

Verges Policy

Removal/Pruning Policy - Trees on Road Reserve

1.0 Principles Governing the Pruning and Removal of Trees on Road Reserve

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of road reserve is primarily to enable movement of people, and provision of utilities. Road Reserve also has an important role in the 'amenity/streetscape value' of the area. These two uses should be dealt with in a complimentary manner.¹

1.2 Pruning

Trees on Council road reserve will be pruned in accordance with the Council's specifications for trees in the service level agreement, generally to:

- Abate a nuisance
- Ensure the trees do not create a hazard for traffic or pedestrians
- Prevent or mitigate damage to pipes or power lines
- Manage risk with larger senescent trees
- Meet the specification for the removal of inappropriate tree species
- Meet any obligations Council has as a good neighbour
- Prevent or stop damage to Council and private assets
- Maintain specified clearances over roads, driveways and around street and traffic lights
- To preserve significant views as seen from the road or footpath².

1.3 Tree topping

As a rule Council will not 'top trees', i.e. reduce their height.

In exceptional circumstances Crown reduction may be considered when:

- Tree topping or regular height reduction has been carried out on a particular tree in the past and other management options are not considered sensible.
- For the clearance of high voltage service or to meet other statutory requirements
- If the tree or trees form part of a formally planted and maintained hedge
- Where the Council has no specific interest in the future maintenance of the tree or trees

There is a small range of tree species that will be proactively removed due to the following factors:

- rapid growth rates
- eventual large size of the tree (in relation to the site)
- prolific at self-seeding

¹ E & R agreed with T & I's addition of a purpose statement. They replaced the sentence "It also serves to accommodate trees and shrubs" with the underlined text.

2 Tree Pruning

T & I suggested this amendment in recognition of the benefit to the public gained from pruning trees to re-instating significant views of Wellington from roads and footpaths. This addition would be consistent with Council's approach toward retaining views from roads and footpaths for the public in other policies. E & R supported this change.

- pose a major risk when senescent
- often colonise or grow on inappropriate sites
- considered a pest plant

1.4 Tree Removal

Trees will not generally be removed from road reserve to preserve views, remove shading or for the control of leaf litter.

Trees that are dead, dying, or storm damaged will be removed as a priority.

Tree removal may be undertaken where significant public views from the road and footpath are compromised.

2.0 Cost recovery for Discretionary Work, Storm Damage and Potential Hazards

Where Council is notified that a tree is blocking a view, or shading a property by the occupier of the property and Council carries out work on the tree the following criteria will apply to cost recovery for the work:

2.1 Full cost recovery

Re-instatement of views that is considered to be work of a discretionary nature.
Mitigating the effects of shading where this is considered to be work of a discretionary nature.

2.2 No cost recovery

Essential work to mitigate an actual or potential hazard.

2.3 Ability to waive cost recovery

Council will consider the following factors when exercising discretion in relation to cost recovery, or the requirement to mitigate a nuisance:

- the level of direct benefit to the applicant or Council as a result of the work
- the priority or the need for the work

3.0 Tree management

3.1 Shading and re-instatement of views

Council will be a 'good neighbour' and will assess Council owned trees, and undertake work to mitigate a nuisance in response to requests from the occupiers of properties that are affected by trees on road reserve. The cost of the work will be recovered in accordance with this policy.

The following factors are considered when making decisions on requests for work on trees from the public or a landowner/occupier:

- The wider community's interests in the maintenance of an aesthetically pleasing environment.
- The value of the tree as a public amenity, including the ability to provide shelter from wind,
- The likely effect (if any) of the removal or trimming on ground stability or the stability of other trees.
- The historical, cultural, botanical or scientific significance (if any) of the tree.
- The length of time the property owner has resided in the property. Often the applicant has recently purchased the property and was aware of the trees at the time of purchase.

Council will give full consideration to residents concerns³

3.2 Overhead Wires

Trees are generally pruned around low voltage wires. (Not topped or reduced in overall height.)

