the tree removal as soon as practicable.
- The developer is to provide a bond determined by the Director Engineering Services equivalent to the cost of supply, installation and two year maintenance of the offset tree numbers required.
- Arborist certification is required from the developer at the end of the two year maintenance period to confirm that the offset trees are thriving before the bond is refunded to the developer or their nominee
- Alternatively, and only in the event that the Director Engineering Services determines that there is insufficient space on the verge from which the trees are removed, the developer can provide an offset planting contribution determined by the Director Engineering Services for the supply, installation and two year maintenance of the offset tree numbers required and the Town will plant them at a different location within the District. Where an offset planting contribution is paid in respect of any offset trees no bond shall be required in respect of those trees.

The Director Engineering Services, shall also be authorised to remove, replant or relocate any new tree planted by the Town as part of the Street Tree Planting Program, for operational efficiency.

Council approval will be required in the improbable occasion when tree removals do not meet the above criteria specified.

Where a tree is to be removed by the Town of Cottesloe, the residents/ratepayers of the adjacent residential property will be notified in advance, and a replacement tree will be planted in the same location by the Town if possible. An alternative location shall be chosen should the original location be unavailable.

If a tree is removed without authorisation by another party, the Council may seek to recover all related costs associated with the loss in amenity value of the removed street tree, and the replacement planting as determined by the Director Engineering Services.

The following do not justify the removal of street trees:

- Tree litter/leaf fall ('messy' tree)
- Restoration of a view
- Alternative street tree requested by resident as planted species, shape or structure is disliked
- In the way of verge development or a desire to re-landscape
- House alterations requiring crossover relocation
- Swimming pool installation – root or falling leaf problems
- Large in size and perceived to be inappropriate for the location
- Attracts birdlife or other fauna
- Inconvenience during development works
- Shading of lawns, pools etc.
- Produces natural debris, which includes the dropping of leaf, flowers, fruit, nuts, bark, etc.
- Perceived as dangerous or that a tree might fall in a storm
- Causes health and allergy related issues

4.6 Tree Protection at Development Sites

Protection of street trees at development site is important towards preserving the amenity of streetscapes. For development or building approvals, plans and drawings submitted must include the locations of all street trees on abutting road verges for the consideration of the effects of such land or building changes, on these street trees.

A bond, no less than the amenity value of the trees plus replacement costs as determined by the Manager Engineering Services will be held by the Town of Cottesloe where development or other activities have the potential to impact street trees. This will be provided before a Building Permit is approved for the commencement of works.

The securities will be held for the duration of the construction and returned upon satisfactory inspection by Council Staff.

4.7 Vandalism to Street Trees

A person or company identified as having damaged a street tree(s) shall be required to provide full compensation to Council, for all costs associated with the re-establishment of an advanced tree of that same species. This will include an assessed value, as determined by the Director Engineering Services, for the loss of amenity/aesthetic value of the tree(s).

Members of the community who witness vandalism to Town trees are encouraged to report this information. All reported incidents of vandalism will be investigated and responded to appropriately by the Town including by the erection of signage identifying vandalised trees or unauthorised tree removal in appropriate cases as determined by the Director Engineering Services.

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