



**Street Tree
Management Plan
December 2018**

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WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL
STREET TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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1. GENERAL

1.1 Introduction

The Shire has a number of townships each with their own unique street tree plantings, which form a significant contribution to West Wimmera' amenity appeal.

Tree lined and leafy streetscapes provide attractiveness all year round and valuable shade during the summer months.

1.2 Aim

The following policy guidelines aim to establish an overall environmentally sensitive and cost effective comprehensive management programme and a guide for maintenance. A major consideration must be that a balance is maintained between the number of street plantings and Council's ability to financially service and maintain these trees. On a micro-management level the issues will be encompassed as part of West Wimmera's Street Tree Strategy contained in the Township Amenity Plan, and the Township Tree Management Plan and Agreement with Powercor.

Councils aim is to conserve, and enhance the Shire's Streetscapes to a standard which will strengthen both the individual residential and community streetscape amenity of the Shire by:

Ensuring that the Shire's street trees are of dimensions that are dominant in the streetscape once established.

- Unifying the streetscape irrespective of less desirable street features.

1.3 Application

This policy shall apply to all street planting within the Shire of West Wimmera.

Any vegetation growing on Council controlled nature strip or road reservation becomes the property of Council, and therefore the duty as regard to care and maintenance also rests with Council, unless that responsibility is apportioned elsewhere under Councils Local Law.

2. MANAGEMENT

2.1 General

Councils' first priority is to maintain public safety with respect to the planning, provision and maintenance of its trees and streetscapes.

Victorian Council's are required by its insurers Civic Mutual Plus to develop and adopt a Tree Management Policy for urban street trees to mitigate public liability risk. Council is required:

- To verify a traceable link between proactive inspections, maintenance generation and completed works for the urban street trees & reserve trees selected.
- Have a traceable reactive program in place for trees where Council can demonstrate a link between a reactive request, maintenance generation and completed works.
- Record maintenance and works to Council trees against a tree inventory and/or property location.

Council will seek from time to time to nominate significant treescapes with the appropriate authorities to ensure their conservation and protection.

Council acknowledges that street trees will conflict with other elements of the streetscape, particularly hard structures and services; but recognises that all components of a streetscape are essential to provide a pleasant and functional environment.

Issues affecting the local environment and trees on public and private land will be promoted by Council when deemed appropriate.

The performance of works associated with this Policy will be undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation including *Occupational Health and Safety and Local Government Acts*, and the *Electrical Safety Act 1998*.

In estimating the value of street trees to the local community the Shire will utilise the *Draft Australian Standard (Trees – Amenity Valuation)*.

New planting will be undertaken in streets in accordance with priorities set in Councils Capital Works Programme and with reference to the Street Tree Strategy contained in the Township Amenity Plan, and from resident requests, and will be performed following consultation with affected residents.

Generally residents will not be permitted to plant trees and shrubs within Council controlled nature strips and road reserves. Such plantings may be regarded as unauthorised plantings and may be removed at the discretion of Council. However in circumstances where Council approves tree planting schemes proposed by residents, such approval will be given provided all the elements of this policy are observed in such a planting programme.

2.2 Streetscape Regeneration

Trees are not a permanent feature and it is possible for a tree to start its decline long before it becomes dangerous or dies.

It is possible to anticipate tree death and plan for regeneration of the streetscape by removing selected trees along a street and replacing them with new trees. As these new trees obtain a size large enough to make a visual impact on the street, the remaining old or dying trees can be replaced. These trees will eventually grow to provide the same benefits provided by the originals. Selective thinning of even aged mature populations to allow for younger plantings in order to ensure population sustainability will be considered.

If through old age or bad pruning techniques street trees lose their vigour, then in such circumstances the tree should be replaced before it dies. If required, a report may be prepared for Council outlining the work that is required to renew the trees in the street, or the reasons for removing and replacing a tree. Council officers will decide whether this work will proceed.

2.3 Species Selection

Tree species selection will take into account relative hardiness, and integration into surrounding planting themes.

Tree species will be chosen which are appropriate in form, size, cover, scale, etc., for a particular street. Appropriate tree species that are sited sensitively and sensibly, will enhance the visual aspects of the street and contribute to the streetscape.

The diverse characteristics of individual streets or areas within the Shire and differing resident expectations will mean species flexibility is desirable. Both native and exotic street plantings will be used to enhance and complement the streetscape in planting programmes. Planting options for various streets within the Towns of West Wimmera will be examined in the Street Tree Strategy.

Council (or its nominated representative) shall nominate the species of tree(s) to be planted in the street, in consultation with the street's residents. Reference will be made to the Street Tree Strategy.

