

Attachment 1 - Summary Key Findings and Community Consultation Report

Tree Management Policy 2021



Introduction

This report provides the results from the community consultation and engagement undertaken as part of the development of the Tree Management Policy 2021.

Marketing & Promotion

To promote community engagement with the policy development, the following activities were undertaken;

- Dedicated page on Council's online engagement tool Shape (refer link below)
 - <https://shape.monash.vic.gov.au/tree-policy>
- Ongoing promotion of the survey through Council's website and social media.
- Information in Council's Monash Bulletin (refer Image 1: February 2021 Bulletin).



Image 1: February 2021 Bulletin (excerpt)

- Emails and distribution to various Council databases and community groups such as Monash's well established Friends of Groups.
- Providing hard copies of the survey as requested (approx.15)

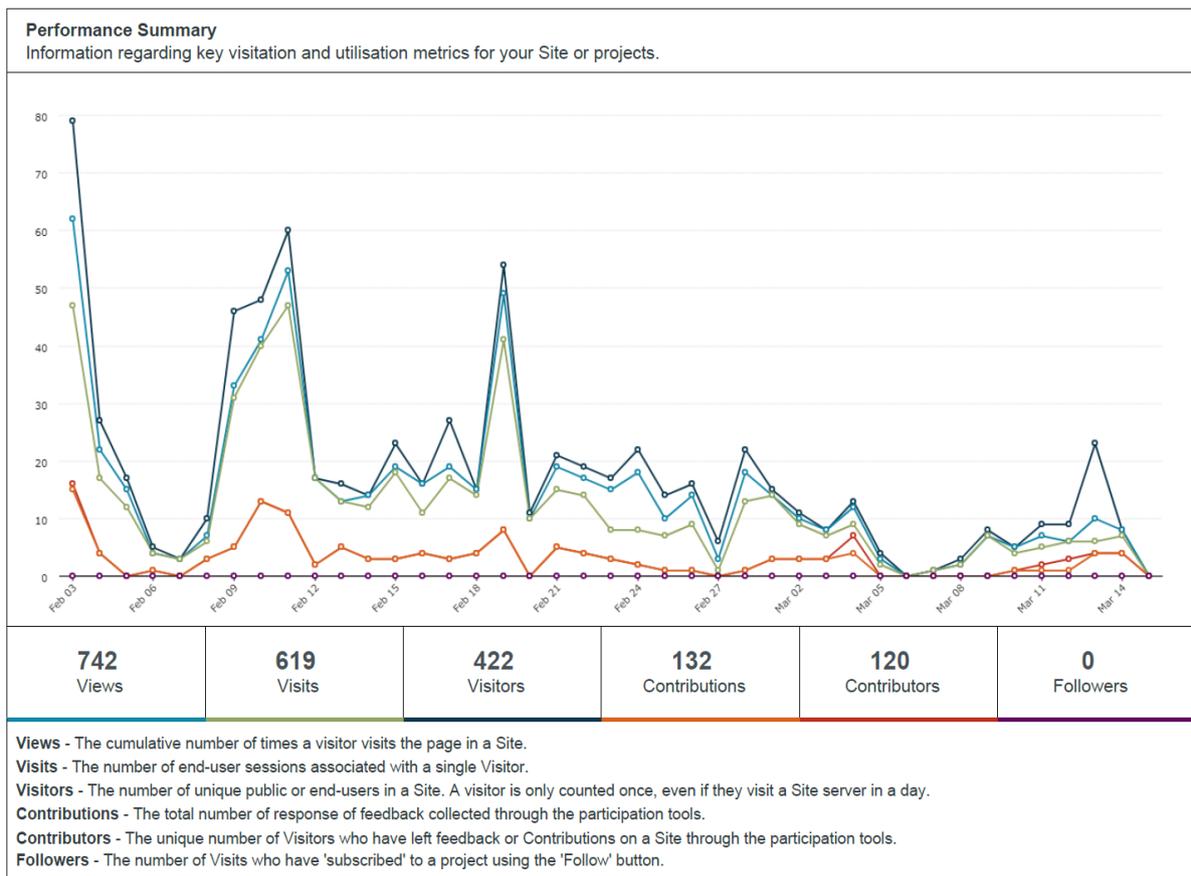
- Responding to phone calls and emails related to both the policy and individual situations. Customer enquiries requesting inspection of a tree concern have been followed up by the Arboriculture team and responses provided directly back to customers.

Consultation & Engagement Activity

The community consultation and engagement program included:

- **A community survey** available in hard copy and Council’s online consultation platform Shape. The platform was well used with 742 views and 120 contributions during the consultation period.

The graph below from Shape represents the activity during the consultation period.



- **Written submissions** – 2 written submission were received (refer to Appendix 3).
- **Enquiries via phone** – approx. 10 members of the community called to discuss the policy and learn more about various aspects.
- **Enquiries via email** – approx. 5 emails were received seeking further clarification on aspects of the policy.
- **Targeted consultation with key internal services** - targeted consultation was undertaken with Council officers to understand the key issues and opportunities that must be considered in the development of the policy. This included service areas such as; Sustainable Monash, Active Monash, Risk and Insurance, City Planning, Engineering and Capital Works.
- **Targeted consultation workshop with Council’s Environmental Advisory Committee** – (refer to Appendix 2)

Key Findings

The following information provides a summary of the community's response to the survey. The results have been analysed to determine the community's support for the key aspects of the policy and to understand the key themes of any comments provided.

