INNER WEST

Urban Forest Policy

V1

Title	**Urban Forest Policy**
Summary	This Policy provides the framework for delivering a sustainable and intergenerational Urban Forest. This policy supersedes all previous Leichardt, Marrickville, and Ashfield tree policies, strategies, and masterplans.
Document Type	Policy
Relevant Strategic Plan Objective	• Strategic Direction 1: An ecologically sustainable Inner West • Strategic Direction 2: Liveable, connected neighbourhoods and transport. • Strategic Direction 4: Healthy, resilient and caring communities
Legislative Reference	• *Local Government Act 1993* • *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* • *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* • *Roads Act 1993* • *Civil Liabilities Act 2002* • *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* • *State Environmental Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021* • *Heritage Act 1977*
Related Council Documents	• *Model Code of Conduct* • *Inner West Local Environment Plan 2023* • *Marrickville DCP 2011* • *Ashfield DCP 2016* • *Leichardt DCP 2013* • *Biodiversity Strategy 2036* • *Community Strategic Plan 2036* • *Councils Delivery Program and Operational Plan* • *Disability Inclusion Plan 2023-2026*

	• *Blue Green Grid 2023* • *Verge Garden and Adopt-a-Spot Policy 2023* • *Statewide Mutual Best Practice Manual Trees & Tree Roots 2018*
Version Control	See last page

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy, is to

a) Outline the Councils approach to sustainably and appropriately manage the Inner West Urban Forest on an intergenerational basis.
b) Define the priorities and framework for Council to manage and maximise the Inner West's urban forest as an intergenerational resource.
c) Develop a sustainable and resilient tree population, maximise benefits, whilst reducing negative interactions and risk.
d) Establish an integrated approach, that incorporates all needs and aspects of liveability within the urban space.
e) Commit to the retention and protection of suitable trees, practical management of unsuitable or hazardous trees, and undertake renewal tree planting.
f) Provide the framework for development of operational plans and manuals, through the Strategic Action Plan, to deliver the aims and objectives of this policy.

2 Scope

This policy applies to trees on private and public land across the entire Inner West Local Government Area, excluding Natural areas which are managed under the Inner West Councils Biodiversity Strategy.

The performance indicators on urban canopy, tree planting targets and associated reporting are managed through Councils Community Service Plan and Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Budget (DPOP) and State Government Canopy mapping data.

Executive, Managers, Council Officers, and contractors working for Council regardless of whether they are permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time or casual. For the purposes of this policy, the term contractor includes on-hired temporary labour services (agency staff) and sub-contractors.

3 Definitions

In the Urban Forest Policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

Act	Local Government Act 1993.
conflict of interest	Includes either a: • Pecuniary conflict of interest. • Significant non-pecuniary conflict of interest.

	• Non-significant non-pecuniary conflict of interest, as defined in the Model Code of Conduct and described in section 7 of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy.
Councillor	Inner West Council elected representative.
Council committee member	A person other than a Councillor or Council Officer who is a member of a Council committee other than a wholly advisory committee, and a person other than a Councillor who is a member of Council's audit, risk and improvement committee.
Council Officer	Inner West Council members of staff (including full-time, part-time, casual and contracted staff).
Council Official	Councillors, Council Officers, Council committee members and delegates of Council.
Executive Leadership Team	General Manager, Director Corporate, Director Infrastructure, Director Community, Director Planning, General Counsel.
Urban Forest – Inner West	The Urban Forest is the collection of trees and large shrubs located within Council managed streets, mown parks, facilities, and all privately owned or managed land.
Strategic Action Plan	The Strategic Action Plan is a list of documents and initiatives that will deliver the aims and objectives of the Urban Forest Policy.

4 Background

The Local Government Council areas of Ashfield, Leichardt and Marrickville were amalgamated in 2016. This resulted in Council managing the tree population from the

documents of these three former Councils, creating inconsistency and complexity for tree management and the community. The historical tree master planning documents are fixed in time and quickly became outdated, many of these documents are now more than ten years old.

Historically tree planting across most cities occurred in short periods of time 1930's, early 1980's and early 2000's. Marrickville's 2011 Urban Forest Strategy stated that 41,500 trees were planted between 1972 to 2003. Whist some of these trees were planted up to thirty years apart, the majority that remain are now mature.

