City of
Norwood
Payneham
& St Peters

NAME OF POLICY:	Tree Policy
POLICY MANUAL:	Service

PURPOSE

The Tree Policy, in conjunction with the attached Objectives, Strategies and Actions, provides guidance for the planting, maintenance and removal of trees managed by the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters. It promotes management of the City's tree assets in an integrated, strategic manner and will result in healthier, longer lived trees.

BACKGROUND

The contribution made to the Urban Forest of metropolitan Adelaide, by trees growing adjacent to roadways and within reserves owned by the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters is significant. The City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters has approximately 20,000 trees growing adjacent to roadways and several thousand more on reserves. The benefit derived from trees, whether on private or public land, in the urban environment, is both immediate and long term. Benefits include:

- Climate modification
- Visual enrichment
- Psychological satisfaction
- Provision and sustainment of wildlife habitat
- Economic reward
- Educational and research purposes

Trees (growing on public land) in the urban environment are a community asset. Establishing trees in streets and reserves is an investment by the Council, of resources belonging to the community on behalf of the community. Publicly owned trees are a tangible representation of community wealth.

The former Town of St Peters managed its trees with the assistance of a manual developed by the Tree Advisory Group. The City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters adopted the manual, to guide the operations of Field Staff who manage the Council's trees. The Tree Advisory Group Manual has been used extensively in the development of this policy document and associated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) and Specifications. Following amalgamation, the Tree Advisory Group was replaced by the Urban Tree Committee, which initially consisted only of Councillors. This group has evolved to combine community and Council Elected Member representation and was responsible for overseeing the formulation of this policy.

The format, structure and wording of this policy and associated documents are similar to the approach taken by other South Australian Local Government organisations, providing some consistency to the management of the Urban Forest of metropolitan Adelaide. In particular, the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters acknowledges the valuable work of staff at the City of Mitcham in the development of tree management strategies, which have been included in these documents.

The increasingly litigious society in which we live, has resulted in the concept of responsible risk management 'driving' much of the work undertaken by Local Government authorities. This notion, combined with generally increased levels of environmental education and awareness throughout the

community, has encouraged the adoption of policies of this type. The need for a more comprehensive and robust tree policy was identified during workshops to formulate the Council's Strategic Plan 2006.

Local Government authorities have an opportunity to provide leadership in the management of environmental issues. They may through example, promote industry best practice, emerging technologies and changing trends.

DISCUSSION

The City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters manages all vegetation, including trees, growing on Council-owned land within the City. Institutions, government agencies and individual property owners are responsible for the management of vegetation within their own properties.

Additionally, the Council administers the Development Act 1993, which sets out certain controls and procedures in respect to Significant Trees, irrespective of ownership.

Trees managed by the City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters represent a significant component of the Urban Forest of metropolitan Adelaide.

The strategic, integrated management of vegetation, in particular trees, within metropolitan areas delivers functional, sustainable Urban Forests for the benefit of the community and future generations.

POLICY

The City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters will manage all trees for which it is responsible, in a strategic manner. The City will employ sound arboricultural management techniques, best practice methodologies and proven technology, in addition to referring to the expertise of other tree-related professions to ensure a sustainable, healthy and functional Urban Forest, for the benefit of its residents and the wider community.

DEFINITIONS

Arboriculture - the study, cultivation, care and management of trees, particularly in the urban environment.

AS 4373-1996 - the current Australian Standard (AS) which refers to the pruning of amenity trees.

AS/NZS 4360-2004 - the current Australian Standard (AS) which refers to Risk Management.

Carbon Credit – an amount of carbon stored or sequestered in plant material, which can be used and traded by governments or other entities, to offset greenhouse gas emissions.

Carbon Sequestration - a process whereby trees and other plants remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and through photosynthesis, turn it into plant material.

NATSPEC – tree industry endorsed national specifications describing the requirements when purchasing nursery stock.

Risk Management - the systematic application of management policies, procedures and practices to the tasks of identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating and monitoring risk.

Significant Tree – relevant to the Development Act 1993, a significant tree is defined as any tree with a trunk circumference in excess of 2.0 metres. In addition, trees with multiple trunks, that have trunks with a total circumference of 2.0 metres or more and an average circumference of 625 mm or more are also classed as significant. In each situation the circumference of the trunk(s) is taken at a height of one metre above natural ground level. .

Streetscape – describes the appearance of a street, which is achieved through a combination of road design, surface treatments, street trees, landscaping, architecture, street furniture and artwork. Items situated within private property, which contribute to the appearance of the street are also considered components of the streetscape. For the purpose of this policy an emphasis is placed on the specific contribution to the streetscape made by trees.

Sustainable – *m*aintaining all elements compatibly within an infrastructure, in safe operating condition, to deliver their facility in the most economical, maintenance-reduced manner, having regard to amenity, for as long as possible within the limits of acceptable wear and tear, technological best practice, and funding provisions.

Triple Bottom Line Reporting - the concept of quantifying and considering the economic, environmental and social impacts and benefits derived from an organisations operation.