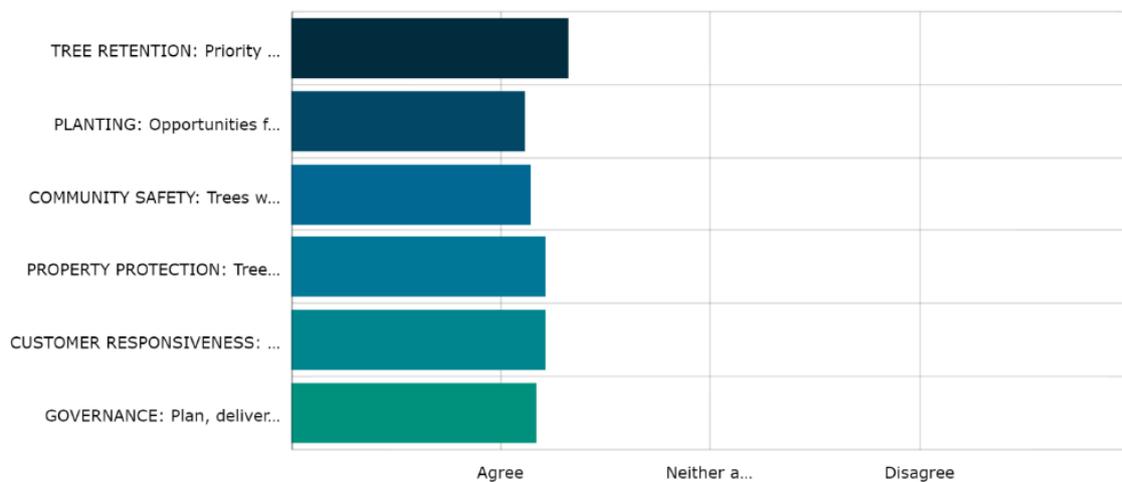
Section 1: Guiding Principles

1. To what extent do you agree with the guiding principles Council proposes to use to manage its trees on a day to day basis?

Overall there was a healthy level of agreement for all of the proposed guiding principles.

1. To what extent do you agree with the guiding principles Council proposes to use to manage its trees on a day to day basis?

Matrix | Skipped: 11 | Answered: 121 (91.7%)



2. If you disagree with any of the principles, please explain why?

The key themes of the responses related to the following;

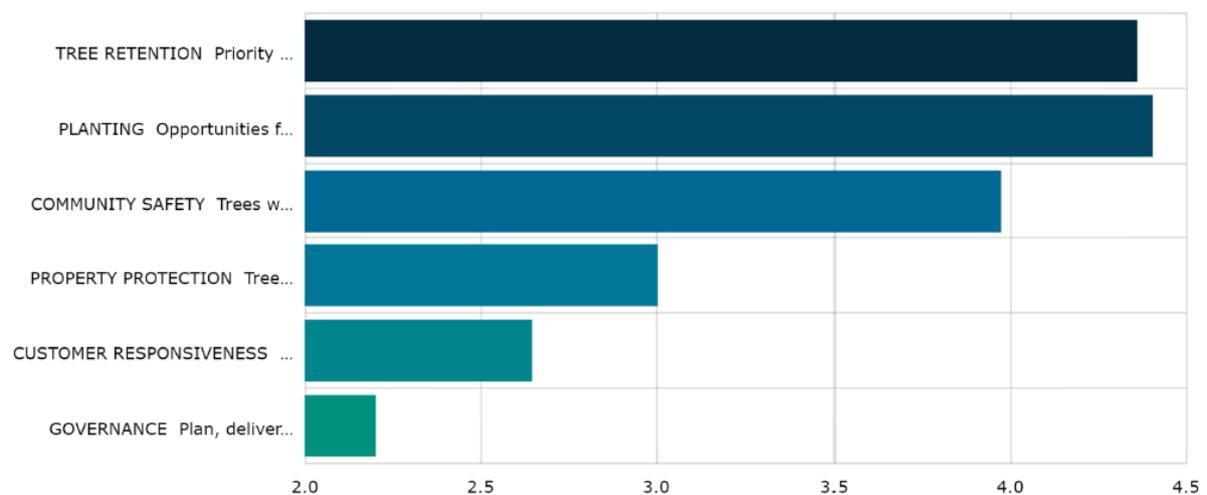
- Concerns that trees are retained at the expense of community safety and property protection e.g. trees that are too large.
- Council should focus on planting native species only rather than exotic species
- Council should not plant eucalyptus trees due to concerns with branches falling.
- Impact of leaf litter on residents with limited capacity to keep up with maintenance.

3. Rank the guiding principles in order of importance from highest to lowest?

While the community response indicated overall agreement, the community was also asked to rank the principles in order of importance. Planting (4.40) was ranked most important closely followed by Retention (4.36), Community Safety (3.97), Property Protection (3.00), Customer Responsiveness (2.64) and Governance (2.20).

The policy and feedback recognises that Council's day to day tree management must consider all of the principles equally in all day to day activities.

3. Rank the guiding principles in order of importance from highest to lowest? (drag each across to the right)
Ranking | Skipped: 13 | Answered: 119 (90.2%)



4. Are there any changes and/or additional principles you would like us to consider?

There were 68 respondents to this question, the most popular responses included:

- 12% of respondents believed that native trees and trees that aid native wildlife should be preferentially planted and retained.
- 12% of respondents believed that safety as a reason for tree removal should be emphasised to a greater extent, with some asking for more maintenance and pruning of these dangerous trees to reduce risk.
- 10% of respondents believed that guidelines should be created for developers to stop them from removing trees and to ensure they create adequate greenspace on their new properties.