The Marrickville documents also recognised the high mortality rate of new plantings, the short life span of urbanised trees and difficult growing conditions in streets.

The Ashfield Street Tree Strategy 2015 identified that, narrow verges planted with large species (Eucalyptus, Melaleuca, Platanus and Corymbia) posed a significant challenge. This was due to their mature size, shallow soil profiles, narrow footways (or roads) and the impacts to infrastructure, pedestrians, houses, and vehicles. Large tree species require space to grow above and below ground, which was not always available.

Over planting was also found to be a negative outcome given the other essential use requirements of streets and roads. The desire for large trees and the many benefits they provide led to poor species selection, with inadequate consideration of site constraints, leading to negative outcomes in some instances.

A review of the public tree population data in November 2024, found an aging tree population with 6% young, 28% semi mature, and 60% mature. The remaining 6% are spread between vacant sites and overmature aged trees. The corresponding data revealed the overall condition and quality of the tree population was also less than optimal.

Trees and other greening, provide many benefits that contribute to the liveability and biodiversity of the Inner West. This 2025 Urban Forest Policy and implementation of the Strategic Action Plan, provides the opportunity to improve the integration of the urban forest with the built environment, and to create a balanced, sustainable, and resilient urban forest tree population.

5 Statement

The many benefits of trees within an urban environment are common knowledge amongst the community. This policy will provide a balanced, consistent, and integrated approach to managing the urban forest on private and public land, within the urban context moving forward.

The Strategic Action Plan includes the development of an Urban Forest Background Paper, operational documents, community initiatives and actions, that will ensure integration and collaboration across all Council divisions. In addition, it will provide transparent and consistent process to deliver the Urban Forest Policy aims and

objectives, maximise tree population and canopy cover, reduce negative interaction and risk, add to biodiversity and heritage outcomes, and allow Council to meet its legal obligations with regards to trees.

Development and private tree applications will be managed through the Development Control Plans (DCP), and Public Trees through operational processes.

The performance indicators on urban canopy, tree planting targets and associated reporting, are managed through Councils Community Service Plan and Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Budget (DPOP).

The adopted planting target is 1,000 public trees planted per annum.

The 2036 canopy criteria is to expand the canopy cover. The current Inner West Canopy Cover is 18.55% as listed in the 2022 NSW Government Seed Data, this is a 1% increase over the 2019 data. The Inner wests seed data is comparable to City of Sydney and Canada Bay.

The Greater Sydney aspirational canopy target is 40%, however, each Local Government Area has different housing and infrastructure densities. The Inner West has a high tree population and limited space; therefore, the Inner West canopy target is set at 23%, noting that other forms of urban greening will compliment canopy cover to offset climate change impacts.

6 Aims

The aims of the Urban Forest Policy are to:

- Ensure a liveable Inner West through a healthy and sustainable Urban Forest, that provides economic, ecological, and social benefits.
- Provide important directional statements that will maximise the potential, and integration, of the Inner West Urban Forest on private and public land.
- Emphasise the role of the Urban Forest as an intergenerational resource that provides multiple benefits to the community.
- Manage the tree resource holistically to maximise benefits, consider other land use functions in the urban context, reduce risk, negative interactions, and meet Councils legal obligations.

7 Objectives

The following objectives form the basis for development of operational documents, and process, and are to be considered when reviewing or developing other IWC strategies, policies or Development Control Plan. The key objectives of the Urban Forest Policy are:

Policy and strategic action plan outcomes:

1. Are clear, concise, cohesive, and consistent.
2. Align with planning instruments (SEPPs, Inner West LEP and Development Control Plans).
3. Provide a structure for development of integrated operational process and technical manuals to retain, manage and renew trees.
4. Acknowledge that the urban space is a combination of important functions that contribute to liveability.
5. Reflect current best practice, peer reviewed literature, legal and legislative requirements.

Value and Manage the Urban Forest:

1. Promote the importance of trees and large shrubs as part of overall urban forest greening, on private and public land.
2. Maximise the capacity of the urban forest to provide ecological, economic, social and amenity benefits to both present and future generations.
3. Recognise the loss of, and competition for, space as a limiting factor for trees in a modified urban environment.
4. Sustain and renew the urban forest on an intergenerational basis.
5. Respond to the challenges of climate change by creating a healthy and resilient tree population, through holistic design, tree management and tree renewal processes.

