MAINTENANCE OF NATURE STRIPS

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CONTENTS

Objective 3
Nature Strip 3
Acceptable Condition of Nature Strips 3
Introduction 3
Policy 3
1. Council's Responsibility Regarding Nature Strips 3
2. Property Owners (and tenants) Role Regarding Nature Strips 4
3. Street Trees 4
4. Landscaping Nature Strips 4
5. Prohibited Activities 5
6. Areas of Neglect 5

Objective

The objective of this policy is to set out both Council's responsibility and Property Owners (and tenants) role in relation to the maintenance and mowing of nature strips, in order to provide a safe, functional and aesthetically pleasing streetscape.

This policy applies to all Council controlled lands between property boundaries and Council controlled roads in the urban areas.

Nature Strip

The area of land between a property boundary and the edge of a roadway. The primary purpose of this land is to facilitate pedestrian movement alongside the roadway and provide an area for infrastructure provision.

Acceptable Condition of Nature Strips

A nature strip should be maintained to a reasonable level of appearance. This usually translates to the regular watering and mowing of grass throughout the year, in order to keep the nature strip aesthetically pleasing and conforming to the overall streetscape of urban areas.

Introduction

Under Section 145 of the Roads Act, 1993, the road reserve in urban areas is vested in Council. Traditionally Council has not watered or mown grassed footpaths and nature strips in front of residential, commercial or industrial property. This has been the role of the property owner or the tenant. The majority of property owners (and tenants) have accepted this responsibility, in keeping with the desire for a neat and tidy appearance of their frontage.

However, it is noted that there is no statutory requirement for the property owner to comply.

Policy

1. **Council's Responsibility Regarding Nature Strips**

   Council will maintain nature strips adjoining or within;

   - Public reserve areas such as, bushland, parks or gardens,
   - Council owned facilities such as public halls,

- Central Business District (CBD).

2. Property Owners (and tenants) Role Regarding Nature Strips

Traditionally, property owners (and tenants) have maintained nature strips adjoining their properties. Council lacks adequate resources to effectively maintain these diverse areas, which taken together, constitute a large and sparse spread of area. As such, property owners (and tenants) efforts are required in order to maintain nature strips throughout our urban areas to a reasonable condition.

Maintenance of nature strips not only benefits the adjoining property, but also enhances the utility, attractiveness and value of the community as a whole.

Where, as the result of roadworks, the road formation is reduced with a corresponding increase in the nature strip, the fronting property owners and tenants are expected to maintain their frontage. Such reduction in formation is normally associated with pavement reconstruction, sealing (including shoulders) and installation of kerb and gutter. The benefits of such works to the property owner in improved amenity and improved marketability are considered by Council to offset any increased inconvenience or cost due to additional mowing.

3. Street Trees

Street trees are managed in accordance with Council's Policy on Public Space Tree Policy.

Council periodically checks and carries out any necessary pruning, removal and replacement of street trees or shrubs on nature strips. Property owners may apply to remove or maintain trees or shrubs planted on the nature strip adjacent to their property, but cannot undertake such work without written approval from the Director Technical Services.

4. Landscaping Nature Strips

Property owners will need written permission from the Director Technical Services to landscape (other than grow grass) on their nature strip. Nature strips usually contain essential services such as sewer pipes, water pipes, telephone, power and gas. Any change such as tree planting or landscaping requires consultation and authorisation.

Landscaping developments may include the following (provided they remain less than 500mm above the road edge and do not provide a public hazard): garden

beds, rockeries, retaining walls, paving, shrubs, ground cover plants, bark, or similar materials.

When assessing requests to landscape the nature strip, Council will consider;

- Impact on the streetscape
- Access to and safety of pedestrians
- Risk of impacting on street drainage
- Shadow and shade effects
- Likely ability of the property owners (and future property owners) to maintain the landscaped area

5. Prohibited Activities

The following activities are prohibited on nature strips. This list is not exhaustive and just because an activity does not appear below it does not mean it is acceptable;

- Develop the nature strip (other than growing grass) without written approval from the Director Technical Services,
- Store or place and substance, material or thing on the nature strip without written approval from the Director Technical Services,
- Install pavers or concrete, erect stone or brick walls, or similar structures or materials, across a nature strip without written approval,
- Allow any foliage to obstruct pedestrian access to footpaths or nature strips 1.2m back from the kerb,
- Park or store any type of vehicle or trailer on your nature strip (registered or unregistered or part thereof).

6. Areas of Neglect

In cases where footpaths and nature strips become overgrown, Council will write to the property owner and advise them of this policy. Only in exceptional circumstances, Council will undertake maintenance to achieve the “Acceptable Condition of Nature Strips” outlined above.