A site analysis will ensure that species of tree(s) planted will fulfil aesthetic, biological and functional requirements of each site. Where there is a dominant, significant stand of trees, this theme will be continued. Where tree species have been removed because they are inappropriate, more suitable species will be sought to fulfil site requirements.

Council considers the following to be desirable features of street plantings;

- Of a size which is dominant in the streetscape once established.
- An enhancement of the appearance of the street and complementary to individual house/premises.
- To unify the street generally by using not more than two species per street.
- In streets where there are different species used, new plantings will reinforce the predominant or most appropriate species present.

- In situations where poor soil or other site conditions may inhibit good growth or restrict the use of normal species used in street plantings, Council's arboricultural representative may nominate a more appropriate species to be used. This alternate species will still exhibit characteristics suited to street plantings.
- Species shall be of reasonably fast or moderate growth habit, whilst exhibiting uniform and consistent crown shape and dimension. Species that sacrifice structural integrity for rapid growth will be avoided. Species that have been documented to present a risk to public safety due to toxicity or structural instability likewise will be avoided.
- Can be readily and economically maintained clear of power lines in an aesthetic manner.
- Species used shall develop a clear trunk height to facilitate unrestricted vehicular parking and pedestrian flow; and to be unsuitable as a haven for undesirables. Clear vision for motorists and pedestrians especially at intersections and crossovers must be maintained.
- Manageable root structures in advanced age.
- Provides shade in the summer months.
- Is Productive, without additional maintenance.
- Does not create an unmanageable slip or trip hazard for pedestrians.

The following street features shall be considered prior to species selection in naturestrips and full width asphalt footpaths;

- Width and type of naturestrip in relation to growth and ultimate tree size.
- Soil conditions.
- Width and length of road pavement in relation to the scale of the streetscape; street maintenance requirements and parking requirements.
- Height, position and capacity (HV/LV) of overhead services.
- Location, depth and offsets of Telecom, Gas, Drainage, Power and Council services.
- Predominant plantings throughout the street properties – type, condition and overhang of some.
- Style of homes and proximity in relation to property frontages.
- Shade requirements and existing landscape features of the streetscape.

2.4 Streetscape Design

Good streetscape design does not automatically result with the infusion of street tree planting programmes. It requires considerable design vision and a strong commitment to the appropriateness of tree planting to certain urban/residential areas. Reactive approach to tree planting in some urban/or built up areas, can often result in controversial promises and unsatisfactory streetscapes. An understanding of the residential areas must be appreciated, and in certain areas trees in the street are inappropriate. A consultative approach to streetscape design with effected stakeholders is useful.

An appropriate selection can be achieved through an understanding of the street space. The street space should be understood in terms of its visual, physical and functional components as well as its relationship to the surrounding areas.

When streetscape works are planned three design objectives should be considered. The objectives are:

- Formality
 - * Formality will achieve a unifying effect of the street space. A formal design will unify the built elements that do vary i.e., buildings, fences, etc.
- Scale
 - * To achieve an appropriate scale tree structure should attain a size in proportion to the streetscape, and avoid informal variations in shape and size.
- Character – Sense of Place
 - * Street design should aim to enhance the characteristics of the street space which contribute to the character of the street. Character can also be retained if the existing built form and landscape character are enhanced and maintained. The choice of tree species should also reflect the history of the built form etc.

The role of the street tree is manifold, and as to whether they are appropriate or not to a particular street is often subjective. This means that the designer must look beyond just selecting a species because it will survive. The tree must “fit” or suit that particular sense of place.

- Some of the functions of the street tree include:
 - * to relate buildings to the landscape or site
 - * to relate buildings to each other
 - * to provide protection, from wind and sun, a cool environment on hot days
 - * to provide visual protection from noise, privacy and screening
 - * to direct vehicular and pedestrian circulation
 - * to channel views to or away from objects or structures
 - * to provide contrast in colour, texture, form, shadows, etc.
 - * to reduce the impact of unrelated, unified building developments
 - * to provide a sense of “scale” to the street
 - * to provide “life” and vibrance in the form of shadows and patterns on the pavement, sounds of rustling leaves, and wildlife habitat.
 - * to disguise overhead powerlines
 - * to identify the entrance into a particular precinct, shopping area, historical area, residential area etc.
 - * to provide character – “sense of place” to an area.
 - * to act as the structural component in an ecological corridor for the encouragement of local fauna.

- Of equal importance to the things we want street trees to do, are those things that we don't want them to do.
 - * they should not frequently drop branches
 - * avoid trees that drop berries, sticky seeds, poisonous flowers and seeds
 - * avoid trees that are prone to particular pests and diseases
 - * their roots should have a minimal impact on roads and drains, and other street services,
 - * they should not obstruct visibility at intersections, signs etc.
 - * they should be drought tolerant and long-lived.
- It is important to assess the role of the street tree in a particular street and its suitability before it is planted.