As a general rule trees will be allowed to grow up and through overhead wires unless a hazard is identified. The Parks and Gardens Unit will deal with requests for line clearance on an individual basis.

The permission of Council must be obtained in advance of carrying out any pruning or removal of trees to clear overhead wires⁴

3.3 Clearance and Repair of Drains

Where a significant tree is blocking a drain on road reserve, the tree takes precedence. Where a significant tree is blocking a drain the general practice will be to move and re-lay the drain.

Cost recovery will be at the discretion of Council.

In general there will be no cost recovery for:

- repairs to private drains on road reserve (i.e. laterals from private properties to the Mains),
- work on private property with the agreement of the property owner, if the fault originated from a Council tree, and
- where a tree on private property is damaging a public Main (40% of public mains are on private property).
- Council does not accept liability for damage by tree roots to drives and pathways where these cross road reserve.

³ E & R discussed rewriting this section to be more in line with the Street Tree Briefing from the Service Level Agreement.

⁴ E & R agreed with the addition of this paragraph.

For trees that are not significant trees, the drainage infrastructure will take precedence⁵.

3.4 Removal of Large Senescent Trees

Where Council considers large trees to be inappropriate or high risk, the trees are added to a list of larger trees for removal and prioritised by their level of risk.

Assessment criteria:

- the condition of the trees,
- previous failure history,
- the potential damage or target if the tree was to fail, the tree species and topography or other factors specific to the site.

3.5 Storms and Clearance of Trees

The main priority during storms is to keep roads clear and open. Private access ways and drives are generally given a lower priority.

Private trees will be cleared from roads but the cost of the work will be recovered from the tree owner.

⁵ E & R agreed with the additions in this clause.

4.0 Notes to Policy⁶

4.1 Road Reserve Free Shrubs⁷

Shrubs may be planted by residents on road reserve for the purpose of beautification and to assist residents with the maintenance of the area adjoining their property.

The planting of road reserve may only be carried out with the approval of the Parks and Gardens Unit.

New planting should be of a type, and location, that will not cause future problems.

4.2 Tree planting

The planting of new trees and the replacement of dead and vandalised trees is covered under the Parks and Gardens Service Level Agreement. The Greening of the City Policy (to be developed) will address the policy on tree planting.

4.3 Council practices⁸

4.3.1 Sites developed by Council

In planning the re-development of a site the Parks and Gardens Unit shall assess the site and identify significant trees.

- Highest priority should be given to the retention of significant trees.
- Where retention is not practicable, transplanting should be considered only when all other feasible options for retention have been exhausted.
- Where either of the above options are not appropriate then suitable replacement should be carried out, or financial contributions should provide for tree planting in another area, with replacement trees being of a similar standard and maturity.

4.3.2 Resource consent applications

Where significant trees are likely to be affected by a development, ECBU shall consult the Parks and Gardens Unit prior to issuing a resource consent. Consideration shall be given to the implications of the development on the health and stability of adjoining trees.

Conditions that may be appropriate include:

- Request a bond be held on the tree to ensure it is not damaged during development. (This is held by ECBU)
- Provide advice on the construction method and other practical solutions that might help avoid or minimise damage to the tree or allow for its successful retention. This may include guidelines to be included on the consent.
- Request that the tree(s) be transplanted by a qualified arboriculturalist within the area at the applicant's cost.
- Consent to its removal and request monetary compensation for its loss, which goes to other suitable tree planting in the area.
- Consent to the removal on the basis that other suitable replacement planting will be carried out in the area.
- Remove the tree at the applicant's cost.

⁶ E & R thought that the clauses from 3.6 onwards should be treated as notes to the policy.

⁷ T&I noted that this clause is not necessary as the policy only addresses the pruning and removal of trees, and not the planting of new trees. T&I also suggested an amendment that 'new planting should be of an appropriate species.

⁸ E & R agreed with the changes in clause 4.3.