Urban Forest - the total vegetative biomass contained in urban areas. All trees, shrubs and ground layer plants whether planted or naturally occurring, growing in public reserves, streets, parks, car-parks and private gardens constitute an urban forest.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Increasing tree populations

The greater the diversity and number of trees which constitute the Urban Forest, the more effective, interesting and sustainable the Forest will be. The City of Norwood, Payneham & St Peters is committed to encouraging a functional and expanding Urban Forest, by ensuring that the number of trees planted by Council in any given period exceeds the number removed.

The removal of established, healthy trees is undesirable, however it is recognised that it may be required on occasion. In that case, the fundamental principle, to which the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters adheres, is that the removal of a tree will only be considered once all alternatives have been investigated and discounted.

Significant trees are defined within the Development Act 1993 as those with a trunk circumference exceeding 2.0 metres or in the case of trees with multiple trunks, those that have trunks with a total circumference of 2.0 metres or more and an average circumference of 625 mm or more, measured at a point 1.0 metre above natural ground level. Such trees enjoy certain levels of protection afforded by legislation.

The time required for trees to develop such dimensions makes maintaining existing specimens and planning their replacement an ongoing and long-term requirement.

2. Healthy, functional trees benefit the community

That part of the Urban Forest, comprising all street and reserve trees is a valuable public asset, which makes a significant contribution to the sustainability of the community, the economy and the environment. It directly influences the City's appeal, desirability, and the quality of life of residents.

Healthy trees, maintained in good condition, tend to require less management over their lifespan. Additionally, healthy trees tend to be less prone to disease and more resistant to environmental stresses such as drought or pollution.

Functional trees provide the broad range of benefits listed previously.

Healthy, functional trees add to the aesthetic appeal of an area and the environmental well being of the community. The social and economic benefits derived from a functional Urban Forest are well documented.

Initiatives such as the awarding of carbon credits in return for carbon sequestration, and triple bottom line reporting, are emerging as considerations which are likely to exert increasing influence on the decision making processes involving tree management.

3. Effective and efficient use of resources allocated to the care and maintenance of the trees in the City

The Council faces long-term maintenance issues as a result of previous tree management practices, including inappropriate species selection and placement and questionable cultural techniques such as pollarding and pruning to clear power lines.

To maintain functional and healthy trees, resources must be appropriately allocated and effectively applied. Arboriculture is a specialist field requiring a planned approach to staff selection, technical knowledge (particularly of AS 4373-1996 and Occupational Health & Safety issues) training, operational planning and equipment procurement. The effective management of trees often requires reference to the expertise of other tree-related professions. The strategic application of resources will ensure that maintenance requirements are minimised. As a result:

- the useful, functional life of trees is extended;
- the impacts of outside influences such as vegetation clearance by ETSA utilities are reduced as trees are shaped from the time of planting;
- resources are directed to where they are of most benefit; and
- the Council's exposure to litigation in relation to injury and property damage is reduced.

4. Strategic management of components of the Urban Forest requires comprehensive knowledge of the asset.

Strategic management of the arboreal component of the Urban Forest requires detailed and accurate information describing the asset for which the Council is responsible.

A computer-based, Geographic Information System-linked, spatial system of recording information describing each tree for which the Council is responsible, provides a range of information relating to the tree species, location and condition. Accurate, up to date data is essential for an inventory system to remain viable. Analysis of any system of recording must recognise the fact that trees are dynamic, living entities. The system must also be sufficiently flexible and user friendly to allow details to be updated and added as required.

Strategic tree management requires long-range forecasting and budgeting, identification of emerging trends, hypothetical modelling, the adoption of robust risk management techniques and linkage to other Council and Government initiatives.

In simple terms, the strategic management of trees involves programming their maintenance, removal and replacement at appropriate stages to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the Urban Forest.

5. Trees are a community asset and the community is encouraged to be involved in the processes that affect the streetscape.

Residents are encouraged by the Council to play an active role in decisions that directly affect them and often display a strong sense of ownership of the streetscape. It is generally accepted that the most successful streetscapes enjoy high levels of community participation.

Substantial alterations to the streetscape will be made in consultation with residents, consistent with the Council's Community Consultation and Communication Policy. The Council's obligation to consult with its community and the circumstances under which consultation must occur, are set out in the Local Government Act 1999.

The Council's final determination in regard to proposed alterations to the streetscape will take into consideration the results of consultation, along with other relevant decision making criteria such as available space, species suitability and future development options.

6. Arboriculture is an emerging profession associated with rapid technological and scientific advances.

The effective management and maintenance of urban trees in what is quite a dynamic professional environment, requires current knowledge, trialling, monitoring and implementation of emerging trends and technological advances.

Additionally, trialling of newly developed and alternative tree varieties are essential to increase the palette of species from which tree managers may choose. The Council holds a membership subscription with TREENET (Tree and Roadway Educational and Experimental Network), which is a non-profit organisation affiliated with the University of South Australia. TREENET hosts a database which records the performance of various species in street tree trial sites. Information relating to tree planting sites throughout Australia is recorded on a publicly accessible data base, providing a valuable source of knowledge upon which to base tree related decisions.

REVIEW PROCESS

The Council will review this Policy within 12 months of the adoption date of the Policy.

INFORMATION

The contact officer for further information at the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters is Council's Coordinator, Trees & Horticulture, telephone 8366 4506.

ADOPTION OF THE POLICY

This Policy was adopted by Council on 6 March 2006

TO BE REVIEWED

March 2007