To achieve Councils aim to enhance streetscapes to a standard which will strengthen both the individual residential and community streetscape amenity:

- The streetscape must be developed and determined in consultation with the streets residents, and as part of a much broader context taking the entire street tree population.
- Take into consideration the desirable and undesirable features of the street.

Councils Street Tree Policy will take into consideration other relevant policies and studies, e.g. the Corporate Plan, the Street Tree Strategy, Significant Tree and Garden Study, Register of Significant Trees of Victoria, etc.

Where a road improvement programme or similar works are being carried out by the Council or other statutory authorities, all trees affected should be marked on a plan and submitted to the Councils arboricultural representative. This plan should show whether the trees have to be removed, or if any pruning works are required. If any trees have to be removed Council will notify residents in writing 2 weeks prior to the removal of the tree(s). The plan should be considered at the same time as the whole of the project. When the project has been approved by the Council, the trees can be removed at the commencement of works without any further permission being sought. The cost of removing these trees and replacing them with new trees will be charged to the total cost of the development works.

2.5 Tree Planting

The planting of trees on naturestrips is an activity which is generally well received by residents and one for which Council receives much praise and very little criticism.

As specified in the Parks and Street Trees specification the Service Provider must supply and plant trees as required for:

- Replacement Planting
 - * All trees removed from streetscapes shall be replaced as soon as practicable, but no later than the following planting season, provided a suitable planting site is available. These plantings will take priority over requests for new plantings (see below).

- Request for Individual Street Tree Planting
 - * Individual trees requested by residents will be considered against the recommendations of the Street Tree Strategy, and assess for suitability. If deemed appropriate the request will be prioritised against other such requests, and works resulting from recommendations made in the Street Tree Strategy. The methodology for prioritisation will be determined in the Street Tree Strategy.

If a request is received by a resident, and is considered appropriate by Council, or a tree removed prior to 1 May, the (replacement) tree shall be planted in the forthcoming planting season (May to September). If a request is received between 1 May and 1 September, the tree will be planted in that planting season, provided planting resources and appropriate nursery stock are available (and contracted limits are not exceeded except by negotiation). Requests received after 1 September will be deferred until the planting season of the following year.

Whole street planting or streetscape rejuvenation planting will be undertaken as part of Councils capital works program, and in association with projects such as road repair and infrastructure development, where funding has been approved through the project budget. Capital Works proposals will be forwarded to all other relevant Council departments.

2.6 Planting Guidelines

All tree planting will be performed during the colder months of the year usually commencing in Autumn and continuing through Winter into early Spring (1 May to 30 September).

Selection of an appropriate planting site is a crucial factor in determining long term viability and cost effectiveness of a street tree. A poorly positioned tree has the potential to diminish the visual appeal of a streetscape, cause structural damage, become hazardous or require excessive spending on maintenance and pruning.

In all cases prior to planting, consideration shall be given to Powercor's *Your Guide to Tree Planting Near Powerlines*.

Planting sites should be chosen to comply with the existing streetscape while allowing for functional limitations imposed by the street environment.

Trees and shrubs as approved by Council to be used in street plantings shall be planted as follows:

- Where reasonable plant at least one tree in front of every property at a spacing of not more than 12 metres apart (this is intended to be the maximum default spacing and is subject to individual street characteristics), and as near as possible to the centre of the property boundary;
- Locate not closer than 2 metres to a fire hydrant or drainage pit;
- Deviate from power distribution company lead in wires by not less than 3 metres;
- Plant not less than 1 metre either side of a pedestrian gate;
- At a road intersection ensure a clear line of vision for traffic in all directions (taking into account the dimensions of the tree at maturity);

- Restrict planting close to trees established within private property which may interfere with the future growth of the new street tree;
- No planting over Telstra , gas or stormwater lead-ins; check meter, junction box and stormwater outlet positions;
- Trees should be located so as not to obscure views from a driveway crossover or road intersection, this can be done by having a clear trunk to 1.5 metres when the tree is planted.

Standardising of street tree spacing shall be regularly undertaken by interplanting with appropriate species so as to bring the general street plantings into line with current spacing policy, (as stated in clause 2.6.4) not more than 12 metres apart where feasible.

Plantings shall not be undertaken in the footpath of streets with a full width asphalt or concrete footpath less than 2 metres.

Council will generally seek to plant trees which are up to 3 metres in height and of semi-advanced stock. Where acceptable, the smallest available stock will be utilised, as such stock is likely to establish much more readily.