Improve the Quality and Quantity of the Urban Forest.

1. Promote increased long-term public and private investment in the urban forest.
2. Secure space through private development and public infrastructure projects, to ensure successional tree planting across multiple generations.
3. Improve the overall health and structure of the urban forest to ensure climate change resilience.
4. Ensure the success of the public planting program, through robust process and quality control to maximise return.
5. Undertake tree planting of all suitable vacant sites on public land to achieve Councils adopted 1,000 public trees per annum.
6. Incorporate appropriate planting on private land to offset trees removed through development processes, and to ensure intergenerational equity and maximise urban forest potential.

Planning and Design Process.

1. Integrate planning for the urban forest within the tree management, development, and civil design processes.
2. Improve the compatibility of trees and vegetation with buildings and infrastructure through concept, design, engineering, tree selection and contemporary arboriculture practice.
3. Appropriately manage and reduce risk through all development, civil design, and maintenance processes.
4. Secure viable space for tree planting through planning and design processes.

Education and Research

1. Improve knowledge and understanding of the Inner West urban forest, the benefits it provides, legal and legislative requirements, whole of tree life asset management and strategies.
2. Monitor and respond to issues and changes in the Inner West urban forest over time.
3. Evaluate the benefit and effectiveness of current technologies.

Community

1. Engage with the community as a key partner in sustaining and managing the Inner West Urban Forest.
2. Undertake annual community education programs through a range of methods and media.
3. Undertake community planting initiatives for private and public land.

8 Key Principles

There are four key principles to ensure delivery of the aims and objectives of Inner West Urban Forest Policy and Strategic Action Plan. The following principles form the basis for development of operational documents, and process, and are to be considered when reviewing or developing other IWC strategies, policies or Development Control Plan.

The four key principles are:

Organisational integration

Managing the urban forest is a core function of local government. The best results are delivered when the urban forest is integrated into Councils public space management, land use planning and infrastructure processes.

Holistic Approach

The urban forest policy and associated documents operate in harmony with other Inner West Council strategies, policies, and development control plan.

The urban environment is a shared space that accommodates a range of functions critical to the liveability of the Inner West. There are significant challenges from ongoing loss of space in urbanised areas, with significant competition for the remaining space, in delivering a range of strategies and programs.

This Urban Forest Policy and Strategic Action Plan recognises these challenges, and will work holistically with existing policies and strategies, to maximise the vegetation and biodiversity returns from any public space, without diminishing other fundamental urban functions.

The future review of Council strategies, policies, and processes will accommodate the aims and objectives of this urban forest policy and the strategic action plan outcomes.

The development of operational documents will holistically support the aims and objectives of the urban forest policy, through integration of green and built assets in planning and design process. This will minimise interaction, account for use of the space, facilitate improved tree planting and maximise both green and built asset life.

Community Focus

Community engagement provides opportunity for improved learning and outcomes.

Understanding the community experience at any given location provides opportunities to improve outcomes, both locally and across the Inner West. This balances broader perspectives with the individual circumstance, in the context of Councils legal and legislative requirements.

Partnerships should be formed at a local level with residents, utility agencies and institutional land holders, traditional landowners, and state government stakeholders.

Asset Management (Council Managed Land)

The urban forest is a living asset in a highly modified environment and is subject to growth and degradation. The useful life span, or the biological potential, of urban trees is shorter than trees in natural areas due to a range of biotic and abiotic factors.

Trees in urbanised areas are required to be managed the same as other built assets, adopting a '*whole of life cycle*' approach that plans for the maintenance and renewal planting of trees and vegetation, within defined service levels.

Accurate information on the quantity and quality of the tree population is vital in understanding the overall performance of the urban forest and to ensure intergenerational equity.

Efficient systems are critical in the gathering of this information and management of the urban forest. This information should be readily accessible to all Council officers and management. A public interface should be developed as the public tree mapping system develops.

9 Notifiable Trees

The decision regarding public tree retention or removal will be determined under separate operational process.