Section 2: Removal of Trees

5. To what extent do you support the policy position on removal of dying trees?

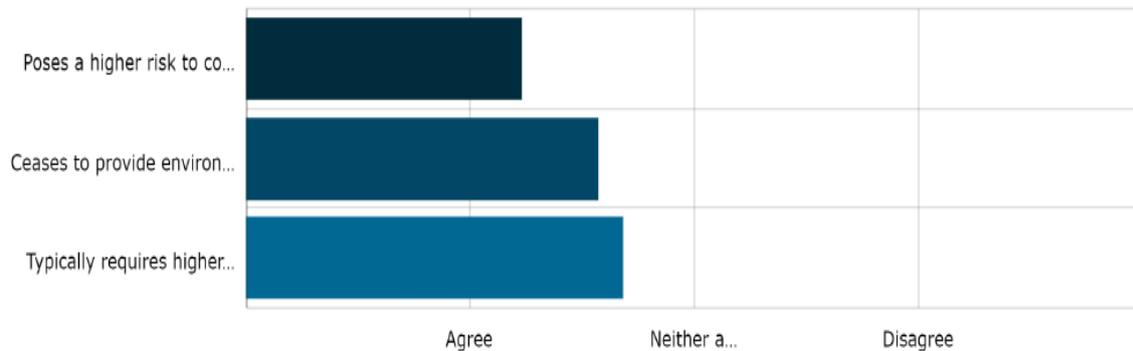
The community was asked to indicate their support for removal of trees under the following circumstances;

- Poses a higher risk to community due to likelihood of failure
- Ceases to provide environmental and health and wellbeing benefits expected from a healthy tree
- Typically requires higher levels of reactive maintenance

The results indicate the community agrees with the policy position which guides Council's arborist to balance the competing principles in their assessments and where appropriate recommend removal with the understanding replacement planting will be considered and delivered in due course.

5. To what extent do you support the policy position on removal of dying trees?

Matrix | Skipped: 10 | Answered: 122 (92.4%)



6. If you disagree with the policy on removal of dying trees, please explain why?

The key themes of the responses related to the following;

- Dying trees can be retained when they pose a low risk to community.
- Consultation is important in this decision making process.
- Dying trees should be considered as 'habitat' opportunities and treated accordingly.

There were 47 respondents to this question, the most popular responses included;

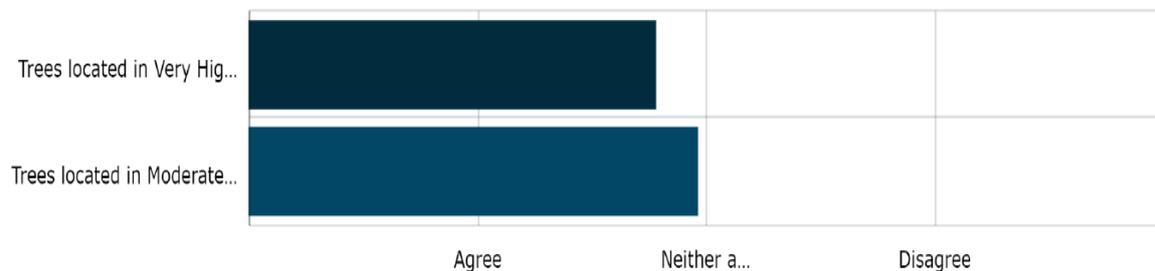
- 28% of respondents believed that tree maintenance should improve so that trees do not die in the first place
- 21% of respondents believed that dying/dead trees should be retained for their value to wildlife
- A further 15% of respondents believed that dying/dead trees should be retained if they pose no safety risk to the community.

7. To what extent do you support the policy position on tree removal according to life expectancy?

The community response indicated that while there was support for this approach to remove trees within five (5) and three (3) years of their useful life expectancy there was also a cohort who were both neutral and disagreed with the approach which is consistent with the result from the ranking of the guiding principles with retention being ranked highly by the community.

7. To what extent do you support the policy position on tree removal according to life expectancy?

Matrix | Skipped: 11 | Answered: 121 (91.7%)



8. The community was asked if you disagree with policy on tree removal according to life expectancy, please explain why?

The key themes of the responses related to the following;

- Dead trees still have value in the environment.
- Community safety is a priority.
- Maintain trees rather than remove.
- Useful Life Expectancy is difficult to understand.

There were 56 respondents to this question, the most popular responses included;

- 27% of respondents believed the term “useful life expectancy” was vague and open to interpretation. Most people added that health, safety risk and the condition of the tree should be the deciding factor in tree removal.
- A further 14% mentioned that dead trees still have value for wildlife and that the trees value should be the determining factor for removal

- 11% of respondents believed that safety should be the number one reason constituting tree removal

Section 3: General Feedback

9. The community was asked to tell us what you like most about the Policy?

The key themes of the responses related to the following;

- Recognises the value of trees and their retention.
- Policy will help community and Council work better together
- Community safety as guiding principle
- Community has been engaged in development of policy

There were 79 respondents to this question, the most popular responses included;

- 25% of people liked the inclusion of tree retention/protection of existing trees and the tree planting sections of the policy, some specified that natives should be given precedence in planting and retention.
- 16% of people liked the policy as a whole
- 10% of respondents liked the value that the Council has put on trees in the creation of this policy
- 9% of respondents liked the canopy cover target, however some respondents mentioned that it could be increased

10. The community was asked to tell us what you would like to see improved?

The key themes of the responses related to the following;

- Increase in planting of trees to meet targets
- Improve selection of trees to provide better, safer areas
- Strengthen controls relating to tree removal on private property
- Clarify Councils approach to road clearance

There were 99 respondents to this question, the most popular responses included:

- 27% of people asked for tree type to be considered in tree planting and retention, with 30% of those expressing the use of native trees as important and 15% of those specifying gum trees as a hazardous tree that should not be planted. Many others mentioned the suitability of trees planted in residential streets, i.e. trees that are hazardous should not be planted in streets but could be planted in reserves or bushlands.
- 8% of people highlighted that replacement, retainment and planting of trees should be highlighted as most important
- 10% of people asked for improvements to be made to the wording of the policy and for those to include more education on the value of trees for mitigating climate change, helping animals etc.
- 7% of people believed that the creation of a significant tree register was important and that Council should help with the maintenance of these trees.