2.7 Establishment

Watering:

- The root system of newly planted trees have been severely damaged by the process of planting. It is essential that all newly planted trees are watered thoroughly immediately after planting . It is essential that all newly planted trees are regularly watered during their first two years of growth. It may be necessary to water the trees for more than the first two years after planting. This watering should be carried out on a regular basis throughout the summer growing period. The minimum period between watering should not exceed fortnightly if it is
- needed.

Shaping of the Young Trees:

- It is only in exceptional circumstances that a young or newly planted tree will grow in the form or shape that is required. It will be necessary for pruning and shaping work to be carried out on all young trees at some time during their growth period. This shaping can be for various reasons. These will include:
 - * Clearance around power lines.
 - * Height clearance over both paths and roadways.
 - * The encouragement of a good, healthy branch structures within the tree.
- If the branch structure of a tree is planned properly when it is young then many of the problems associated with street trees can be easily remedied in the future.

3. MAINTENANCE

3.1 General

Every endeavour should be made to maintain plantings in a safe and physically healthy condition.

Wire Clearances between tree foliage and power distribution company and private electricity wires will be maintained in accordance with the Code of Practice for Powerline Clearance (Vegetation) 1996.

In order to maintain the safety of pedestrian, travellers and vehicles travelling through the West Wimmera Shire trees will be maintained to the following clearances:

- 4.2 metres over carriageways;
- 4 metres over driveways; and
- between 2.5 – 3.0 metres over footpaths, pathways and naturestrips and private property.

These height clearances will apply to those trees that are well established and which would not be destroyed by this type of pruning. Exceptions are allowed for young trees which would be irreparably damaged by such pruning action.

Every property owner has a legal right to prune any vegetation which overhangs their property line. This right concerns private and public trees. No property owner or resident will be allowed to prune any material off Council trees outside of their property lines without the permission of an authorised Council Officer.

While upholding the right of residents and property owners to remove branches from Council trees overhanging their property, Council has appropriate expertise to carry out this work safely and effectively. Consequently it will place requests for the removal of such foliage as a high priority.

Notwithstanding the effective life of street plantings, every attempt should be made to protect established street trees against damage through works associated with underground services, road or footpath pavement reconstruction and general utility works within the root zone area of such trees.

3.2 Pruning

Once established, the major maintenance requirement of a tree is pruning.

The pruning of trees should be minimised as all pruning cuts are potentially injurious.

Trees should only be pruned to achieve specific goals which are listed below:

- Maintain public safety through the removal of structurally unsound limbs.
- Maintain tree health through the removal of dead or diseased limbs.

Modern arboricultural practices will be employed in all pruning work, and only suitably qualified personnel will undertake this type of work.

Sprout or sucker growth to be removed to a minimum height of 2.5 metres above the ground level. Exceptions are allowed for young trees which would be damaged by such pruning action.

3.3 Crown Lifting and Visibility Clearance

The removal and directional tip pruning of branches from street trees that are touching, may touch or obstruct signs, street lights or impede upon pedestrian or vehicle traffic.

Street trees shall be maintained to the following clearances:

- Street Names are to be visible from 50m in either direction.
- * Vehicles approaching an intersection (including driveways) must be visible to Pedestrians and other vehicles from the following distances:

Speed Limit (km/hr)	Distance (m)
40	40
50	60
60	80
80	120
100	180

- * Road signs must also be visible from the distances outlined above.

These works will only be carried out where clearance from the tree or trees is necessary or where growth from the tree or trees is likely to impede clearance requirements.

3.4 Overhead Service and Structure Clearance

This operation shall consist of reducing the height and/or spread of a street tree or hedge by not more than 25% and shall only be applied to trees when such work is necessary to control extended growth which may endanger overhead services lines, street lights or interfere with adjacent structures.

All wire clearance will be performed by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel. All work shall be performed in accordance to the Code of Practice for Powerline Clearance (Vegetation) 1996.

3.5 Pests and Diseases

The Service Provider in consultation with an appropriate Council Officer will formulate an emergency plan within 24 hours of an outbreak of disease or plague of pests threatening West Wimmera's tree population. The Service Provider will take immediate and effective measures to eliminate or contain major disease or pest outbreaks after an authorised Council Officer's approval of the emergency plan.

The Service Provider must provide affected residents and businesses with a minimum of two days advance written notice where chemical pest control is to be undertaken.

For all Pest and Disease outbreaks, an inventory and management record will be maintained by the Service Provider for Council using the appropriate technology. This will include a record of all chemical pest control undertaken.

