



George Town Council

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# TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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## Introduction

This Policy has been developed to provide guidance regarding tree establishment services, the selection and planting of new trees and the management of existing trees by George Town Council.

This policy applies to various areas including parks, reserves, operational land and roads (including road verges).

The Policy acts as a **guide only** to residents in respect of planting and maintenance of trees on private property within the George Town municipality.

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## Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to formalise Council's position in regard to the management of trees.

To provide guidance and direction for the management of trees under Council's care and control throughout the municipality of George Town, giving consideration to:

- Compliance with health, safety and environmental legislation and regulations.
- Identification and management of hazards to minimize harm.
- Communication with staff, residents and other stakeholders in relation to tree management matters.

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## Statement of Principles

George Town Council recognises that by identifying possible problems and addressing them before a tree is planted is a much better option than dealing with problems in the future.

The objectives of tree management at George Town Council are:

- To adopt a consistent and transparent approach;
- To provide an appropriate level of input to all residents and service requests;
- To acknowledge a full range of considerations which includes health of trees, vehicle safety, public safety, local amenity and environmental issues;
- To balance the needs of community members in context of other considerations;
- To ensure decisions are appropriately and adequately communicated in response to service enquiries and requests;
- To adequately prepare for emergency works;
- To develop and instigate a routine inspection and reporting regime; and
- To integrate management plans with budget cycles.

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## Link to Strategic and Annual Plans

### **Goal 1 – Organisational Accountability**

To ensure best practice and risk management processes.

### **Goal 5 – Our Built Environment**

Develop and implement asset maintenance plans for parks and associated infrastructure.

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## Legislation and related documents

- George Town Council Tree Management Strategy
- George Town Council Planning Scheme 1991
- Threatened Species Protection Act 1995
- Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994
- Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993

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## Scope of Policy

This Policy is applicable to all Council owned and managed areas.

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## Application of Policy - Stakeholders

Stakeholders may include but are not limited to:

- All Council workers;
- Mayor and Councillors;
- General Community;
- Contractors;
- Volunteers;
- Visitors;
- Lease holders; and
- Interested Parties

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## Benefit of Trees to the Community

The value of trees to the community and the urban environment is often overlooked but are significant and quantifiable contributors to the principle tenets of the George Town Council's Strategic Plan 2012-2017.

Trees provide several architectural and engineering functions. They provide privacy, emphasise views, or screen out objectionable views. They reduce glare and reflection. They direct pedestrian traffic and can calm traffic. They provide background to and soften, complement, or enhance architecture. The shade provided by street trees can also reduce pavement fatigue improving public safety and reducing management costs.

Trees can act as windbreaks and deflect rain fall along foot paths. Trees intercept water, store some of it, and reduce storm water runoff.

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## Application of Policy – Council Tree Selection & Planting

When selecting a tree, consideration will be given to its potential height and form. Consideration will also be given to proximity to buildings, other trees, shrubs, overhead wires, sewerage and water pipes. This will help to avoid later problems and will ensure trees fulfil the desired function.

Tree species known to have a tendency to drop limbs in high winds will not be considered for planting by Council.

## Application of Policy – Council Tree Selection & Planting (Cont.)

### COUNCIL

Council's tree planting program incorporates the strategic planting of 200 trees annually in George Town Council's urban area, parks, reserves and streets over 10 years commencing in 2011/12.

New trees should be as large as possible to allow for quality of specimen, availability and site conditions. Species will be selected that do not require excessive resource input to maintain them in a safe and aesthetically pleasing manner. Additionally, a combination of favourable factors will determine a species selection:

- Longevity – longer lived species should be given preference;
- Public safety;
- Environmental conditions;
- Growing space;
- Maintenance;
- Effect of native flora and fauna;
- Existing streetscape;
- Traffic conditions; and
- Residents' submission.

Tree species known to cause excessive damage to infrastructure will be avoided and tree species that are known for their structural integrity, aesthetic value and limited litter drop will be preferred. The following characteristics are generally undesirable and should be avoided when selecting trees:

- Invasive or weedy type species;
- Invasive root systems;
- Severe allergy or irritation causing ;
- Excessive fruit or nut drop;
- Poisonous; and
- Excessive limb drop.

The following list of trees has been chosen by Council to accommodate the above prerequisites, however does not limit Council in its choice of species to be planted.