Appendix 2 - Environmental Advisory Committee Consultation

On the 11th of January 2021 an online workshop was conducted to introduce the draft policy and its objectives. The workshop was facilitated by Trish McGee to gather feedback from the committee across a range of aspects to both determine the committees support for the policy and actions that should be considered a priority to ensure successful implementation.

The following notes were recorded as the outcome of this engagement.

Increasing Vegetation and Canopy is the second priority for EAC to provide input.

Lucas Skelton, Manager Horticulture provided an overview of the new Tree Management Policy which has been developed to provide consistency around the planting, retention and removal of trees on Council land. It is currently out for consultation. Follow this link: <https://shape.monash.vic.gov.au/tree-policy>)

The committee then broke into four groups to discuss how Council could improve the canopy and vegetation across Monash, how Council might communicate this importance, and provide feedback on the Tree Management Policy. Feedback from the group discussions are summarised below

a) What do you think Council could do to improve canopy and vegetation across the municipality?

Incentives for land owners looking to develop with minimise loss of trees/vegetation.

- Property value is higher in tree lined street with green spaces than concrete jungle
- Create landscape guidelines which consider canopy and understorey
- Consider incentives for private landowners to retain and plant trees (e.g. rate relief?)
- Consider use of developer contributions to plant new trees and retain significant ones.
- Consider Tree Bonds

Penalties

- Increase penalty for illegal removal of trees on private property
- Continue to report and take appropriate action to pursue residents/developer that remove trees

Increase vegetation in Council land and across Monash

- Show how Council is tracking towards the 30% target (from 14%) by 2030 – lead by example.
- Provide better access to vegetation species that work best in Monash - collaborate with local nurseries.
- Collaborate with schools, corporates, owners of land that has potential for planting/ retention of trees
- Communicate developer responsibility to maintaining a garden city in Monash.
- Increase micro-forests proactively and consider food forests.
- Proactive assessment of nature strips and public land to see where trees can be planted, but also encourage residents to report nature strips needing trees.
- Support Greenlink nursery and similar to encourage volunteers, donate equipment, hold workshops

Create biodiversity corridors

- Replicate the Skink link project with other fauna and set up habitat displays and information
- Increase vegetation in existing habitat corridors to attract smaller native birds.
- Track fauna diversity, density and distribution and report.
- Plant out vacant land with vegetation
- Set up competitions for abundance of biodiversity in backyards

Promote value and benefit of trees

- Create a significant tree register
- Consider Tree bonds
- Reiterate the ecosystem benefits of trees - cooling effects in an increasingly warming planet and to reduce urban heat island effects, carbon stock, water retention/flood prevention
- Change the perception of trees so that the community falls in love with trees. The idea that trees promote wealth and health. Could carving messages in trees encourage connection?
- Re-brand trees as oxygen/fresh air sources.
- Trees provide shade for people and cars
- The added value of carbon capture as part of the tree management policy.
- Explain the value of retaining trees and increasing tree canopy, especially in community consultation.

- Tree lined streets and being close to open space increases the value of a property.
- Communicate the minimal risk concerning property during storms and trees falling.
- Consider promotion of native edible foods like myrtles, salt bushes, Davidson plums, etc.

b) Improving communications regarding vegetation in Monash Education

- To provide insight into the value of Monash's vegetation in the community.
- Build developer understanding of the value provided by vegetation and resulting increased environmental outcomes. Local open space and tree lined streets can increase value and amenity of a property
- Clarify how Council arrived at 30% by 2030 canopy coverage target and communicate how it will be achieved and why it is important. Explain why we reduce the grass area and increase natives in reserves.
- Proactive communications to address tree loss and management during development

Re framing message

- Link mental and physical health benefit with environment and increased vegetation
- Relate to personal circumstances to drive action and support from community, e.g. lack of trees, heat islands, higher cooling costs, hot cars etc. explain What's In It For Me (WIIFM)
- Reduce technicality and be more user friendly in communications.
- Use images as much as possible to convey the usefulness of having more trees - including historical images of City of Monash with its lush vegetation. (see Appendix for examples)
- Careful thinking in framing message about understory to reduce perception of fire, safety or security risk)
- Build partnerships with Beyond Blue, R U okay, Zoos Victoria to support messaging

Note: Information about DELWP and RMIT fauna biodiversity - Canopy cover over the Eastern Region

https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/440173/CompiledReportEastern2018_v2.1.pdf -

Case study/ Examples

- Present case studies and infographics to show how increased tree canopy has improved appeal of a city making it more liveable and create healthier environment for elderly people and children alike
- Present success stories (not only within Monash but neighbouring Councils)
- Use infographics showing temperature under a tree and then temperature in a full sun. Similar to sitting on a beach with shade vs sitting on a beach under a tree.
- Duplicate skink link signage and story board in other reserves.

Promotion

- Promoting through local schools via fetes, festivals and university events, or community club activities
- More planting days that are interactive and involve all sectors of the community.
- Create custodianship when people are involved, passive surveillance champions
- Share the message via Councils sporting clubs
- Provide information/newsletters at pick up points such as nurseries and Bunnings.
- Replicate Green Shoots giveaways and engagement to reinforce message and create awareness
- Make a case for creating healthier spaces with trees and plants for mental (and physical) health e.g. partner with beyond blue or mental health charities.
- Physical art displays of art and garden through Monash, facilitate through youth program (similar to Talking Trees)
- Social media messages from Horticulture team
- Provide display gardens and vegetation in high density areas or new shopping centres.

c) Draft Tree Management Policy feedback

1) Principles

- Need to demonstrate value to either humans or the local animals in the principles.
- Encourage native indigenous trees that provide food, habitat and passage to local vulnerable fauna, with consideration of changing environment and increased density.
- Focus on trees with edible fruit where practical and can be managed. May help increase food security within local communities and lower food costs. Also consider bush medicine.
- Principle that 'Council trees' are important and deserve the level of attention embedded in the policy

- Clarify risk matrix for trees in high use open space - so trees are not avoided.

ii) General feedback - do you think this approach will serve Council and the Community well in practice to manage Council's trees effectively?

