

## Urban Forest and Green Space Policy

<b>Policy Type:</b> Council Policy <b>Policy Owner:</b> Manager Natural Areas and Parks	<b>Policy No. CP- 102</b> <b>Last Review Date: 21 November 2017</b>
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### Policy Objectives

1. To protect, preserve and enhance the aesthetic character of the City of Melville.
2. To realise the social, environmental and economic benefits of trees and other vegetation as an integral element of the urban environment.
3. To contribute to community wellbeing by integrating and aligning the efficient provision of physical, social and green infrastructure and management of natural areas to achieve community wellbeing today and tomorrow.
4. To encourage a sense of shared responsibility and balance individual and community rights to equitably distribute the costs and the benefits of a greener City.
5. To ensure that the urban forest and green spaces that are integral to the City's sense of place are not compromised in areas of increased residential density.

### Policy Scope

This policy applies to land owned or controlled by the City, to activities for which the City's discretion or approval is required and to the City's function of advising and providing services to the community.

This policy is intended to give direction to operational strategies and where appropriate, the development of local laws and to guide decisions in circumstances of competing objectives.

### Definitions / Abbreviations Used In Policy

**Activities for which the City's discretion or approval is required** include legislative and compliance requirements for which the City is responsible, commercial undertakings with the City, and community funding as relevant.

**Green infrastructure** means all deliberately planted or actively maintained plants on public or private land within the City of Melville, including trees, shrubs, groundcover, climbers and aquatic plants and plants integrated into the built form such as green roofs/walls, or in atriums and courtyards or balcony gardens and includes the soil, water, growing space and solar access that support them.

**Green space** includes green infrastructure, natural areas and turfed recreational facilities, whether on public or private land.

**Natural area** refers to bushland reserves and to the plants and associated fauna within them or otherwise occurring naturally within the City.

**Private land** includes land owned or leased by institutions, commercial entities, bodies corporate, community groups or individuals.

**Public land** is land that is owned, vested in, and/or managed by the City or by a State or national government agency.

**Shrub<sup>1</sup>**, for the purposes of this policy, refers to a woody plant less than 8 metres tall, with multiple stems arising at or near the base.

**Tree<sup>1</sup>**, for the purposes of this policy, refers to a woody plant with a potential mature height of at least 5 metres, generally with a single self-supporting stem (trunk) and a clearly formed crown of foliage.

**Understorey**, for the purposes of this policy, refers to shrubs, small trees and plants that do not meet the size criteria of trees, growing in natural ground, but does not include turf or unirrigated grass.

**Urban forest** means that part of the City's green infrastructure and natural capital comprising the trees and associated understorey on both public and privately owned land.

**Urban tree canopy** is defined as the layer of leaves, branches and stems that cover the ground when viewed from above, and **canopy cover** is the percentage of a given area of land that lies directly below the canopy.

## Policy Statement

Plants comprise a critical element of the urban ecosystem contributing many social, economic and environmental benefits.

The protection of a healthy, resilient and diverse urban ecosystem is a shared responsibility of the City, other landowners, residents and businesses.

The City is committed to no net loss of plant cover within the City and to locally targeted increases in tree canopy and understorey cover where it is deficient.

The City seeks to achieve and maintain locally optimal levels of urban canopy cover that balance:

- the community benefits of trees,
- the benefits of biodiversity and a sustainable ecosystem,
- the needs and aspirations of land owners and users, and
- the health, safety and quality of life of the community.

The City will foster and facilitate innovative ways to engage the community in increasing urban forest and other green space across the City in all urban environments including streetscapes, parks, civic facilities, infrastructure reserves and private land.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition of shrub and tree adapted from Specht, R.L. (1970) Vegetation. Pages 44–67 in Leeper, G.W. (ed.), "Australian Environment", 4th ed. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne cited by Australian National Botanic Gardens (<https://www.anbg.gov.au/aust-veg/veg-map.html>)

Other than in natural areas, the City will plant trees and shrubs that are well-adapted to the specific site requirements and surrounding land use, are compatible with existing and planned adjacent hard infrastructure and are fit for the purpose for which they are planted.

Management of natural areas will minimise variation to the natural and unassisted species mix occurring in the environment, with intervention in natural areas limited to replacing senescent, diseased or dead plants with the same or similar indigenous species, removing weeds, addressing land and plant degradation and responsibly managing fuel load to reduce bushfire risk.

All future structure plans, Local Planning Scheme amendments and infrastructure asset plans will make explicit reference to urban forest and green space objectives.

The City will develop and maintain a publicly accessible tree inventory for public land and a database of potential planting sites to inform its tree planting program, and will regularly assess the extent, health and diversity of the City's urban forest, with the results made publicly available.

The implementation, monitoring and review of this policy will be based on the above data and risk management principles.

#### References that may be applicable to this Policy

Legislative Requirements:	The Local Government Act
Procedures, Process Maps, Work Instructions:	N/A
Other Plans, Frameworks, Documents Applicable to Policy:	CP-029 Street Tree Policy CP-086 Verge Treatment Policy Urban Forest Strategy (under development) Green Space Strategy (to be prepared in 2017)
Policy alignment required:	CP-006 Land and Property Retention, Disposal and Acquisition Policy CP-030 Environmental Policy CP-040 Public Health and Wellbeing Policy CP-067 Amenity Policy CP-078 Residential Development Policy CP-087 Non-residential Development Policy
Delegated Authority No:	N/A

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#### ORIGIN/AUTHORITY

Ordinary Meeting of Council

20 September 2016

#### Item No.

T16/3720

#### Reviews

Ordinary Meeting of Council

21 November 2017

T17/3769