

Public Tree Removal – Amenity Valuation

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Responsible Position Manager Recreation and Open Space

Branch Recreation and Open Space

Division Community Culture and Places

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Notes	

POLICY

PURPOSE

The implementation of the Amenity Valuation of Public Trees will assist in the protection of public trees through the establishment of a value for trees which have requested to be removed by Developers, or by members of the public. As public trees effectively are owned by the broader community, the establishment and the recouping of this value resulting from its removal compensates the general public for the loss of amenity value that will then go back into other public tree planting programs.

Where public trees are removed at the request of the public, Developers, etc., Dubbo Regional Council shall take the approach on passing on all of the identifiable costs associated with the removal, valuation and replacement and establishment of the tree/s.

In the instances where public trees are required to be removed for Council based projects, a negotiated outcome between Community Culture and Places Division and the Division that owns the project will be determined. As an aspirational goal Council should attempt to plant as least as many advanced (85 - 100 litre) trees as are being removed to reduce the impact to the future tree canopy of the urban area and utilising an appropriate planting methodology for the environment to reduce future impacts and conflicts.

For street trees that already exist within the road carriageways of Dubbo and Wellington (for example road shoulders, medians) the preferred planting methodology utilises the Stockholm Methodology. Tree pits will be generally sized in accordance with the Stockholm planting methodology, and using the formula $V=\pi r^2 \times 0.6$ to determine minimum root vault size. This formula takes into account the projected mature canopy of the tree but has a reduction factor to recognise street trees generally do not reach their full potential. Pit sizes may also be reduced due to site specific constraints. Public trees that are removed for construction works are to be covered under this Policy. Trees removed on the basis of safety or emergency infrastructure works to the general public are exempt. A recommendation by Council's arborist is required, with a following recommendation from the Manager Recreation and Open Space and final approval from the Director Community Culture and Places.

Funds generated through the implementation of the Amenity Valuation of Public Trees framework shall be utilised in public tree replanting programs.

For the purpose of this Policy a public tree includes those that are located within carriageways inside the 80km urban zones, and within the public open space network.

BACKGROUND AND RELATED LEGISLATION

Trees make a valuable contribution to the way that humans observe and interact with their environment. In the urban setting particularly trees play a significant role in the aesthetic softening of the built environment through their shape and their foliage and floral displays. It has long been recognised (eg: Neely, D. 1979 *Guide for Establishing Values of Trees and other Plants. Revision IV*

and Maurer – Hoffman 1970) that this aesthetic contribution by urban trees has a value to the general public that can be calculated and potentially recouped in circumstances where trees are requested or required to be removed.

Where street and park trees are removed on the request of the public and Developers Dubbo Regional Council shall take the approach on passing on all of the identifiable costs associated with the removal and re – establishment of the tree.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all urban street (inside the 80km/hr zones) and trees located within the open space network throughout the local government area that are either owned or managed by the Dubbo Regional Council.

Where Developers, or the public, approach Council requesting the removal of a public tree/s, an assessment of the tree/s will be conducted by a Level 5 Council arborist to determine the amenity value of the tree/s in accordance with the adopted methodology. The Developer, or member of public, will be required to compensate the public for the loss of amenity value prior to the removal of the tree/s, as well as the cost of removal and replacement of the tree, in accordance with the adopted Street Tree Planting standards.

Members of the public that request the removal of a public tree can only do so with trees that are immediately adjacent to their property, and where they are the land owner of that property. Trees that are identified on Dubbo Regional Council’s Significant Tree Register, where they are on public land, are covered under this Policy. However other approvals will be required prior to Council considering their removal.

Council currently manages over 40,000 public trees, with approximately 27,500 of these being located within our streetscapes.

Where a tree/s covered under this Policy have been wilfully damaged, killed or destroyed a valuation of the tree/s will be carried out using the latest data and images collected on the tree/s. Where the individual/s can be positively identified that caused damage or death of the tree Council retains the right to take the necessary steps to recoup the amenity value of the tree/s.

