

## Inner West Council Tree Management DCP draft

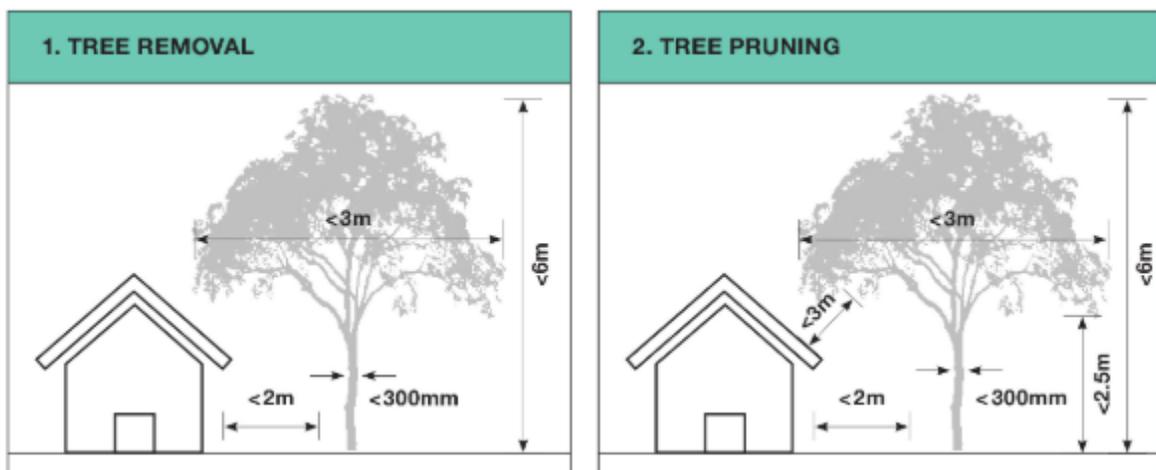
### How to have your say

Prepared by the Office of Jamie Parker MP

Inner West Council's proposed new tree policy (Tree Management DCP draft) has recently been released for public comment. You can find the proposed policy [here](#).

This follows an attempt by Labor and Liberal Councillors to amend an earlier draft of the policy that was widely consulted on and supported by residents ([see here at Item 1](#)). Thousands of locals contacted the Mayor and Deputy Mayor asking them to support the original draft, but instead another new version of the policy has been proposed.

**This new policy makes some improvements on the Mayor's failed developer-friendly proposal, but it will still allow almost every tree in the Inner West Council area be removed with automatic consent from Council.**



Tree policies that are centred on liveability and environmental protection balance the need for tree removal to be a cheap, easy process for residents with important considerations like whether the tree is healthy, if it endangers property or people, and its place in the local landscape.

This policy still seeks to make distance from a property the primary determinant for tree removal, giving developers an open door to destroy almost any healthy tree.

The Tree DCP is a missed opportunity to meet tree canopy targets, protect much needed urban habitat for wildlife, and help ameliorate the impacts of climate change in our community.

## How to make a submission

Community members are invited to make a submission to Inner West Council by **Wednesday 11 December 2019**.

### Online

To make a submission online, go to the Inner West Council website [here](#). You will be asked to submit a short survey including comments at the last question.

### E-mail

The online submission form is extremely restrictive. If you would like to submit longer form feedback, email council at [trees@innerwest.nsw.gov.au](mailto:trees@innerwest.nsw.gov.au)

## What to include

1. Do you support the new Tree Management DCP?

Yes

No

Unsure

2. The plan has a new process to allow tree removals by permits which are simpler and less expensive than development applications. Do you support the new process?

Yes

No

Unsure

3. Do you believe property owners who remove a tree should have to replace it?

Yes

No

Unsure

4. If a replacement tree won't fit on the same property, do you think property owners should pay a fee for another tree to be planted elsewhere? (Low income earners would be subsidised).

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

5. Do you support the definition of a 'protected tree'? A protected tree is higher than 6m, wider than 300mm diameter at ground level or with a canopy spread of at least 3m.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

6. Do you support the rules for when you can remove a tree? The rules are: you can remove trees under 6m, narrower than 300mm diameter at ground level or under 3m canopy spread. You can also remove trees growing within 2m of a dwelling house or garage or weed species by application to Council.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

7. Council is proposing that property owners should be able to remove trees growing within 2m of a dwelling house or garage. Which trees do you think property owners should be allowed to remove with a simple application to Council?

- Trees growing within one metre from a dwelling house or garage
- Trees growing within two metres from a dwelling house or garage
- Trees growing within three metres from a dwelling house or garage
- All trees, any distance from the dwelling house or garage
- None of the above

8. Do you support the rules for when you can prune a tree? The rules are: you can prune trees under 6m, narrower than 300mm diameter at ground level or under 3m canopy spread. You can also prune branches up to 2.5m from ground level or within 3m of your roof.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Do you support the assessment criteria when considering an application to remove a tree?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. Would you like to add further comments?

*Include this text, or a version of it in the comment box:*

I oppose the Tree Management DCP draft because I'm concerned that it will lead to the wholesale removal of trees in the inner west. While tree removal should be simpler and less expensive for residents, the objectives of this policy fail to link tree management with urban forest policies, tree canopy targets, beautification or action on climate change.