Any Chemical treatment carried out on a tree for insect control or fungus control will be carried out with all due regard to public safety. As far as possible chemical treatments will only be used if there is no possible alternative available.

If Dutch Elm Disease should enter Australia and an outbreak occur within the municipality it is likely that, because of the extremely virulent nature of the disease that trees will be removed immediately. In such circumstances it may not be possible for the normal community consultation process to occur. However affected residents will be informed as soon as practicable. Treatment of Dutch Elm Disease will occur in co-operation within surrounding municipalities and the Department of Employment and Primary Industries.

3.6 Tree Surgery

Technically all pruning operations and any work that is done to a tree comes under the category of tree surgery. However, in this case it is only referring to corrective treatments and repair work to the branches or the trunk of a tree.

All major tree surgery work is expensive and for this reason tree surgery work will only be carried out on trees that are of high aesthetic and amenity value. It is necessary that the cost of the work involved be balanced against the amenity value of the tree before any work is commenced.

In the case of badly damaged trees, it will be necessary to decide whether the tree surgery should be carried out or whether the tree should be removed and replaced. The main type of tree surgery works carried out by Council include cable bracing and bolting.

- This treatment will be used where the branch structure of a tree has to be artificially reinforced. It will only be carried out to prevent extensive damage to a tree or to increase public safety. This type of treatment can only reinforce the strength of a tree and cannot hold a tree together that is in imminent danger of collapse.
- Maintenance of existing bracing and bolting requires annual inspection of hardware, and the Service Provider will be expected to keep an inventory of all such treatments within the municipality.

4. TREE ROOT MANAGEMENT

4.1 General

The potential for invasion of private property by tree roots is problematical in all tree plantings as is the potential for lifting of footpaths and road pavement surfaces by tree roots. This tree root growth is unpredictable and cannot be easily identified before it has become a problem. In the case of tree roots lifting a footpath, the requirements of public safety on the footpath will take precedence over the health of the tree.

Claims for damage alleged to have been caused by tree roots from trees in areas under the Councils ownership or control will be considered and liability determined in the context of Council's current Public Liability policy, and the issue of liability for any damage alleged to have been caused by Council owned trees will be decided in consultation with Councils insurer.

4.2 Tree Root Damage Claims

When a claim is received by Council for tree root damage, either verbally or in writing, the following procedures are in place.

When a claim is brought to the attention of the Service Provider the matter is investigated and a full report is prepared for Council's Insurance Officer. Under no circumstances will the report, or any other communication (verbal or written) offer an opinion as to Councils liability with respect to any damage claim.

Completed reports will be presented within 14 days of investigation. Reports will contain full details of site, photographs, recommendations for remedial works or recommendations to Council of requirements to have further investigation take place by other professionals with specific qualifications and experience. (This is essential where a claim is pending regarding damage to private property). Where a claim for an amount in damages in excess of \$1,000.00 is made, the claimant will be required to furnish supporting evidence to Council for consideration.

The original report is presented to Councils Insurance Officer, to be forwarded to Council's insurance company and a copy is kept by the Service Provider and a copy forwarded to Councils Parks Co-ordinator, and recorded for future reference.

Tree Root Damage investigation (where claims are estimated to be in excess of \$1,000.00) may comprise of:

- Having hard surfaces lifted to better ascertain the extent of radial root growth and How it corresponds to damage.
- Use of air knife (or other appropriate method) to remove soil to visually inspect root system.
- Root identification through other sources (eg; Agriculture Victoria Laboratories). Identification of roots is mandatory for all damage claims where such claim may result in damages in excess of \$5000.00. Identification of roots will be the responsibility of the claimant.

- Consult with geo and structural engineers.

Remedial work on trees allegedly causing tree root damage may include:

- Installation of tree root barrier (type and depth dependant on site conditions, type of damage and species of tree).
- Removal of tree (refer to tree removal criteria clause 5.3).

Where appropriate and practicable, lineal tree root barriers will be utilised and/or roots pruned to limit the extent and influence of Council tree roots on private property and its buildings and features. The installation of such barriers and the pruning of tree roots will only be undertaken provided the health and stability of the tree is not compromised.

These types of works are required on trees that through either radial root expansion or soil water loss via water uptake through roots that have damaged or threaten to damage either publicly or privately owned property. Trees that form part of a significant stand of trees, are of significant historical or botanical value will be considered for these types of works.

4.3 Tree Root Barrier Installation

Installation of a tree root barrier will not be construed as an admission of liability. A root barrier is installed in order to remove the potential for damage from Council owned trees. The depth and type of tree root barrier (moisture cut off wall) will be determined in consultation between the Service Providers Arboriculturist, and Councils Parks Co-ordinator, after investigation of site and consultation with appropriate professions where required.

