



NATURE STRIPS and TREE POLICY
MOWING, PLANTING, LANDSCAPING,
MAINTENANCE AND REMOVAL

DOCUMENT VERSION CONTROL

CREATED BY	FIRST ADOPTED	LAST MODIFIED	REVIEW PERIOD
Andre Pretorius Director of Infrastructure and Engineering Services	BY COUNCIL ON 16/06/2021 RES NO 2021/131		3 YEARS

1 INTRODUCTION

Nature strips are public land and not part of residential property, however it is well recognised that a shared maintenance approach between Council and the community provides the maximum opportunity for individual and town wide benefits. Where this relationship exists, the nature strip can perform its essential role as a conduit of services and make a highly valuable contribution to the street character, which in turn can lead to higher individual property value and sustainability benefits. While many aspects of nature strips maintenance are the responsibility of Council, it is accepted practice that the adjacent landholder or resident is responsible for some maintenance and for ensuring that any landscaping development is safe and appropriate. For example, the landholder is expected to ensure that trees and shrubs growing on private land do not impede access to the nature strip or the footpath. Likewise, residents who wish to landscape their nature strip may do so but only in a way that provides for safe access and use by the public

This policy establishes Council's position with regard to nature strips along urban streets and the planting, managing, maintenance and removal of trees and vegetation with the Council Road Reserve.

Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of trees on the Shire's street roadsides and those on Council owned land.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Confirm Council's position in relation to the responsibility and cost of construction and maintenance of nature strips;
- Confirm and recognize the community's role in maintaining nature strips;
- Ensure the mowing, planting and landscaping of nature strips contributes to the overall streetscape and amenity;
- Define appropriate criteria for assessing requests by residents for Council assistance in mowing grassed nature strips;
- Define appropriate criteria for assessing requests by residents to plant out nature strips; and
- Outline the planting, management and removal of trees on public land

3 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council owned and/or controlled nature strips within the Narromine Shire LGA urban environment.

Council has had a long-standing practice of relying on residents and businesses to maintain those grassed nature strips adjoining their property. This policy restates this practice identifying the importance of community involvement and cooperation.

This policy does not extend to the mowing of grass or landscaping on private property; which is the responsibility of the owner or occupier of the property.

4 DEFINITIONS

Nature strip: means any Council owned and/or controlled land located between a constructed road and a parcel of private property (that is, the street verge) but does not include land reserves for a public purpose or bushland. It is generally that portion of the street verge that is grassed and may contain street trees.

Urban Environment: residential lot

5 LEGISLATION

- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- Roads Act 1993
- Civil Liability Act 2002

6 STANDARDS

- Australian Standard 4373-2007 – Pruning of Amenity Trees
- Australian Standard 2303-2015 – Tree Stock for Landscape Use
- Australian Standard ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines

7 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Statewide Mutual - Best Practice Manual – Trees & Trees Roots - Version 8 – December 2019

Essential Energy Vegetation Management Brochure – 15 January 2018

8 CONTENT

8.1 Principles

Narromine Shire Council is committed to ensuring that the streetscapes are maintained in partnership with the residents of Narromine Shire. Nature strips contribute significantly to the streetscape and visual amenity of local neighbourhoods. Council aims to maintain an overall consistency and appearance of nature strips.

Council maintains the street trees but relies on residents to maintain the grass. Council also relies on residents to keep garden plants within their property trimmed to ensure it does not obstruct pedestrian access on the footpath, laneway or nature strip and doesn't interfere with cyclist or motorist sightlines.

To ensure safety and amenity the following general principles apply for footpaths or verges:

- The footpath area, either formed concrete, asphalt, bitumen pathway, synthetic turf or unformed grass verge must be maintained with sufficient clearance (generally 1.5 metres wide) to allow pedestrians to walk along comfortably.
- Any construction works within the road reserve will require an S138 application in terms of the Roads Act, 1993 to the Infrastructure and Engineering Department.
- Property owners or residents are responsible for determining the underground and aboveground services within the nature strip (i.e. Dial before you Dig) prior to lodging the application form with Council.
- Groundcovers, native grasses and shrubs up to 50 cm in height to help maintain line of sight can be planted.
- Compacted gravel on up to 50% of the nature strip (but not within the drip line of trees),

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with the remainder being low level shrubs or grass (this allows for water filtration and has a cooling effect) can be installed.

- Temporary protective fencing for new grass/shrubs up to 13 weeks can be provided to facilitate the establishment or growing-in period.
- No trees or shrubs must be planted in the footpath area without written consent from Council.
- Council will identify the need for planting of trees within the urban space and ensure that the trees planted will be in accordance with this policy.