Large Shade Trees suitable for avenue or for formal spatial boundaries	Large Shade Trees (suitable for individual or group planting)	Large evergreen trees suitable for wind break and infill planting	Medium to small trees suitable for accent or specimen planting	Shrubs suitable for understorey planting
Canadian Maple	English Oak	Blackwood	Hawthorn	Bottlebrush
Ornamental Pear	Live Oak		Rowan	Viburnum
Claret Ash	Flowering Ash		Flowering Plum	Bracelet Honey Myrtle
Pin Oak				
Linden				

## Application of Policy – Prohibited Planting

**Ratepayers must obtain permission from Council when considering planting street and park trees within Council managed land. Unauthorised planting is not permitted.**

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## Application of Policy – Tree Register

Council will maintain a Tree Register for all trees growing within the George Town Municipality and for which Council has responsibility. The Tree Register will form a critical component of Council's risk and tree management.

The register will record the following details of each tree:

- Species;
- Location;
- Age;
- Current health rating (at latest inspection);
- Inspection dates; and
- Next inspection due.

Maintenance activities undertaken will be recorded in the Register against each tree.

High risk trees will be identified if they are higher than 6 metres, showing signs of disease or damage will be inspected annually for changing factors that require Council mitigation.

Trees planted by residents on Council managed land with prior Council approval will be recorded in the Tree Register and will only be retained if they meet criteria including:

- Council's requirements for species selection;
- Compatible with other species around planting site; and
- Planting to Council standards (depth, location).

If the tree does not meet the standards the rate payer will be asked to remove it. If the rate payer does not remove it, Council staff will.

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## Application of Policy – A Guide to Planting on Private Property

Council does not have jurisdiction in regard to the planting of trees on private property. The following information is offered as a **guide only** to residents:

1. Determine the mature size of the tree and the size and nature of its root system. When buying plants, check their characteristics: Check on mature size, shade characteristics, potential for roots to cause damage, flowers, fruits and pollen, to determine their suitability.
2. Don't plant too close to buildings or in-ground pools or plant large trees too close together: Determine the height and canopy of trees when fully grown. Allow room for root growth (at least twice the height of the tree). Large trees should be planted at least three metres from buildings.
3. Check when planting under wires or over drainage lines: Trees planted in this location are extremely difficult to maintain and pose a safety threat to both people and property. Do not plant a tree directly underneath overhead lines.
4. Consider the effect on neighbouring properties (ie. shading, loss of views, and impact on foundations, fences and services). One issue that is commonly overlooked when planting a tree is allowing sufficient 'line of sight' for both an individual's and the neighbours' driveways.

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## Application of Policy – A Guide to Planting on Private Property (Cont.)

5. Care should be taken to ensure that ample vision is provided for all driveway users to see both the roadway and the footpath when either leaving or entering a property. This will minimise the risk of an accident or injury, and also makes entering and exiting a property easier.
6. Large trees can present a hazard in storms and have the potential to cause major damage to property. When planting a large tree near a house, place it at least half its mature height away from any building. For example if a tree grows to a mature height of 10 metres, plant the tree at least 5 metres away from any building. This will reduce the potential impact from a future fall.
7. Many people establish trees and other plants too close to footpaths and services such as underground pipes and wiring. This can cause problems which can be dangerous and costly to repair. It is the resident's responsibility to ensure that there is at least a 2.2m clearance above the footpath, and that the roots from the tree do not interfere with the path.
8. When planting a tree or shrub consider how much maintenance it will require, whether its seeds will create a safety hazard on footpaths and whether its leaves will fall into a neighbour's property. Debris from plants can pose a safety problem when they land on footpaths or areas that are commonly used by people. Sticks can pose a trip hazard, and things like seed pods and gum nuts can be slippery under foot. These are particularly hazardous for elderly people and people with limited mobility.
9. Use trees to provide the home with summer shade and/or winter sun: Plant deciduous trees (suitable to the climate and soils of the George Town municipality). Consider the summer and winter shadows of evergreen trees.
10. Don't grow climbers on trees: Climbers can strangle trees, leading to the tree's eventual death.
11. Retain and protect as many trees as possible when building or extending the home
12. Don't excavate or alter the ground level around trees: This can cause root damage or starving of the roots and can cause limb drop, instability or tree death.
13. Mature trees do need maintenance: Remove or trim misshapen branches. Check for fungal rots or other diseases. If in doubt, contact an experienced Arborist. Indiscriminate lopping can be dangerous to personal safety and the health of the tree.

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## Application of Policy - Tree Maintenance

### **COUNCIL**

Council will not permit the removal of any street tree unless it is considered dangerous, diseased or dead, a traffic hazard, obstructing vehicles or pedestrians, causing damage to public or private property and /or is an extraordinary maintenance problem associated with power lines.