DEFINITIONS

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions apply:

Term	Definition
Public Tree	Urban street and trees growing within the open space network in the local government area that are either owned or managed by the Dubbo Regional Council. This excludes trees that are located on Operational Land.
Developer	A person or a company that buys land and builds houses, offices, shops, or factories on it, or buys existing buildings and makes them more modern
Land owner	A person that owns the land
Tree Amenity Value	The calculated value of a tree that recognises the contribution of a tree or trees to the landscape through a range of attributes and values.

POLICY

Where public trees are removed, other than by Council for infrastructure projects, Dubbo Regional Council shall take the approach on passing on all of the identifiable costs associated with the tree.

These costs can be summarised as:

Removal Cost + Amenity Cost + Re – instatement and Establishment = Total Charge

To determine the **Total Charge**, both the removal cost and the re–instatement and establishment costs will be based on the actual costs of undertaking the works. To determine the Amenity Cost of the tree/s to be removed, the modified version of the City of Melbourne model based on Yau's 1990 modified Maurer-Hoffman Formula shall be used. This model takes into account a number of factors including the size of the tree (that is related somewhat to the age of the tree), the species of the tree, the aesthetic value of the tree (eg: is it a single tree, or part of an evenly planted avenue), its location (eg: whether it is a reserve, village, residential street or park) and its overall condition (eg: health, vigour, life expectancy).

The basic monetary value of the tree was taken from the internationally accepted table of values devised by the American Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers and the International Society of Arboriculture, which in the base year 1988 was \$US27 per square inch trunk basal area. This figure was converted to a value corresponding to centimetres in trunk diameter at breast height (DBH), the Basic Monetary Value table, and updated in 2017 to reflect more current monetary values.

When young trees with a 6cm trunk diameter or less will be replaced by another tree, there will be no amenity value charge. All other charges will be applied.

Amenity value shall be calculated using the formula below:

Value (V) = Basic Value (\$) x Species (S) x Aesthetics (A) x Locality (L) x Condition (C)

- The **basic monetary value** of a tree is determined by matching the trunk diameter at breast height (DBH) with its corresponding base value that is updated annually.
- The **Species value** of a tree is assessed according to its known natural life span and its rate of growth in a particular environment. For example, a long-lived tree will be scored higher than a short-lived tree.

Significant features to the tree will also modify how the tree is scored. Judgment regarding species factor is required to be made by a qualified Arborist.

- The **Aesthetics value** of a tree is determined by the impact on the landscape if the tree were removed. This category is closely tied to the locality factor (below).
- The **Locality factor** is determined by the tree's geographical situation. Trees in a major centre, main street or boulevard score highest because of the stressful growing environment in which the tree has to survive. As the location becomes more rural, the significance of the tree diminishes.

- The **tree condition value** is determined by a qualified arborist considering the condition of the trunk, growth (associated with health), and the structure of the tree and whether or not it is compromised by pests and/or disease.

For Council based projects where public trees are required to be removed for Council based projects, a negotiated outcome between Community Culture and Places Division and the Division that owns the project will be determined. It is proposed that this negotiated outcome between Community Culture and Places and the division that owns the project continues. The aspirational goal is to replant at least the same number of advanced (>100 litre) trees that were removed as part of the project, and to and utilise an appropriate planting methodology for the environment to reduce future impacts and conflicts.

For street trees that already exist within the road carriageways of Dubbo and Wellington (for example road shoulders, medians) the preferred planting methodology utilises the Stockholm Methodology. Tree pits will be generally sized in accordance with the Stockholm planting methodology ($V=\pi r^2 \times 0.6$). This formula takes into account the projected mature canopy of the tree but has a reduction factor to recognise street trees generally do not reach their full potential. Pit sizes may also be reduced due to site specific constraints. Public trees that are removed for construction works are to be covered under this Policy. Trees removed on the basis of safety or emergency infrastructure works to the general public are exempt.

A recommendation by Council's arborist is required, with a following recommendation from the Manager Recreation and Open Space and final approval from Director Community Culture and Places.

Funds generated through the implementation of the Amenity Valuation of Public Trees framework shall be placed in a Restricted Asset to help fund future public tree replanting programs.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility for enacting this Policy will lie with the Director Community Culture and Places, or a delegated representative.

The valuation process will be undertaken by a qualified Level 5 arborist.