9 MOWING OF NATURE STRIPS

9.1 Areas that Council will mow and maintain

Council undertakes to maintain the nature strips or verge areas that meet any or all of the following criteria:

- Adjacent to Council owned or operated community facilities;
- Adjacent to parks and reserves;
- In front of lots where a clean-up Notice/ Order have been issued to that lot. Council will maintain that area every six months, depending on environmental conditions; and
- Nature strips where the resident or owner of the property is unable to physically and financially to undertake the work themselves and has made application to Council and had it approved for Council to maintain that area.

9.2 Areas to be maintained by owners / residents

The property owner or resident of abutting properties are responsible for maintaining the visual amenity by maintaining the vegetation (excluding street trees) and landscape features on the nature strip including watering, weeding, mowing, removal of loose material that poses as a slip or trip hazard and edging turf. Council does not carry out renovations or maintenance of nature strips.

All areas not maintained by Council are expected to be maintained by the owners and/or residents of the adjoining private property. Grassed nature strips are expected to be mowed regularly by residents or property owners and kept neat and tidy such that they provide a safe environment and contribute to the general appearance and aesthetics of the streetscape.

It is recognised that some residents may appoint a contractor to undertake general yard or garden maintenance work for them. It is considered reasonable that the nature strip mowing would be carried out in conjunction with the mowing of the private property. Nature strips will generally not be mowed by Council if other lawns on the private property are being maintained by the resident or a contractor on behalf of the resident.

9.3 Eligibility Criteria for Nature Strip Mowing Service Adjacent to Private Property

Council could provide a nature strip mowing service in circumstances where residents, due to financial reasons, are unable to mow the nature strip adjoining their residence, to ensure that Narromine Shire grassed nature strips and streetscape amenity is maintained. Only where residents meet certain criteria will the nature strip mowing service be provided by Council.

The nature strip mowing service is not an entitlement program. At all times the mowing service will only be provided subject to availability of funding.

The following criteria will be considered in assessing a person's eligibility for inclusion on the nature

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strip mowing list:

- Be a permanent resident of Narromine Shire, and occupy the property which is the subject of the nature strip mowing service application; and
- Be receiving or be assessed as eligible to receive home care services such as Meals on Wheels or have a disability or other medical condition which makes it impossible for that person to mow their nature strip; and
- Be the holder of a current Pensioner Concession Card issued by the Commonwealth Government or in receipt of a Service Pension; or some other type of income substitution resulting from a physical disability that restricts a person from mowing their nature strip e.g. worker's compensation or income protection benefit; and
- Have no other members of the household who are able to mow the nature strip.

Council reserves the right to take special conditions into consideration, other than those listed above.

9.4 Mowing Service Schedule

The nature strip mowing service does not provide a guaranteed mowing frequency and site visits under this Policy will generally be no more than 6 times a year, or at Council's discretion.

Council will clean grass clippings from the footpath, driveway and gutter that results from works carried out in the maintenance of the nature strips. No other rubbish, debris or green waste will be cleaned up and/or removed from the nature strip or private property at the time of mowing.

9.5 Approval Process for Nature Strip Mowing Service

Applicants requesting this nature strip mowing service must fill in the relevant application form.

Once the application has been assessed, residents who meet the eligibility criteria will be entered on Council's nature strip mowing list.

All recipients of the service are required to reapply annually to confirm eligibility. Applications forms will be sent out by Council and the service will be suspended if a response is not received.

The Council reserves the right to remove any person from the nature strip mowing list at any time with two weeks written notice, if any of the following occur:

- The person sells or otherwise transfers their interest in the property, and/or ceases to occupy the property.
- The circumstances of the owner / occupier of the property change dramatically, such that the person no longer meets the eligibility criteria stated in this policy.
- The person fails to report any changes in their circumstances, which could make them ineligible for inclusion on the nature strip mowing list.
- Council deems that the person no longer meets the eligibility criteria stated in this policy.

10 GARDENS AND VEGETATION ON NATURE STRIPS

10.1 Bushland vegetation on nature strips

Existing remnant bushland vegetation in specific locations adjacent to Council's bushland reserves

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must be maintained with minimum weed infestation so as not to obstruct pedestrian, cyclist or vehicular traffic.

10.2 Gardens on nature strips

Property owners or residents who wish to plant a nature strip abutting their property with anything other than the items listed in Section 8.1 must apply to Council in writing. All costs associated with the Landscaping will be borne by the property owner or resident.

10.3 Existing Gardens on nature strips

The nature strip must not be landscaped to look like private land and/or used for a private purpose.