A dangerous tree is one that has been determined by a suitably qualified and experienced person, such as an Arborist, to be dangerous.

A tree that drops leaf litter or fruit is not considered a dangerous tree.

Work to undertake removal of trees will be done so by qualified and approved contractors or Council staff.

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## Application of Policy - Tree Maintenance (Cont.)

Following removal of a tree Council will replace with either the same species or alternative in the next planting season except in the case where the tree has been removed due the impact on personal or property safety.

**Reactive** tree maintenance will be in response to customer complaints, internal works requests, damage following weather events, identification from external authorities or as identified through regular inspections.

### RESIDENTS

Residents must consult George Town Planning Scheme 1991 – Tree Preservation to determine if a Planning Permit is required for the removal of trees on their property.

Persons that have taken unauthorised action in relation to a tree may be subject to action and penalties.

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## Application of Policy - Tree Management Procedure

The George Town Council Tree Management Procedure will detail the requirements (timeframes and process) for responding to tree related customer enquiries.

The Tree Management Procedure will provide the operational framework for George Town Council employees to follow in the event of scheduled or reactive tree management processes. Scheduled processes include maintenance of the Tree Register including updating through regular tree inspections. It will also detail the procedure to follow in response to customer requests whether urgent (incident/hazard) or routine. Specifically it will cover:

- Customer requests
  - Response timeframes as per the George Town Council's Customer Charter Service Charter Policy.
  - Creating a customer request.
  - Cycle of a customer request dealt with by Works Depot employees.
  - Cycle of a customer request listed for inspection by contractor.
- Tree register
  - The area/officer responsible for maintenance of the register.
  - Frequency of updating of the register and how requests to update the register are created/received (i.e. through receipt of inspection reports by the Parks and Reserves Team).
  - Overarching schedule of routine inspections – frequency.
- Incidents and Hazards
  - Identifies what is an incident or hazard.
  - Reporting an incident and/or hazard to the Works Depot for immediate securing.
  - Engaging contractor if required.
  - Documenting of situation via Incident Report Form Hazard Identification Form.
  - Closure of incident.

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## Application of Policy – Dangerous Trees – Private Properties

Dangerous Trees may fall under one or more of four criteria being dead, dying, diseased and/or structurally unsound with the potential to cause significant damage to an adjoining property or members of the public should it fall or drop limbs or branches.

A tree that drops leaf litter or fruit is not considered a dangerous tree.



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## Application of Policy – Dangerous Trees – Private Property (Cont.)

Council does not get involved in negotiations or disputes between neighbours regarding trees.

If a branch or root from a private property encroaches onto Council managed land, Council is entitled to cut and remove the offending branch or root at any point up to the boundary of the property concerned.

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## Application of Policy – Tree Preservation

In Accordance with the George Town Planning Scheme 1991:

### 6.4 TREE PRESERVATION

- 6.4.1 (i) For the purposes of securing or of preserving the amenity in any Village, Low Density Residential or Tourist Facility Zone, or Skyline Protection Area, no person shall ringbark, cut down, top, lop, remove, injure or wilfully destroy any tree or trees, except with the consent of the planning authority given with or without such conditions as the planning authority deems necessary.
- (ii) Sub-Clause (i) shall only apply to trees having one or more of the following characteristics:
- (a) height greater than 3 metres;
  - (b) spread of branches (diameter) greater than 2 metres;
  - (c) circumference of trunk greater than 40cm measured 1 metre above the adjacent ground level.
- (iii) Notwithstanding Sub-Clause (i) above, nothing in this Section shall prevent tree removal for the following purposes:

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## Implementation and Accessibility of Policy

This policy will be implemented by the General Manager and reviewed every two years.

This Policy and Council's Fees and Charges register are available on Council's website [www.georgetown.tas.gov.au](http://www.georgetown.tas.gov.au). Hard copies can be provided in accordance with Council's Fees and Charges register.

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## Risk Management

Despite Council's efforts to ensure safety and maintenance of trees the nature of the assets means that incidents and/or hazards will occur. George Town Council's Tree Management Procedure together with the George Town Council Customer Charter Policy outlines the standard approach for dealing with reported incidents and hazards.

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## Risk Management (Cont.)

This Policy aligns itself to Council's Risk Management Policy No. 33 in that it aims to maintain overall responsibility for the effective management for all types of risks related to this across Council's operations. Refer to Risk No.'s 46, 47 and 48 of George Town Council's Risk Register.

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## Responsibility

Responsibility for the operation of this policy rests with the General Manager.

## Tree Management