Linear tree root barriers of High Density Polyethylene (HDPE), of depths between 300mm to 1200mm are considered and utilised dependant on site, type of damage and species of tree.

Reinforced concrete moisture cut off walls are considered and utilised dependant on site, type of damage and species of tree.

All underground services are identified prior to commencement of work.

The distance from trunks for root barrier installation take into account the critical root zone of any tree. A minimum distance requirement of 1.5m from the trunk to any trench.

Casaron (Dichlobenil), a root inhibitor is considered for use in the backfill, at the base of trenches and around services where it is felt appropriate.

4.4 Removal of Tree Roots

As much care should be taken when removing tree roots as when removing the branches of a tree. It is possible for disease to enter a tree through a wound in the roots as easily as it can enter a tree through a wound in a branch. When a root is removed from a tree the following steps should be taken:

- The root should be inspected and as little root removed as possible.

- The root should be removed as cleanly as possible and always in accordance with Current arboricultural practice.

After root pruning a record should be made of the work carried out. This record will be used to ensure that follow-up treatment of adequate fertilisation and pruning, if required, is carried out.

5. TREE REMOVAL

5.1 General

As trees in the urban environment provide many services to the residents and visitors, including shade and amenity. It is understood that street trees are an important element effecting the attractiveness and liveability of our townships, and that is why the selection or proposed removal or lopping of street tree/s can generate a lot of emotion in people - tree removal or the removal of trees in the townships can be a contentious issue. However, it becomes necessary from time to time to remove trees for a variety of reasons. It must be remembered that trees are no more permanent than any other feature in a streetscape, and that they are living organisms with a finite functional life.

The present policy with regard to healthy street tree removal is that no tree shall be removed without the consent of an authorised Council Officer and this present policy will be continued.

If it is deemed that an aged and significant tree needs to be removed from public land in townships by Council employees or workers contracted by Council, then Council first receives a risk assessment (where appropriate), by a suitably qualified arborist, and a costing for the removal of the tree, before making a decision on the removal of the tree.

For definition purposes, “an aged and significant tree” be taken to mean “if in doubt, it should go through Council”.

Where Council is considering the removal of any multiple street planting, or where Council is petitioned by residents for the removal of street plantings, or where an authorised Council Officer deems street plantings should be removed, an authorised Council Officer must consider the following factors to establish the Streetscape Evaluation Report:

- Reasons for removal;
- Contribution of the street planting to the streetscape;
- Maintenance costs of the tree in question;
- Potential for damage by tree roots to services (above and below ground);
- The overall health and condition of trees;
- Number of residents who approve/oppose the tree removals;
- Replacement planting type in relation to streetscape elements;
- Significance of the actual existing tree types (that is aesthetic as well as botanical Significance).

An authorised Council Officer will have authority for the removal of trees from Council streetscapes in accordance with the following guidelines:

- That Council is advised and that residents adjacent and opposite the tree removal site are consulted and provided with reason/s why the removal is necessary
- Residents will be given not less than 10 days to seek a report or make objection or comment;
- That removal of the tree/s complies with the tree removal criteria set out in clause 5.3;
- That in the event of an objection being received, the matter will be re-evaluated and all objectors consulted with prior to further action.

5.2 Tree Removal Applications

Requests are sometimes received from residents for the removal of a tree outside their property. The only requests that will be considered in detail are those that are received in writing. On receipt of the request the tree will be inspected and a report prepared. If in the opinion of an authorised Council Officer, there are no grounds for the removal of the tree then the person making the request will be informed.

Where there are good grounds for the removal of the tree or the person making the request is not satisfied with an authorised Council Officers response, then a report and recommendation will be prepared for consideration.

APPLICATION FOR TREE REMOVAL

An application in writing, is required to be approved by Council's delegate before any street tree can be lopped or removed.

Any Application for Tree Removal or Lopping, must be in writing, and contain the following details:

- The exact details of the location of the tree
- A detailed description of the tree, including species, age and condition.
- The reason for the proposed lopping or removal
- A map showing the tree/s
- Photographs of the tree/s
- Written advice from the Planning department of Council, stating whether or not a Planning Permit is required for the removal of Native Species.

Public Notice and Consultation

Except in emergencies involving a determination that the subject tree is a hazard which poses a threat to the public safety or damage to property, Council will notify residents in writing 2 weeks prior to the removal of any tree from a streetscape.

Notice of a Decision

Where the Council has approved to the removal or lopping of a tree, two weeks prior to that removal taking place, a letter will be dropped in the letter boxes of all the residents in the vicinity of the tree. This letter will state that work is going to be carried out to remove the tree and that if they have any queries and/or objections, that

they can contact Council (an appropriate officer will be nominated in the letter) and obtain more details. All objections will be mediated or negotiated by an authorised officer of the Council.