Once Council determines that public tree removal is required, then a notification process will be triggered based on a size index calculation. Size index is calculated using height m x diameter cm (measured at 1.4m above ground level). Appendix A provides further detail.

All notifiable tree removals undertaken by Council will be listed on Councils web site. The Council will investigate sites and undertake tree planting wherever practical.

Tree removal of trees greater than size index 750, will require a notice to be attached to the tree for a minimum of fourteen days prior to removal, and the ten properties immediately adjacent notified by letter box drop.

Tree removal of trees greater than size index 1000, also require a notification memo to be provided to management stating reason for removal and options considered.

Exclusions: The notification process is not required:

a) where agencies external to Council are removing the tree, or
b) in the event of an imminent risk (such as significant structural failure) or after hours, that requires immediate removal, or
c) for public infrastructure projects where notification has been provided, or
d) the tree does not meet the minimum size index of 750.

The minimum fourteen day notification period may be reduced where there is a public safety concern, and the works are required to:

a) Remove an unacceptable risk in a timely manner.
b) Reinstate essential house services – such as water, sewer, telecommunications or prevent flooding.

Adjacent residents are to receive a letter box notification in all cases. Councils Web site will provide the details of any urgent removals and the reason for the priority.

10 Breaches of this Policy

Breaches of this policy may result in an investigation of the alleged breach in line with relevant Council policies including the Model Code of Conduct.

Any alleged criminal offence or allegation of corrupt conduct will be referred to the relevant external agency.

11 Administrative Changes

From time-to-time circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made including branding, Council Officer titles or department changes and legislative name or title changes which are considered minor in nature and not required to be formally endorsed.

12 Version Control – Policy History

This policy will be formally reviewed every three years from the date of adoption or as required. A report will be provided to Council at 12 months from adoption on the performance of the Policy.

Governance use only:

Document	**Urban Forest Policy and Strategic Action Plan**	***Uncontrolled Copy When Printed***	
Custodian	Director Engineering	Version #	Version 1
Adopted By	Council	ECM Document #	40646959
Next Review Date	May 2028		

Amended by	**Changes made**	**Date Adopted**
[Council Department]	[Describe reason for major changes]	Day Month, Year
		20 May 2025

13 Appendix A Size Index Calculation

Size Index is adapted from the Australian Standard, AS 2303-2018 Tree stock for landscape use, and has been used effectively for over a decade by other Councils to inform their notification processes. The intention is to capture trees that require notification in an easy to use and transparent methodology.

The methodology of using Size Index, calculated by multiplying tree height in metres, by trunk diameter in centimetres (measured at 1.4m above ground level using a tape measure) to generate a single number. This methodology only requires a tape measure and visual estimate of height, which has been used successfully in the past to determine notifiable trees. There is no requirement for millimetre accuracy for this process to work effectively.

Using tree height, or trunk diameter, in isolation does not account for various tree shape and natural growth habits. This can result in some trees being excluded from the notifiable process, despite their prominence in the landscape.

Table A below provides examples of various tree heights and diameters and where the notifiable and memo process are triggered.

Tree height and trunk diameter will vary subject to growing conditions. The same species at different locations can vary greatly in mature dimensions.

The species listed below as examples in Table A all have the potential to reach the notifiable threshold, and in some cases meet the requirement for a memo. The examples 5 and 6 demonstrate how varying tree height and trunk diameters can result in trees being notifiable.

Table A Examples of size index calculation

	Height M	Diameter CM	Size Index	Notifiable	Memo
Tree 1	6	25	150	No	No
Tree 2	6	50	300	No	No
Tree 3	11	40	440	No	No
Tree 4	16	50	800	Yes	No
Tree 5	18	60	1080	Yes	Yes
Tree 6	12	90	1080	Yes	Yes

Typical species trees 1, 2 and 3: Callistemon, Watergum, Crepe Myrtle, Blueberry Ash.

Typical species tree 4: Brushbox, Jacaranda, semi mature Eucalypt and Corymbia.

Typical species tree 5: Norfolk Pines, mature Eucalypt and Corymbia species.

Typical species tree 6: Melaleuca, Brushbox, Port Jackson Fig, Small-leaved Fig.