Garden plants on nature strips must be kept in a safe, clean, healthy and attractive condition. Understorey plants must be kept to a maximum height of 0.5 metre and maintained so as not to obstruct pedestrian, cyclist or vehicular traffic. Sight distances for vehicles entering and exiting driveways, cross overs and intersections must be maintained and vegetation must not interfere with the driving task itself. A clearance zone of 1.5 metres beside the road is required so people can still get in and out of cars and rubbish bins can be collected.

Property owners will be responsible for repairing any damage to infrastructure caused by landscaping works.

Any works considered hazardous will be required by Council to be removed or made safe at the cost of the relevant property owners.

Hard landscaping elements such as large rocks or boulders, railway sleepers or retaining walls will not be permitted as these items are potential hazards or they may interfere with the driving task itself.

Letterboxes must be established on private property with suitable access to Australia Post drivers maintained.

Electrical or solar wiring must not be installed on the nature strip (e.g. lighting of trees etc.).

Mulch material must be kept stable and properly contained. Allowable treatments include granitic sand, screened granite, crusher grit, blue and white metal grit and finely ground organic mulch which have a diameter of less than 10mm.

Nature strip soil levels, including mulch, should not be allowed to significantly drop or protrude above the level of the footpath or kerb. Ideally nature strips are gently graded towards the kerb for drainage purposes.

Fixed irrigation systems are not encouraged by Council as other service providers may need to access underground services in the nature strip, with these systems being damaged and costly for property owners to replace. Council will not be responsible for replacing plants or landscaping as a result of such works.

Council will endeavour to restore the disturbed area; however, Council reserves the right to remove any nature strip landscaping or treatment for the purpose of carrying out works, without being liable to compensate owners for any loss in reinstating the nature strip.

11.1 Tree Planting and Species Selection

Council will proactively identify opportunities to increase its canopy over the local government area, especially within build up areas.

Improving the quality of this canopy cover will be achieved through stock quality, planting, selection criteria and species diversity.

Council's urban forest is a mix of native, exotic, evergreen and deciduous trees.

Council will plant the most appropriate tree species based on site suitability, aesthetic, functional and biological attributes, performance and the potential to contribute to the landscape character.

Council will only use quality nursery stock according to the latest best practice and standards.

Council recognises that low species diversity has the potential to create an unstable ecosystem that is vulnerable to pest and disease attack. Council will increase species diversity by ensuring the street and park tree population does not comprise of more than 50% for any particular family and 30% for any particular genus.

11.2 Tree Removal (whole or limb) and Replacement

Selective tree removal and replacement programs are vital in managing canopy cover to ensure that the numerous benefits trees provide are sustained for future generations.

Council will assess all trees proposed for removal or lopping in Council owned or managed land and implement removal and replacement programs as required.

The risk to public safety (including road users) and property will take priority in tree removal in decisions in emergency situations.

Council will remove and replace poor performing trees to reinvigorate the urban forest.

Council will undertake the staged removal and replacement of trees classified as noxious. The impacts to canopy cover will be a key consideration in removing trees as part of this process.

Council will develop strategies for the installation of new plantings, where feasible, prior to tree removal required for capital work projects.

Council will maintain a spread of tree age classes to minimise the impact of tree removals in close timeframes and/or within specific areas.

11.3 Requests for Street Tree Planting By Residents

Council will consider requests from residents to plant street trees. Requests will be assessed according to policy and standard requirements.

12 Tree Maintenance

Council recognises that trees are a major asset and play an important role in ensuring our Shire is liveable, attractive and healthy.

Our trees grow in a harsh environment and require specialised care and management. They are living dynamic organisms that have the potential to cause damage or injury.

Council will conduct regulation inspections of street and park trees to determine the potential for a tree or one of its limbs to fail and in doing so injure people or damage property. These inspections include a consideration to road user safety.

Risk Management strategies include but are not limited to, replacement, repair or redirecting of footpaths, root pruning, installing root barriers, tree pruning, diverting services or minor infrastructure, enlarging root zones or tree removal.

13 Trees and shrubs in private property

Property owners are required to maintain trees and shrubs within their property. Where a tree or shrub, located in private property, is overhanging onto a road reserve and pose a safety risk or interfere with the driving task, Council will:

- a) Approach the property owner and raise the issue in the first instance;
- b) Allow for the property owner to address the issue within an agreed timeframe; and
- c) Should the issue not be addressed within the agreed timeframe, Council will remove the hazard at no cost to Council.

Offences

- a) It is an offence to do any of the following on vegetation located on public land or land that Council own without written consent from Council:
 - i. Trim, remove, lop, destroy any tree, shrub or vegetation;
 - ii. Remove or damage any tree or trunk protection measure such as a tree guard, bollard, guide post and the like; and
 - iii. Attach any sign, marking, fixture, light, etc. to any tree.