- Trees provide carbon storage, are important both for water catchment and to reduce erosion and landslides, particularly to increase climate resilience – need to promote these features
- Look at incentives for residents in retaining significant trees including maintenance support (gutter cleaning, sweeping, pruning, etc.
- Recognised that the tree management policy provides good tree management practices.
- Consider role of tree in habitat after maturity and even after death – such as retaining trunks for habitat.
- Discourage trees being removed for solar access – tree provides more benefits than solar, consider alternatives.
- Add glossary for any technical terms – not all know what canopy means
- Routine assessment of trees to ensure safety and health (annual assessments already done)
- Explain 30% target and how it is being tracked, measured, and managed
- Clarify that the policy only deals with trees on Council land.
- Allow space for trees to grow to maturity.
- What is being done to extend the life of trees if damaged by storms – example removing branches or covering exposed roots if tree is safe.
- Encourage input from Friends groups on policy
- Draft policy clear and easy to read, and the formatting made it easier for the public to access than some previous documents. The table on Page 19 has the Inspection frequency for Moderate Risk as both Annual and Every 2 years. Please clarify? At the beginning, where the policy outlines 'Trees excluded from this policy', it would be informative to provide the policies and legislation that deal with these issues.
- Will there be access to the street tree asset register (AMIS/GIS) for the community or professionals in the landscaping and horticulture industry – or can the data be added to existing publicly available GIS mapping for Monash? This would be useful, especially given the ID requirements for landscape plans as set out per the document

- Create Council workshop, webpage or brochure on tree health and safety as a valuable resource that can be leveraged by professionals and passionate community members to educate residents.

Appendix 3 - Submissions from Individuals and Organisations

Submission # 1

A REVIEW OF THE DRAFT **TREE MANAGEMENT** **POLICY OF MONASH CITY** **COUNCIL**

There appear to be some very serious legal and systems problems relating to tree management within Monash. So sorting out this Policy and the Road Management Plan (RMP) are very timely.

A low tree branch (less than 3.8 m at the road centerline) struck by a truck, and the branch almost writing off my car, and all in a local residential street, has resulted in some in-depth monitoring, observation, and measurement of the current situation and system(s). And especially given Council's claim that it meets and complies with its Road Management Plan which states that trees will have 4.5 m road clearance.

In the subsequently observed residential area some 60% of street trees lost low branches in a two year period due to major vehicle impact (and these branches were of some substance and typically 100 to 200 mm in diameter, i.e. not new growth).

A further review of trees in the local neighbourhood showed at least 60-80% had low branches impacted (without branch removal) and resulting in very serious tree trauma.



Some of the tree maintenance logic within the Horticultural section of Council appears to be very seriously flawed.

Of particular interest in the Draft Tree Management Policy is –

Section 4.8 – ROAD CLEARANCE PRUNING (PAGE 24)

The first sentence is grammatically incorrect – it doesn't make English sense –

“In the situation where well established trees may have developed prior to current vehicle height capacity, the introduction of more contemporary infrastructure and legislative changes on clearance other than for power lines.”

Safety – First, or Last???

One might be reading too much into this erroneous sentence, but there is a suggestion in the phrases in this sentence that there is no obligation to enforce current road clearance statutory and regulatory requirements on older trees. If this suggestion is the intended meaning then it is a grossly incorrect approach to pruning. If Council follows outdated lower clearances then Council is totally unable to meet its claims of –

- “balancing” “inherent risk that trees can pose to property and people” (page 4), and similarly
- “To implement best practice safety processes and principles to minimise risks to the community from trees on public land.” (page 6), and
- “COMMUNITY SAFETY – Trees will be managed so that any risks to the public are minimised to the greatest extent possible.” (page 8)
- And numerous references in LINKAGES (PAGES 10 TO 13) to safety in public places, environments, and ensuring a safe and efficient transport network.
- And “4 Tree Pruning” (page 23) with tree pruning carried out “to prevent impact

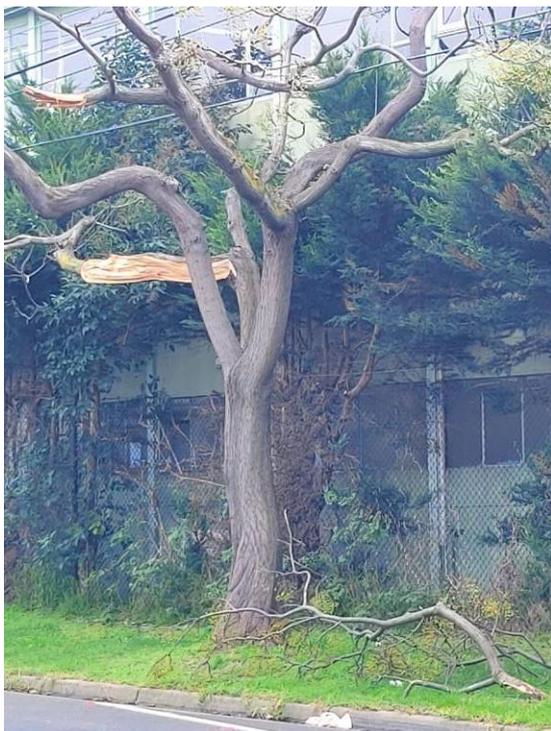
or damage to property”, and “to prevent any occupational health, safety and welfare risk to the public.”