Removal or Lopping by Other Authorities

In cases where trees are removed by authorities other than Council due to road widening works, laying of cables, drainage, etc., special provisions shall apply to ensure that replacement will not be at Councils cost.

Consequences of Unauthorised Removal or Lopping of a Street Tree

When street tree(s) located on the proper alignment within the naturestrip or footpath require removal or are removed by any person or authority without Council authorisation, that person or authority shall be identified to Councils Street Environment Officer and will be required to meet the full cost of replacement (including the cost of the tree), plus a contribution for maintenance for the establishment period of the tree. The installation of any new crossover is such a case.

The process for tree removal applications will be as follows:

- A written request is received from a resident, owner or their agent.
- Investigation of the request by the Service Provider and action decided in the context of the tree removal criteria contained within the Policy (refer to clause 5.3). A tree removal report will be prepared for Councils arboricultural representative who will have the authority to approve or reject the recommendation contained in the report, and may make modifications as appropriate.
- In the event of approval of a recommendation for removal, affected residents would be circulated notice giving the reason for the intention to remove the tree/s and seeking their comment or objections and indicating the removal date of the tree/s.
- In the event that objections are received from the community or a Councillor requests information concerning a removal, Councils arboricultural representative will re-evaluate the report and respond to the objector. If the objector is still dissatisfied with the decision the matter will be referred to executive management for consideration.
- In the event that no objections are received, the tree will be removed on the date specified in the notice to the residents.
- If the tree is recommended for removal on the basis of an unacceptable risk to public safety then the normal notification process need not be followed and immediate removal may proceed. Photographic or similar documented evidence of the hazard will be kept in all such cases.

Now take Note

***** It is imperative that tree removals are not undertaken prior to the expiry of the 10 day notice period.**

5.3 Tree Removal Criteria for the Assessment of Lopping or Removal

Acceptable Reasons for Removal or Lopping of a Street tree

Council will only authorise the lopping or removal of street trees from its streetscapes if one or more of the following Criteria are met:

- The street tree, or part there of, is dead or dying, except where the dead tree is determined to have ecological habitat value in accordance with the requirements of Clause 52.17 of the West Wimmera Planning Scheme;
- The street tree is infected with an epidemic insect or disease where the recommended control is not applicable, economic or viable, and removal is the recommended practice, which must be supported by a written opinion of an independent and suitably qualified arborist.

To prevent transmission;

- The street tree poses an extreme public nuisance or safety hazard, because of its species, size, vegetative debris, location, attributes, or condition;

- The street tree interferes with the growth and development of a more desirable tree;
 - The aesthetic value of the street tree within the specific site and overall uniformity of the streetscape, are so low or negative that the site is visually enhanced by the Trees removal;
 - Work improvements required to be made around the street tree will kill or render the tree hazard;
 - Preservation of the street tree, when adjacent property is developed is not cost effective. The monetary value of the tree shall be compared to construction cost necessary to preserve the tree;
 - The street trees removal is required after investigation to facilitate the construction of a vehicle crossing into a property and there is no other viable choice. Cost of removal and replacement to be borne by the property developer; The street tree is not a significant or mature specimen;
 - The tree is alleged to be substantially responsible for damage occurring to public or private hardscape features and property and no viable other means can be identified which will address the damage and retain the tree e.g. the construction/installation of a root barrier would be detrimental to the health or stability of the tree, or an adjoining property owner/resident is not willing to co-operate with remedial works which may be considered necessary to save the tree;
- (Note: in this instance other factors such as the age of a building, changes in drainage or building conditions etc. have not been significant contributors to damage occurring.)**
- Repeated claims for damages from repair costs are likely to be more than the tree is worth.

5.4 Process for Tree Removal Assessment

A written request must be received by Council from resident owner or agent proposing the removal or lopping of the street tree.

Upon inspection and assessment the street tree is found to fulfil one or more of the tree removal criteria (refer to clause 5.3).

If the tree is recommended for removal and does not pose any immediate safety hazard, and is not dead, affected residents would receive notification of the proposed removal date/s, and desired tree species (based upon predominant tree species where desirable) for replacement.

Written objection may be received from the public within 10 working days prior to the trees removal.

In the event that no objections are received the tree will be removed on the date specified in the notice to residents.

Tree removals will (as often as is practicable) be grouped together in lots.

