

# Public tree management policy

## Policy No. 8302.100.E.R

### 1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- recognise City of Darwin's commitment to the preservation, management, maintenance, enhancement and expansion of public trees and supporting habitats on City of Darwin controlled land
- provide a framework to enable consistent decision making, documentation and application of standardised processes in the management of public trees on City of Darwin controlled land
- effectively address public tree management issues faced by City of Darwin.

### 2 Scope

This policy applies to the planning and management of all public trees on City of Darwin controlled land.

The policy excludes:

- trees on privately owned land
- trees on Northern Territory Government or commonwealth government controlled land, unless managed by City of Darwin through a formal agreement, or similar
- public trees within City of Darwin leased areas where vegetation is explicitly stated as the responsibility of the lessee
- trees on City of Darwin controlled bushland and nature reserves (urban forest)
- any vegetation in drainage reserves and firebreaks, including vegetation impacting access to these areas to undertake essential maintenance activities.

While trees not on City of Darwin controlled land are excluded from this policy, City of Darwin encourages all land managers and owners to undertake appropriate planting, protection, removal if required and enhancement of trees across the municipality.

### 3 Policy statement

City of Darwin recognises the value of trees in creating a cool, clean and green city.

The key priority is to preserve and maintain the health of the City of Darwin's public tree network, including those trees identified as significant. In preserving and maintaining the public tree network, City of Darwin must balance various risks against the social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits

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public trees can provide. The management of public trees on City of Darwin controlled land is based on the following order of principles:

- manage risks to public safety
- manage risks to property and infrastructure
- support the health of the City of Darwin's ecosystems through investment in the public tree network
- improve the city's liveability and presentation, and wellbeing of the community by appropriately integrating public trees within the urban environment.

The Public Tree Management Procedure supports the delivery of this policy through seven key areas:

Key area	Description
Tree retention and protection	City of Darwin is committed to preserving, protecting and maintaining the health, structural soundness and resilience of its public tree network. Public trees are managed as long-term community, environmental, social, cultural and landscape assets.
Tree maintenance	City of Darwin is committed to managing its public tree network in a strategic and efficient manner that preserves, protects and improves the health of the city's public tree network and its supporting habitat. Public trees will be maintained in accordance with Australian Standards considering industry best practice for a Tropical Savannah (wet/dry) environment, across all stages of the tree's lifecycle.
Tree removal	City of Darwin recognises the multiple benefits provided by trees and will, where reasonable and practical, preserve as many trees as possible. In some cases the removal of existing public trees may be appropriate or necessary.
Tree valuation	City of Darwin recognises the significant value of its public tree network and the many benefits trees provide to the community from an economic, social, cultural and environmental perspective. City of Darwin will continue to invest in its public tree network.
Off-set tree plantings	Where a public tree must be removed, City of Darwin will recognise the value of the tree and will offset its loss to maintain its public tree network canopy. Any offsetting planting should generally occur within the existing or nearby location to help ensure an equitable public tree network across the municipality.
Tree planning and planting	City of Darwin is committed to expanding the public tree network to increase canopy cover and provide greater resilience to pests, disease, cyclones and other weather events, and the effects of climate change. City of Darwin will plan, and encourage others to plan, to ensure a sustainable public tree network now and in the future. Tree planting will be carried out in accordance with Australian Standard, considering industry best practice.
Engagement	City of Darwin supports partnerships and activities to educate and encourage community participation in initiatives that promote the benefits of trees.

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The Asset Custodian will ensure public trees on City of Darwin controlled land are recorded in the City of Darwin asset management system. This will assist in making informed, balanced and prioritised tree management decisions.

## 4 Definitions

**Asset custodian** means the section of the City of Darwin nominated as being responsible for ensuring City of Darwin’s public trees are managed and maintained in accordance with City of Darwin’s policies, procedures, guidelines and standards. The current asset custodian is the Parks and Open Spaces Section, within the Operations Program.

**City of Darwin controlled land** means land managed by City of Darwin.

**Offset tree planting** means new public tree plantings intended to offset the tree canopy lost from public tree removal. For each public tree removed on City of Darwin controlled land, two trees will be provided.

**Public tree** means any tree within the City of Darwin local government area that has any part of its trunk growing from City of Darwin controlled land.

**Public tree network** means the network of all public trees on City of Darwin controlled land within the City of Darwin local government area.

**Reasonable and practical** means application of sound process where appropriate outcomes are achieved through fair and sensible judgement and consideration of all reasonable and practical solutions as per the order of principles and cost versus benefit assessment.

**Should** indicates in the context of this policy, a recommendation.

**Significant public tree** means a public tree on City of Darwin controlled land that is recorded in the Significant Public Tree Register and has been classified as ‘significant’ in accordance with defined criteria.

**Significant Public Tree Register** means a register managed by the City of Darwin which aims to recognise and record public trees on City of Darwin controlled land that have been identified as significant for cultural, environmental and/or social values.

**Supporting habitat** means understory vegetation, fallen logs and leaf litter that support trees and fauna values.

**Tree** means long lived woody perennial plants with a trunk diameter at breast height greater than 200 mm; usually greater than 3 m in height; and have one, or relatively few main stem/s or trunk.

**Will** indicates in the context of this policy, a requirement.

## 5 Legislative references

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*Biosecurity Act 2015 (CTH)*  
*Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (CTH)*  
*Bushfires Management Act 2016 (NT)*  
*Environmental Protection Act 2019 (NT)*  
*Heritage Act 2011 (NT)*  
*Local Government Act 2019 (NT)*  
*Local Government Planning Regulations 2021 (NT)*  
*Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976 (NT)*  
*Weed Management Act 2021 (NT)*  
*City of Darwin By-Laws 2023 (NT)*

## 6 Procedures / related documents

AS 2303-2015 Tree stock for landscape use  
 AS 3743-2003 Potting mixes  
 AS 4373-2007 Pruning of amenity trees  
 AS 4454-2003 Composts, soil conditioners and mulches  
 AS 4970-2007 Protection of trees on development sites  
 Northern Territory Planning Scheme 2020  
 1020.010.E.R City of Darwin 2030 Strategic Plan  
 Movement Strategy 2030  
 6833.010.E.R 2030 Climate Emergency Strategy  
 6835.010.E.R 2030 Greening Darwin Strategy  
 2024–2025 City of Darwin Municipal Plan  
 1350.100.E.R Community Engagement Policy  
 0051.100.E.R Verges Policy  
 Native Vegetation Policy  
 Public Tree Management Procedure  
 Verges Procedure  
 Native Vegetation Procedure

### City of Darwin Fees and Charges

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City of Darwin: Preferred Species List  
City of Darwin: Not to be Planted List  
Creating a Resilient Urban Forest for Darwin  
Public Tree Management Guidelines

## 7 Responsibility / application

The General Manager Community is responsible for implementation and review of this policy.

All City of Darwin workplace participants are responsible for adhering to this policy.

This policy will be reviewed every four years, or as required.

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