

City of Melbourne

Tree Policy



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Purpose

Melbourne's trees are one of its greatest assets. This policy provides the strategic framework used by the City of Melbourne to protect, care for and nurture trees in its streets and parkland. It will guide decision making and will be supplemented by more detailed policy and procedures regarding specific tree-related issues.

Background

Context

The City of Melbourne is internationally recognised for its tree-lined boulevards, parks and gardens. Trees beautify, define and soften streetscapes and give scale to buildings in addition to providing shade and wildlife habitat. They also contribute significantly to the maintenance of a healthy urban environment by trapping air borne pollutants and absorbing carbon dioxide.

Melbourne's community is protective of its trees, and interested in their health and maintenance. Consequently, any issues relating to Melbourne's trees generally have a high profile and generate considerable public debate and passion.

It is important that Council protects its trees, demonstrates to the community that it is doing so and is able to provide a rationale for the decisions it makes.

The Trees

There are approximately 35,000 trees within The City of Melbourne. Using the City's 'tree amenity valuation formula' the total value of Melbourne's trees is estimated to be over \$360 million.

This asset is irreplaceable in the short term and the trees require close monitoring and management to ensure their continued good health.

All of Melbourne's major parkland, and many smaller neighborhood parks, contain important arboricultural assets. Remnant eucalypt trees feature in Royal Park and Yarra Park and many of these are important to Aboriginal culture.

Melbourne has some of the most significant stands of mature elm trees remaining in the world after Dutch Elm Disease almost totally destroyed elm populations in the Northern Hemisphere. The elms lining the major boulevards of Flemington Road, Victoria Parade, St. Kilda Road and Royal Parade are registered as significant by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), along with the avenues of trees in the Fitzroy Gardens.

Strategic Direction

Creating Prosperity, Victoria's Capital City Policy 1994, establishes Melbourne's strategic direction. It recognises that the 'health of the City's trees must be continuously monitored: protection of the boulevards and avenues of trees, especially the elms, which are now a rare international asset, will continue.' Creating Prosperity also acknowledges that 'streetscapes parks, gardens and boulevards, give the City.. elegant and cosmopolitan qualities..' and 'maintain the City's green character.'

City Plan '97, The City of Melbourne's Municipal Strategic Statement aims to 'maintain and enhance the City's parks, gardens and boulevards as the signature for Melbourne's livability..' and furthermore, that 'Council will protect historic parks, gardens, avenues and significant trees.'

Council's Parks Policy indicates that a complementary Tree Policy will be developed.







Tree Policy

1. *New trees will be planted in the City of Melbourne whenever there are opportunities to do so.*

Council will take all opportunities to increase the number of trees in the City. Precinct Plans and Park Plans will maximise planting opportunities and provide direction for future planting programs.

Action

- Plant more than 5000 new trees in the City of Melbourne by 2003.
- Promote and support local tree planting days and encourage and increase community involvement in these events.
- Implement the North West Greening Strategy, which aims to identify new sites for tree planting in North Melbourne and West Melbourne.

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2. *High tree management standards will be maintained at all times.*

Council will ensure its high quality maintenance regime is continued and that it provides adequate resources for tree management. The latest technology will be integrated to ensure maintenance and management programs continue to meet World Best Practice.

Action

- Develop and maintain a computerised Geographic Information System (GIS) tree database, incorporating the latest technology, to ensure accurate information is readily available.
- Conduct an annual independent audit to ensure a high standard of arboricultural work is maintained.
- Regularly benchmark tree maintenance standards to ensure they reflect Worlds Best Practice.

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3. *Melbourne's world class, tree-lined boulevards will be given special management and extended as opportunities permit.*

Tree-lined boulevards are a defining feature of Melbourne. They complement and beautify the urban environment and provide "gateways" to the City. Council will ensure the protection of existing boulevards and develop new ones, particularly to the west and northwest of the CAD, as this approach to the City will become more important with developments such as Docklands and City Link.

Action

- Inspect each boulevard tree annually and prune and maintain as required.
- Plant additional infill elm trees in the centre medians of Flemington Road.
- Develop and implement new tree planting plans for the northern end of Swanston Street.
- Plant additional trees in Flinders Street through to Docklands to achieve boulevard status.
- Plant additional trees in Footscray Road and Dynon Road to achieve boulevard status.