Trees bring so many benefits to our community but this policy does not mention the role they play in reducing the impacts of climate change, managing heat in urban environments or filtering various forms of pollution. As with similar policies in jurisdictions like the City of Sydney, the tree policy should reflect the values of our community and the reasons why Council should work to protect and increase the local tree canopy – not simply roll back the rules that protect trees.

I don't support the proposal to allow any tree within 2 metres of an existing structure to be destroyed. This will allow the removal of healthy trees that are not dangerous to people or damaging to property. Decisions about tree removal should take into account broader factors like the health of the tree, if it poses a danger to property or people, its contribution to the local environment, and its place in the local landscape.

The NSW Government's Greater Sydney Commission recommends 40% tree canopy coverage in urban areas. Currently no suburbs within the Inner West Council even come close to meeting the government's conservative target.

While I support the proposal to replace trees that are removed, the policy doesn't detail the requirements for replacement trees. This means that large healthy, mature trees can be removed and replaced with a seedlings which could take a decade to reach maturity. The

replacement of mature trees with seedlings could further reduce tree canopy coverage in the inner west.

The policy would also encourage unqualified tree works with no real checks and balances against unapproved or dodgy work. There is no provision for monitoring or evaluation to keep track of changes to Inner West Council area's tree canopy cover over time.

The inner west should be leading the effort to increase Sydney's tree canopy coverage by protecting existing trees, undertaking ambitious tree planting in public spaces and supporting residents to better care for trees on private property.

I support a return to the original tree policy which passed community consultation earlier in 2019. That policy reduced the burden on residents trying to remove trees but managed that need properly against the community and environmental benefits of preserving healthy trees.

## More detail

### **The objectives of the plan fail to link tree management with urban forest policies, tree canopy targets, beautification and action on climate change.**

- No mention is made of the role trees play in ameliorating the harsh effects of climate change, adding beauty and value to our streetscapes or filtering various forms of pollution in built-up, busy urban areas.
- Important objectives that were present in the earlier draft have been removed. This includes the objective to "support Council's Community Strategic Plan Our Inner West – Strategic Direction 1.2- Inner West has a diverse and increasing urban forest that supports connected habitats for flora and fauna". It also removes reference to promoting increased tree canopy coverage and achieving canopy targets.
- Compare this to the published policies of City of Sydney Council:
  - The City will prioritise the maintenance and protection of its existing tree population in order to maximise the benefits already received from this asset.
  - The City will increase the average total canopy cover from the current 15.5% to 23.25% by 2030, and then to 27.13% by 2050, through targeted programs for trees located in streets, parks and private property.
  - The City will improve the age spread of our street and park trees. We will also increase species diversity, by ensuring the population does not comprise more than 40% for any particular family, 30% for any particular genus, and 10% for any one species.
  - The City will engage and educate the community on the benefits of trees and their management requirements and assist community participation in the greening of Sydney.

**The plan gives a green light to the removal of trees and tree canopy coverage across the Inner West.**

- Any tree on council land could be removed or destroyed at council's discretion.
- Any tree on private property that is less than 6 metres tall, or with a trunk size of below 300mm in diameter, will be considered "unprotected" and could be removed without the need for council approval.
- Automatic approval will be given for applications to remove all other "protected" trees that are within 2 metres of an existing structure, making distance to structures a primary consideration for removal. This means almost all of Inner West's trees could be removed solely on the basis of distance to a human-built structure.
- Where other criteria apply it is unclear what level of expertise and/or quality of evidence would be required to support an application for tree removal, and no guidance is given. Compare this to the detailed guidance provided in the [Leichhardt Private Property Tree Manual](#) with regard to risk assessment, damage to property, condition of tree, etc.

**The plan would encourage unqualified tree works with no real checks and balances against dodgy or unapproved work**

- All reference to arborists reports and qualification requirements have been removed from this plan, despite being included in the earlier draft. This sends the wrong message – tree maintenance and removal is a job for specialists, but council's Tree Management Plan wants them out of the way.
- The plan encourages the destruction of trees without council approval, and provides no real checks and balances to ensure trees that require permission for removal are genuinely protected. Council will have no real way to encourage or ensure compliance with this plan.
- The plan does not require a person to take reasonable steps to check for the presence of wildlife or habitat before removing or pruning a tree, making any proposed protections for wildlife and habitat nothing but a hollow promise.

**The plan will result in loss of diversity and reduced tree canopy coverage across the Inner West**

- Replacement tree planting requirements will be completely undermined by the ease with which trees could be removed without consent. Even so, even the most well-intentioned replacement of trees that are up to 6 metres in height will result in reduced canopy coverage as it can take decades for new trees to grow to a comparable size.

- The plan provides no guidance with regard to replacement trees. Compare this again to the [Leichhardt Private Property Tree Manual](#), which sets out considered information about replacement tree species selection, determining appropriate sites for planting, ensuring replacement trees are of suitable quality and ongoing maintenance of newly planted trees.
- The plan makes no provision for monitoring or evaluation to keep track of changes to Inner West Council area's tree canopy cover over time.