Put simply, you can't have it both ways. Either the safety comes at a higher priority, which it must, or you are committing to save MCC dollars by having vehicles do your pruning for you and it's just tough luck if a vehicle or innocent pedestrian gets in the way of a flying branch!.

And “Lesser Streets”.

In a similar vein, Council representatives have, on a number of occasions, either inferred or stated that lesser residential streets are consciously (let slip) way below the mandated 4.5 m minimum road clearance. But nothing is quantified, or stated in policy, as to what standards are used in this indirect casual approach.

Council is using a de facto standard for the lower use residential streets, so the 4.5 m standard of the Road Management Plan (RMP) is not being enforced, (and again, by default, Council relies on vehicles up to the legal 4.3 m height to do its pruning for it !!!).



And “Risk Assessments”

Council, blatantly and in contravention of its stated policies, has not completed a formal risk assessment for vehicle impacts in so called “lower use” residential streets. And the outcome of such a formal risk assessment would be quite explosive. The erroneous assumption is that tree impacts are unlikely to occur.

All residential streets are now seeing significant housing developments and construction. Larger vehicles are bringing construction materials, furniture in containers, etc., into the most minor residential streets. Similarly public utilities must be maintained in these streets with high profile sucker trucks and the like. And more and more goods purchased online are entering urban streets in larger and larger delivery trucks. And for the frequency of events or exposures in the risk assessment calculation it is not a case of 'if' a low branch will be struck, but 'when'. The low branch is there continuously.

And the facts....

And the observed number of cases of branches removal by vehicles, all backed by photographic evidence of the downed branches, is horrific. 60% of trees lost a branch in a two year period in the monitored area!

And 60-80% of trees viewed in the local neighbourhood area had suffered impact trauma. And why should this area be any different to other parts of the Council area. So until data is collected it is reasonable to assume that this is a City wide problem.

Quite clearly the risks are high. For 100-200 mm branches to be removed by an impact there is significant damage to vehicles. There is a high risk of injury to the vehicle occupants. Often overlooked is the potential for risk to the general public with these large branches sweeping through the public domain at high speed, not only at initial impact, but some branches have been carried several hundred meters along the roads protruding well out from the vehicles. So not only other vehicles and drivers are at risk, but cyclists and pedestrians can easily be swept to their deaths.

Philosophically Council should be utilising its risk assessment methodology contained within "Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy and Framework 2020". Council's Road Management Plan identifies its enforcement of the 4.5 m limits and associated actions were set based on a Council Risk Assessment. So why isn't it being followed?? It does not appear that the road clearance risk assessment has been updated for a long time (if ever?)(is there even a copy of it??). And the risk is increasing, not decreasing. To do this properly Council will need to quantify the extent of the problem.

Why hasn't an incident investigation occurred for every downed branch??

And basic info for a Risk Assessment....?

How do you do a risk assessment if you don't know how big the problem is???

Council has no idea how many branches have been struck and brought down (yet Council collects the branches!!). Council has no idea how many trees have been struck causing tree trauma. Council has no idea how many trees are below 4.5 m.

A simple measurement approach using a laser distance measurer has identified numerous local neighbourhood trees with road clearances of less than 3 m are present in the observed neighbourhood

Council does not have a system for one off or large City area measurement of tree branch clearance above roads (though the Road Management Plan states otherwise), so is blind to the seriously dangerous situation it is in.

The second sentence (in Section 4.8 – ROAD CLEARANCE PRUNING) is of major interest –

“Removal of structural branches may cause significant wounds, provide entry points for pathogenic organisms and decay, and cause undue harm to the trees.”

This statement raises some anomalous and conflicting Council activities with regard to the removal of branches.

It should be noted that tree impacts by vehicles can remove low branches (i.e. branches lower than the mandated 4.5 m), or simply cause these low branches or trunks considerable damage.

Then If there is such a fear of pathogens/disease/insects/decay, why aren't all electrical and road clearance trunk/branch removal sites treated to preclude pathogens/etc.. These treatments/sealants are cheap, widely used and readily available, e.g. from Bunnings. Council does not use sealants/treatments on any of its street trees so the “fear” of pathogen's/ etc., is in verbiage only. Actions (or lack of them) speak louder than words!. It can't be a real problem. How many street trees have been identified as having been affected by pathogens/etc..?

It appears that this pathogenic focus is used as an excuse for not pruning as an adjunct to city expansion of green cover.

Its OK to remove non-structural branches without fear of pathogens/ disease/ insects/ decay but not OK to remove structural branches for fear of pathogens/ disease/ insects/ decay?. These references to pathogens/ etc., appear to be used to cover an alternate motive, e.g. don't cut off branches so as to assure the expansion of the City's green cover and at any cost????

Low branches (less than 4.5 m road clearance) which are impacted (and broken off) with resulting trauma, go undetected and untreated (e.g. saw remediated by Council.) . It often takes weeks or even months for impact removed branches to be collected/removed, and even the location of such branches does not trigger a tree inspection. And of very great significance is the fact that when a branch is torn from a tree, the tree has much much more trauma and injury area than a saw cut branch. Wouldn't sawn removal of the low branch have been much less traumatic for the tree?. Not only is the saw cut a much smaller wound, but a sawn cut can be orientated to eliminate water entrapment/ pooling

which is an important factor in pathogen/etc. growth and infestation. And if Council was truly and honestly concerned, as a minimum, wouldn't they be out to treat the tree's wound?.