Standard Conditions for the Approval of lopping or Removal of Street Trees

1. With respect to applications for removal or lopping related to Development proposals, Full Cost Recovery, including replacement cost and maintenance to establishment, to be borne entirely by the proponent.
2. All removal works are to be undertaken or commissioned by Council, under the usual private works quotation process, with completion of a Request for Quote Agreement.
3. In exceptional cases council may permit, an Authorised Contractor, to undertake the works, with submission of a copy of the paid invoice for the approved works, with all costs borne by the proponent.

5.5 Method of Tree Removal

Trees to be removed must be cut down to ground level. All removals must be undertaken in a safe manner and in line with current contractual arrangements and according to current arboricultural practice, and must at no stage endanger persons or property.

In every case where a tree is removed by Council the tree will be removed in its entirety to a level at least 150mm below ground level. To achieve this it may be necessary to use a stump grinder to grind out the root base of the tree.

Stumps will be barricaded off to alert the public to their existence. All underground services will be identified prior to stump removal being carried out. The site will be reinstated with topsoil and seeded, where appropriate, or levelled off and made safe where they are located in hard surface situations.

5.6 Dead Trees

Trees that have died through either natural or unnatural causes can soon become dangerous if they are not removed. Where there are such trees, the cause of death should be ascertained if possible so that corrective treatment can be carried out in the area and the tree should then be removed with the consent of an authorised Council Officer.

No report need be submitted to Council prior to the removal of such trees. However, a photographic record must be kept, and a copy supplied to Councils arboricultural representative.

5.7 Dangerous Trees

It is possible for trees to become dangerous through storm or vehicle damage, or decay may cause branches or the centre of the trunk to become weak. Where an inspection reveals that a tree is in a dangerous condition it should be removed immediately. Immediate removal is required in such cases to minimise the risk to a third party. Photographs should be taken of the tree before it is removed so that there is proof of the danger of the tree. A report should be prepared on reasons for the removal of the tree for an authorised Council Officer.

5.8 Trees Alleged to be Causing Structural Damage

That in the event of damage to Council or private property alleged to be caused by street tree roots, every attempt shall be made to repair such an area without causing damage to the tree. Tree removal under these circumstances shall be regarded as a final option.

5.9 Removals for Development

Where an application is made to remove a street tree for the installation of a new vehicle crossover, the guidelines for removal shall be the same as those in clause 5.3, except that a tree which is in good condition and suited to its location, may be removed provided that:

- No alternative site for the crossover is available.
- Affected residents have been notified in writing and have an opportunity to lodge an objection.
- A suitable replacement tree will be provided and maintained at the cost of the property owner (if an appropriate site is available).
- The cost of the removal and any associated works will be borne by the property owner/developer.

The following procedures are for the removal of trees for proposed vehicle crossings:

- Driveway application lodged with Councils Planning Department.
- If a street tree is affected by the proposed crossing and/or requires removal the Service Provider must be notified. Minimum distances are required between trees and crossings; tree centre to be no closer than 1.8 metres to closest edge of crossover. Exceptions to this regulated distance must be negotiated with Councils arboricultural representative.
- The tree must be assessed by an arboriculturist. Proposed removal of the tree will be documented in a tree removal report to be provided to Councils arboricultural representative.
- Interim response including costing and conditions, are sent to the developer.
- The proposed removal is recorded on the tree removal database (held by the Councils arboricultural representative). Residents are notified, using the following process:
 - * A letter is circulated with regard to the proposed removal, and 10 working days given to respond to the proposal. Removal is subject to resident objections being considered. If resident objection is received a report is produced for Council for its consideration and resolution;
 - * Residents are notified of removal date;
 - * Applicant is notified of approval to remove, accompanied by account for the costs involved;
 - * Account paid
 - * Tree removed;
 - * Stump removed;
 - * Tree listed for replanting during the following planting season.

Minimum distances required:

- A minimum distance for trenching along one side of a tree of 150mm for each 25mm of diameter at breast height (DBH). This would require a distance of 1.8m for a tree with a DBH of 300mm.
- The minimum distance of 1.5m from the trunk, of the tree to any proposed development. This will cover the majority of the trees within the Townships.
- If a tree has a DBH greater than 300mm an inspection of the tree will be required, by an arborist, to ascertain the size of the protection zone in each case.
- The larger the size and foliage density of a tree the greater the area is required to maintain basal integrity (stability).

5.10 Dispute Resolution

If objections are received the proposed removal will be suspended and the arboricultural representative or other appropriate officer will examine the objections on their individual merit and may in consultation with interested parties reach a final decision.

If it is likely that a dispute may develop the Councils arboricultural representative will refer the matter to Executive Management for resolution.

The Council Arboricultural Representative (or other appropriate officer) will advise the objector in writing of the decision and supply a contact number.