

THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NEW SOUTH WALES) POLICY ON TREES IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

PREAMBLE

From its inception in 1944, when the Ku-ring-gai Tree Lovers Civic League moved a motion at the Forestry League's "Save the Trees – Conserve Our Forests Conference" to form the National Trust, the Trust has continued to lobby for the retention of trees in urban areas. While the Trust quickly broadened its focus to include other aspects of heritage, it retains its commitment to the conservation of trees in the urban environment.

Trees contribute greatly to the character of our urban environment, and have many values, both aesthetic and functional. Remnant native vegetation, as well as urban plantings across NSW can have high degrees of heritage significance and should be retained.

Urban trees are consistently under threat. Some of these threats stem from a lack of appreciation of the value and significance of the trees by both the public and the managing authority, some stem from the choice of inappropriate species at the time of planting. A significant current threat is the removal of trees to enhance views and the interpretation of fire protection controls.

In addition to heritage significance that could be associated with their historic, aesthetic, associative, scientific and social values, trees in the urban environment are valuable for their amelioration of climate (through temperature modification, wind control and air movement, and precipitation control and water quality); engineering values (through soil erosion control, noise and air pollution abatement, glare and reflection control, and traffic control); and the provision of habitat for fauna.

In this policy, the word "tree" is used loosely to cover both trees and shrubs. Whilst the policy specifically refers to urban areas, many urban environments are semi-rural, e.g. country villages. It relates to both trees on public and private land, and both planted and pre-European tree species.

POLICY

1. The National Trust will continue to assess the heritage significance of urban trees for inclusion in the National Trust Register.
2. The National Trust will advocate for the retention, protection and management of trees in the urban environment according to best practice, involving reference to recognised standards and multidisciplinary expertise.
3. The National Trust will promote the understanding and appreciation of the role and value of trees in the urban environment.
4. The Trust will continue to contribute to the National Register of Significant Trees¹, a collaborative project of the State and Territory National Trusts.
5. Local government authorities will be encouraged to recognise the significance and value of urban trees by:
 - Preparing Registers of Significant Trees;
 - Introducing Tree Preservation Orders;
 - Introducing appropriate development control plans;
 - Educating local communities in the value of urban trees;
 - Taking care in choosing appropriate species for new plantings;
 - Setting an example in its own actions in the protection of trees (especially those of heritage significance); and in undertaking new plantings;
 - Encourage appropriate training in all aspects of tree selection, care and management for staff.

6. State government authorities will be encouraged to recognise the significance and value of urban trees by:
- Minimising the impact of public works on trees;
 - Exercising care in the management and development of public land in the State;
 - Maximising the suitability of species chosen for plantings on public land;
 - Using the Heritage Act to protect significant trees where appropriate;
 - Revising guidelines and policies which are detrimental to trees so that trees are not always regarded as being expendable;
 - Encourage appropriate training in all aspects of tree selection, care and management for staff;
 - Establishing new parks and tree plantings to provide “lungs” to offset ever increasing high density residential development.

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ⁱ The Register is available at <http://www.trusttrees.org.au/>.