And branches which are less than 4.5 m and are struck but not removed by vehicles still suffer injury and trauma, and are never ever treated for the injury. Council has no system for prompt follow-up and treatment. It doesn't know the impact has occurred. Again surely it would be better to minimise trauma and injury by removing the less than 4.5 m clearance branch in the first instance.

And why is it OK to remove structural branches for Electrical line clearance, but not for Road clearance?

In summary there can be little doubt that Council's reference to "Removal of structural branches may cause significant wounds...." is extremely misleading, and an erroneous attempt to misguide the policy. Council must remove such references from the policy as they are a total contradiction of the facts at hand, and truly start honouring references to, and claims of, honouring its commitment to public safety.

The third sentence (in Section 4.8 – ROAD CLEARANCE PRUNING) is of major interest –

"Council's Arborist and assigned contractors will aim to meet clearance requirements as best as possible while maintaining the integrity of the trees health and structure."

The inference is that road clearance doesn't really matter. The vehicle clearance and public safety come second to the tree.

It should be noted that the "assigned contractors" for road height clearance have absolutely no control over the branches they remove, but are stringently required to only follow specific stated instructions from Council regarding which specific branches are to be removed from which trees. This was immediately apparent from direct interaction with contractors during major street pruning work. One contractor's employee's advice was that structural low (non-compliant less than 4.5 m road clearance) branches were predominantly not pruned due to the cost involved to re-achieve AS4373 compliance on the tree, as well as a fetish or bias for increased green cover. Quite clearly in the contractor discussions the contractor would have preferred to have removed the non-compliant low branches.

This statement (the third sentence in section 4.8) is in direct contravention of 3. Tree Removal (page 20) section 3.4 bullet point 4. –

"3.4 The removal of trees may be considered under the following circumstances:

In the case of achieving regulated road and electrical line clearance, only once all practical solutions to maintain acceptable clearances have been exhausted.”

So, as stated in 3.4, the 4.5 m road clearances will be met.

Conclusions

Demonstrably, by virtue of several years of factual observations, Council has been sacrificing not only the safety of the public by not meeting the mandated/regulated road clearance, but has been degrading the integrity of tree health and structure, both causing considerable tree trauma, by permitting low structural branches to be torn off by vehicles, and permitting tree impact by vehicles.

Further it is very interesting that Council does not rework the trees with ripped off branches for the purpose of re-establishing AS 4373 compliance for the tree. Again actions speak louder than words. Is it that action for compliance with AS 4373 is only when it pleases the focus on increased green cover???

It can only be concluded that Council has failed miserably to provide adequate road clearance. In general, one would expect that the priority sequence is –

1. Prune to meet Electrical Line Clearance and Minimum Road Clearance,
2. Further prune to comply with AS4373
3. If 2. cannot be achieved then remove the tree.

Public Safety is paramount (and Council statements and policy confirm this) , and so if a tree cannot be pruned to assure that level of safety, then based on risk the tree needs to be removed, or listed for as-soon-as-practicable replacement and within an appropriate time..

OTHER SECTIONS IN THE DRAFT

The above 6 pages address the major flaw(s) and inconsistency in the Draft Policy.

The following are other anomalies in order of appearance:-.

Page 14 – **Australian Standard** is defined, but doesn't mention that it is AS4373-2007??

Page 15 – **Hazardous Trees** should include trees with road clearance less than the mandated 4.5 m, and not meeting electrical line clearance requirements.

Page 18 – Sections 2.6 and 2.7 etc., should be cross referenced or referred to the table at the top of page 19, or move the table into page 18 when area risk is first mentioned.

Page 20 to 22 – all of Section 3 – Needs clarification as to whether the Tree Removal applies to trees in public space, private space, or some to both, or...??

Page 20 to 22 – all of Section 3 – should be hand in hand with section 6 – if you get it wrong in 6.2 and 6.4, then why isn't it wrong in section 3 ??.

Page 20 – Section 3.5 – The introductory sentence “Tree removal will not be considered for the following reasons:” appears at odds with the first point “When a tree is providing little or no amenity and a suitable replacement would do so.”?

Page 26 and Page 28 – Local Government Act section references are incorrect. Nothing at these sections in the Act remotely resembles planting authority or property damage.

Page 27 – Section 8 – it is presumed the tree for valuation is on Council land. Also this section needs clarification and needs to be expanded as an appendix or alternatively provide a decent reference link so that interested people can fully understand the calculation and its terms, as well as see a typical example.

Page 28 – Section 9 – it is presumed the tree for valuation is on Council land.

Page 28 – Section 10 – Property damage may require clarification (e.g. a definition at page 4). There is an inference that property damage only occurs around ground level due to root penetration, etc.. What about property damage involving vehicles and low branches???. And what if a Ratepayer has made a written request to Council regarding branches less than 4.5 m, etc..

Page 29 – Section 11 – will the public have some access to the database, or how can they obtain information from the database?

Colin Carter

13/3/2021

Council Response

Dear Colin,

Again thanks for your time and effort to both review the policy and provide feedback while also taking an interest in your local area.

This feedback has provided another point of view and specific circumstances in which to determine how we continue to improve our services.

Tree management has undergone significant change over the last 24 months culminating in the development and adoption of this policy. The improvements have been driven by our own service review and that of the Council's Internal Audit and Risk Committee. The most recent Customer Satisfaction results indicate that Council's service delivery is meeting the community's expectations however there is always room for improvement.

