

Tree management policy

PURPOSE:

The City of Launceston (CoL) is focussed on achieving the community's long-term vision of creating a diverse, vibrant and liveable urban environment that is an attractive and safe place to live, work and play. Large trees and well-tended green spaces play an important role in defining the image and culture of the city, enhancing aesthetic appeal of our streets and facilities, increasing property values and contributing to the viability of business by creating an urban environment people want to spend more time in. Trees are an important community asset that cool buildings and pavements, improve the lifespan of asphalt, reduce stormwater flows and improve water and air quality.

It is estimated that 30,000 trees are currently managed by City of Launceston in road reserves, civic spaces, facilities and parks. This excludes the extensive areas of native vegetation in bushland and riparian areas across the municipality. With over 400 species recorded and trees varying in size, shape, condition, age, significance and value, managing trees is a complex task. Development pressures, conflict with other infrastructure, changing climatic conditions, individual or groups of trees approaching end of useful life expectancy and community safety are important considerations in maintaining trees.

This document aims to provide a clear and consistent management approach to ensure that the City of Launceston's trees are:

- recognised as valuable community assets
- adequately protected from works and development
- maintained in a healthy condition to increase useful life expectancy and
- removed only under defined conditions.

SCOPE:

This policy provides a strategic direction for tree management to guide Alderman, employees, residents, planners, developers, contractors and tree workers. It applies to all trees that are owned and/or managed by City of Launceston regardless of land management responsibilities.

POLICY:

As with all City of Launceston assets, trees require monitoring, maintenance and removal/renewal plans. Trees also like infrastructure require protection from damage associated with works and development.

Protection from Works and Development

Developers and residents are not authorised to damage or remove City of Launceston's trees. The Council will use relevant provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993* to protect the value of the trees that have been damaged or removed without appropriate consent.

Potential impact on City of Launceston's trees will be considered during the design and planning phase of infrastructure and development works.

All practical measures are to be undertaken to protect tree roots, trunk and branches from physical damage during works and development in accordance with *AS4970-2009: Protection of Trees on Development Sites*.

Monitoring

A formal risk based inspection regime for all trees located in high risk/public use areas (ie. streets, paths, playgrounds, gathering spaces, car parks) will be undertaken by a qualified arborist annually. Annual visual inspections will be undertaken for pipes identified on the root cutting maintenance schedule.

The regime will include risk based processes for assessing areas immediately before signature or major events and following storm, wind, flood and fire events.

Reactive inspections driven by customer requests will be prioritised based on risk level and comply with the Customer Service Charter.

GIS and asset management data will be updated accordingly.

Maintenance

Maintenance works will be identified through the inspection regime and undertaken to improve the tree's health and vitality and minimise risk of hazard development, branch failure, disease and premature death in accordance with *AS 4373-2007: Australian Standard for Pruning of Amenity Trees*.

Root trimming will be undertaken for pipes identified on the root cutting maintenance schedule as determined through the annual inspection regime.

Powerline clearance maintenance for trees growing in easements is undertaken by TasNetworks' accredited vegetation contractors. The City of Launceston will continue to work with the contractors to ensure trees retain their health and vitality and are not disfigured unnecessarily.

When considering thinning or pruning (including roots) of a City of Launceston tree, the following principles will apply:

- the tree's health, growth habit, structure, stability and growing conditions;
- the potential risk of personal injury and significant damage to buildings, structures, infrastructure or utility services;
- requirements under section 39 of the *Local Government (Highways) Act 1982* for safe pedestrian and vehicle access;
- the level of impact upon adjoining residents' living environment;
- the impact on the landscape or streetscape and the amenity value of the tree to the local area;
- whether the tree is a native species providing biodiversity value;
- the suitability of the species to its location; and
- whether the tree has cultural/heritage significance or is subject to planning considerations based zoning or overlays.

Generally, City of Launceston will not consider leaf, fruit, flower, bark stripping, sap or wildlife as valid reasons for pruning trees. Pruning for view or solar access will be assessed on a case by case basis. Pruning will not be undertaken where it will disfigure the tree, impact on the health and vitality of the tree or impact on native wildlife habitat (foraging and/or nesting).

Developers or residents requesting pruning of a healthy and structurally sound tree to facilitate development or works, view or solar access may be required to pay for the cost of pruning.

Removal and Replacement

Provided there is an agreed replacement planting, the City of Launceston will consider the removal of individual or groups of trees in the following circumstances:

- There is an unacceptable risk identified through a Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) undertaken by a qualified arborist that cannot be mitigated through pruning;
- The tree is dead, dying and/or diseased and does not provide habitat for native wildlife.
- The tree is causing damage to utilities or public infrastructure and there is no other practical option to resolve the issue to maintain the supply of essential services;
- The tree is causing significant damage to private property which has been confirmed by a suitably qualified structural engineer and there is no reasonable alternative to resolve the issue (ie. the cost of repairs outweighs the amenity benefits provided by the tree);
- To facilitate development or works where there is no reasonable alternative to retain the tree and a landscape plan showing suitable replacement trees is approved; or
- To facilitate renewal of the streetscape or revegetation with native species following weed removal.

Trees that are healthy and structurally sound will not be removed for the following reasons:

- The tree obscures or potentially obscures views excluding mandatory vehicle sight lines;
- The tree species is disliked;
- The tree species causes nuisance by way of leaf, flower, fruit, bark shedding or the like;
- The tree provides habitat for wildlife that causes nuisance; or
- The tree shades private gardens, solar installations and the like.

Developers or residents requesting the removal of a healthy and structurally sound tree to facilitate development or works will be required to pay for the cost of removal and replacement plantings.

PRINCIPLES:

To ensure that all trees that are owned and/or managed by City of Launceston regardless of land management responsibilities, are recognised as valuable community assets, monitored and maintained appropriately, removed only at the end of safe useful life expectancy and renewed.

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES:

[Greater Launceston Plan May 2014](#)
[City of Launceston Strategic Plan 2014-2024](#)

RELATED LEGISLATION:

Electricity Wayleaves and Easements Act 2000
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
Fire Services Act 1995
Forest Practices Act 1985
Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995
Local Government Act 1993
Local Government (Highways) Act 1982
Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993
Nature Conservation Act 2002
Threatened Species Protection Act 1995
Water Management Act 1999
Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2008
Weed Management Act 1999
Urban Drainage Act 2015

REFERENCES:

Australian Standard 4373-2007: Australian Standard for Pruning of Amenity Trees.
Australian Standard 4970-2009: Protection of Trees on Development Sites.

DEFINITIONS:

Tree: Long lived woody perennial plant generally with one or relatively few main stems or trunks.

REVIEW:

This policy will be reviewed no more than 5 years after the date of approval (version) or more frequently, if dictated by operational demands and with Council's approval.