4. *Exotic trees are an important element of the central City's Victorian character and they will be maintained and strengthened where appropriate. In addition, a diverse range of native and exotic tree species' will be maintained across Melbourne.*

Precinct Plans and Park Plans incorporating tree planting design and species selection for specific areas will be developed with extensive public consultation. These will preserve the historic character of particular areas, strengthen existing themes and, where appropriate, introduce more contemporary landscaping. The existing street tree stock within the City of Melbourne consists of approximately 72% exotic trees and 28% natives. The projected long-term ratio after full implementation of the Precinct Plans is unchanged.

Action

- Develop precinct plans for South Yarra, Jolimont, North Melbourne, West Melbourne, Kensington, Parkville, Carlton, South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and the Central Activities District.
- Continue to develop Park Plans, outlining planting regimes, for all parkland within the City of Melbourne.

5. *Tree species will be selected for planting depending on their suitability for the site, performance, and potential to contribute to the streetscape. Poor performing trees will be removed and replaced to reinvigorate streetscapes.*

Trees will be selected depending on their capacity to grow successfully in a particular location. Species that display longevity, aesthetic qualities and durability will be favoured. A high percentage of Melbourne's existing tree stock consists of only a few species, therefore new species will continue to be trialed to improve diversity. Trees that do not grow to maturity, offer little aesthetic value or fail to maintain acceptable health will be removed.

Action

- Continue to trial new tree species across the City.
- Remove and replace poor performing trees as part of annual winter tree planting programs.

6. *Melbourne's stock of mature trees will be maintained with the implementation of a strategic replacement program.*

Some trees in the City of Melbourne, including many of the elms in the boulevards are approaching the end of their useful life. Council will manage its large number of trees by keeping up to date data on the age, condition and life expectancy of all trees and replacing them where appropriate. This will ensure a mature tree stock is maintained while younger trees are growing as replacements.

Action

- Develop a tree replacement strategy in line with Park Plans and Precinct Plans.
- Commence a replacement program of poor trees on St Kilda Road.

7. *Research into biological pests and diseases that threaten urban trees will continue to be actively supported by Council.*

Council has actively fought the pests and diseases that threaten its trees, particularly elms. Council will continue to support pest and disease research and encourage greater interaction between neighbouring municipalities in the management of this issue.

Action

- Play a leadership role in elm pest and disease research.
- Support Moreton Bay fig Psyllid research.
- Implement Council's Tree Protection (Possums) Strategy.
- Promote joint pest and disease control strategies with neighbouring municipalities



8. *Melbourne's unique stands of elm trees will be protected and maintained, however, no major new elm plantings will be undertaken.*

Dutch Elm Disease has killed most of the elm population in the Northern Hemisphere and has recently been discovered in New Zealand. It has the potential to destroy Melbourne's elms should it become active in Australia. Consequently it would be wise to only plant replacement elm trees

Action

- Replace individual elm trees within existing stands as required.
- Continue contract growing of elms to ensure availability of quality replacement stock.
- Source and trial Dutch Elm Disease resistant elm varieties as they become available.
- Source and trial alternative species similar in character to elms.
- Continue to implement Elm Leaf Beetle control program.
- Continue to work with and support the Friends of the Elms.
- Maintain representation on the Elm Pests and Diseases Task Force.

9. *Trees will be protected from development and other activities that threaten their health. The conflicting requirements of trees and infrastructure will be minimised where possible.*

Council will always give existing trees priority when considering applications for new developments or for events to be staged in parkland. Construction and excavation close to trees can cause damage if correct tree protection zones are not observed. Council will pursue the relocation of infrastructure away from trees, to reduce the need for excessive pruning.

Action

- Provide and enforce stringent procedural guidelines to protect and preserve trees, for any event or development close to trees.
- Seek alternatives to pruning under the Powerline Clearance Code and pursue underground power supply cables.
- Play an advocacy role with planning bodies to minimise impact on trees.
- Continue to seek compensation for trees lost or damaged due to development.

10. *The community will be consulted and informed about all major projects involving tree removal, tree planting and pest and disease management.*

The City manages Melbourne's trees on behalf of the community. Information will continue to be provided well in advance to residents regarding works proposed in their neighbourhood. Stakeholders and the public will be notified well in advance of all major works involving trees.

Action

- Consult widely with the community and stakeholders during the development of all Park Plans and Precinct Plans.
- Provide comprehensive information to all residents, stakeholders, and interest groups, regarding major tree projects.