The recommendations from these reviews have led to the following actions which will strengthen our tree management;

- 3 additional inspecting arborists to undertake proactive and reactive inspections.
- Update of Council's tree asset register to include both street trees and open space trees.
- Review of specification and awarding of new service contracts to deliver high priority tree maintenance programs including the Annual Cyclic Pruning program.
- Implementation of the latest software version of Council's Asset Management System (Confirm) and introduction of real time in field recording of inspections, defects and works by both Council's arborist and contractors. This includes updated process and procedures along with training to ensure compliance to achieve satisfactory outcomes.
- Purchase and use by Arborist of Nikon Forestry Pro range finder to measure distance.
- Policy which provides a clear agreement with the community on how we will manage its trees.

As evidenced by the above Council has invested significantly in improving its approach to managing its trees and related risks.

The feedback from the community consultation has indicated a healthy level of support for the principles and approach towards managing risk, removals, planting and community engagement.

In regards to your submission the following changes have been recommended to the policy and have been included in the report going to Council in May 2021.

In regards to road clearance Council is also undertaking a review of its Road Management Plan which will further clarify its approach in this space. This plan provides the clearances Council is to maintain by using a range of controls which include pruning and removal. It also recognises that in some cases the likelihood and consequences on not maintaining this clearance may be low and therefore other controls may be used to minimise the risk while also retaining established trees which contribute significantly to the local streetscape and environment. It is acknowledged there are areas within Monash where the conflict cannot be resolved without removing trees and/or structural limbs and this is being actioned by Council's arborist and contractors as part of the annual cycle.

It is recommended to change the wording of section 4.8 to the following to clarify Council's approach to meeting its obligations under its Road Management Plan.

Council's Road Management Plan (RMP) sets out a series of clearances for vegetation to be maintained in order to minimise risks to road users, community and environment.

Council will inspect its trees to identify and implement appropriate controls to meet its obligations for road clearance. It may be appropriate due to the value of the tree/s that controls other than pruning and removal are used to achieve its objectives of minimising the risk while being able to maintain a thriving urban forest to benefit the community.

Other controls Council may use to minimise risk are;

- Installation of reflective plates on low structural branches above the roadway
- Install white lines to direct traffic away from kerb
- Install warning signs in streets known to have low clearance

It is recommended to change the wording of 8.1 Tree Valuation to the following to improve the structure of the sentence;

'A valuation may be undertaken by a qualified arborist (Certificate Level 5) to assess the value of the tree/s as part of the development plans and planning applications, and to set a value for compensation, where it is agreed the best overall outcome is the removal of the tree/s.

It is recommended that Clause 10.2 be removed from the policy as it was included in error and the clauses are not relevant to the management of Council's trees.

In regards to the other suggestions or clarifications sought please note the following;

- The definitions are not specific to any particular Australian Standard as the policy refers to several.
- Hazardous trees definition does include reference to trees which are 'leaning over road/path/property'.
- The scope of the policy is limited to trees on Council managed land as per page 5.
- Property damage relates to any type of property that may be impacted by a Council tree.

- Due to the advancements Monash has made with its Asset Management System it is planned to provide more information on an updated Council website platform that is also currently under development.

The next annual inspections of the trees within your area are due to be completed in January 2022. If you would like to discuss the results of these inspections and the works that are being recommended I would welcome the opportunity to meet and review our findings.

In the meantime please continue to report any concerns you may have with any tree and as per our policy we will inspect, determine our findings and provide a response to the customer before undertaking any required works.

Best Regards,
Lucas Skelton
Manager Horticulture Services

Submission # 2

The Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve Inc. Mt Waverley 3149

14 February 2021

Mr Lucas Skelton

Monash City Council

cc CEO, Councillors, and Staff in this area of concern

Dear Mr Skelton

Re: Response to the Monash City Council Draft Tree Management Policy

Thank you for your email of 9 February 2021 providing the draft Tree Management Policy (TMP) and seeking feedback from FoDCCR members.

We have circulated information on the TMP draft to the members via our Damper Creek Doings February newsletter and requested them to consider responding to the survey.

With regard to the impact of the TMP on Damper Creek Conservation Reserve, and the other bushland reserves in Monash, please note the following comments:

- The importance of tree retention for conservation and biodiversity reasons needs emphasis: dead trees can provide vital habitat for wildlife and their value in this respect needs careful consideration in any risk assessment of a dead or dying tree.
- Street trees, especially in streets near the bushland reserves, can play an important role in complementing the wildlife habitat of the reserves and providing a green corridor of trees. We would like to see more emphasis given to preserving and planting native/indigenous species of trees in these streets.
- It is disappointing that Monash Council has still not introduced a “**Significant Tree Register**” as this is urgently required to complement all other Council strategies of vital importance to the conservation role of bushland reserves and public spaces.

- We strongly support Council's aim to increase tree canopy cover in Monash to 30%. The opportunity for increased planting of canopy trees in the bushland reserves will be important but is somewhat restricted, therefore canopy tree plantings in other spaces, especially private property, needs greater encouragement and direction.

Regards

Doug Scott, President

Council Response

Dear Doug,

Firstly thank you for taking the time to both promote the opportunity for your members to provide their feedback via the survey and also providing the feedback in the letter.

This feedback has been considered along with the other contributions received to understand the community's support for the policy.

The policies guiding principles include both retention and planting which I note are key points of your submission. Council continues to support the proactive maintenance of its trees to ensure they are long lived without requiring high levels of reactive maintenance. A budget submission to increase tree planting will prepared as part of the 2022/23 annual budget process to increase tree planting in both streets and reserves.

It has also been recognised within the policy under the Tree Removal section on page 21 that *'opportunities to retain a dead tree and maintain it as a 'habitat' tree will be considered as part of the decision making process. Habitat trees provide an important function by providing homes for local fauna'*.

A Significant Tree Register is planned to be developed following the adoption of this policy. This project will commence early in the 2021/22 financial year and aim to recognise those trees which meet the 'significant' criteria for the Monash community.

Best Regards,
Lucas Skelton
Manager Horticulture Services

