LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL

Preserving the Past, Enhancing the Future

LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL POLICY

TREE MANAGEMENT

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(1) Introduction

The overall aim of this Management Policy is to ensure that the Shire of Leeton has a well managed sustainable tree population.

The introduction of a user pays town water system combined with extended periods of drought through climatic changes, means that many of the established exotic trees within the Shire are not getting their required water needs that they once did. This will result in many of the mature trees within the Shire dying.

A holistic approach must be taken towards the management of our street trees. This will include only planting trees that can survive the harsh climate of the Leeton Shire and proactively maintaining existing trees.

This will ensure that Leeton Shire will have a healthy, well maintained tree population that will enhance the environment of the entire Shire.

Trees are a vital part of the environment within the Leeton Shire and an asset that is valued and appreciated by the whole community.

Leeton Shire Council is responsible for the planting, care, protection and maintenance of all trees on Council land within the Shire.

A holistic strategy of tree management of the Council tree population will ensure that all Council trees can be appreciated and perform to their full potential.

(2) History of Leeton Street Trees

Evidence clearly shows that the early plantings of street trees within the Leeton Shire were well researched and planned by the NSW Department of Agriculture around 1911. It was their intention to have avenues of Gums, Kurrajongs and Palm Trees along the channel banks and streets of Early Leeton and Yanco.

The avenues of sugar gums that extended from Yanco to the old cannery site in Wamoon Avenue Leeton, were planted in 1912 with the avenues of Date and Washington Palms clearly planted in 1913.

These trees were either sourced from nurseries or grown from seeds and cultivated in large nurseries within Leeton. Tens of Thousands of trees were grown and made available to growers to plant as wind breaks and tree buffers along channel banks.

Between 1936 and 1947 the streetscape of Leeton was dramatically changed. Avenues of Gums were removed in Palm Avenue and the majority of the mature trees that are present today, through the town, were planted. Such trees as Chinese elms, Illawarra Flame trees, American Maples, English Ash, Brush Box and White Cedars trees were planted as street trees in the residential areas of Leeton.

There is a direct relationship between the growth of the town and the age of the tree populations. It was common practice as a new area of Leeton was open for residential development, the parks and trees were established to coincide with this development.

These historical facts illustrate the reason for developing a plan of management to enhance these early plantings. We understand that the pioneers of the Leeton area went to great lengths to provide a streetscape filled with many trees. It is our responsibility now to ensure the streetscapes future.

(3) Objectives

The purpose of this Tree Management Policy is to provide a general level of service by:

a) Specifying the processes and considerations necessary to ensure consistency in decision making relating to the management of street trees.

b) Creating a safe, healthy, aesthetically pleasing and satisfying environment for all Shire residents.

c) Providing an efficient and effective reporting and maintenance system to ensure that customer concerns and expectations are addressed and met.

(4) Definitions

Definition of terms used in this Management Policy

Tree – a perennial plant with one or more self supporting woody trunks and a more or less distinct and elevated canopy, the main criterion being “form” rather than “size”.

Street Tree – Any tree or shrub that is located on Council owned and controlled road reserve whether or not originally planted by Council and may include those trees on Council reserves adjacent to such roads.

Dead Tree – Means a tree is no longer capable of performing any of the following processes or is exhibiting any of the following symptoms.

Processes

* ***Photosynthesis*** - via its foliage crown (as indicated by the presence of moist, green or other coloured leaves.

* ***Osmosis*** – the ability of the root system to take up water.

* ***Turgidity*** – the ability of the plant to hold moisture in its cells.

* ***Epicormic shoots*** – the production of new shoots as a response to stress, generated from buds under the bark or from a lignotuber at ground or underground stem or at a pruned junction. These shoots are weaker than primary shoots and will develop into major branches.

Symptoms

* **Permanent leaf loss** - in both deciduous and evergreen plants.

* **Permanent wilting** – the loss of turgidity which is marked by drying out of stems, leaves and roots.

* **Shedding of the epidermis** – bark dries out and peels off to the beginning of the sapwood.

Lop or Lopping – means cutting between branch unions or at internodes on young trees, with the final cut leaving a stub.

Pollarding - The level cutting of the whole of a trees canopy. All branches are cut off at the same level regardless if the level is at a branch union or mid limb. Not a recommended practice in today's standards. Was used widely throughout the 80's and is a major contributor to branch dieback and epicormic shoots.

Pruning – of a tree means the removal of any stem dead or alive, back to the intersection of another live stem to a swollen area at the intersection called a branch collar, with a final cut at the outer edge of the collar leaving no stub. This also means any act or acts of severing any part of a tree so as to cause a reduction of the air space occupied by the branches and foliage of a tree. Further all tree pruning is to conform to Australian Standard AS 4373-1996 "Pruning of Amenity Trees". Pruning is not "lopping", "topping", "top lopping" or the reduction in height of any tree.

Remove, removal and cutting down – means cutting away part or all of a trees foliage crown leaving a trunk and stubbed main branches to reduce its height and spread and is an antiquated practice which damages trees reducing strength and should only be used as a last resort, not recommended practice within Leeton Shire.

Crown – portion of tree consisting of branches and leaves and any part of the trunk from which branches arise.

Crown lift – the removal of the lowest branches of the crown, usually for pedestrian, sight or vehicular access.

Thinning – general pruning of the crown with the removal of secondary branches whilst retaining the main structural branches of the tree.

Deadwooding – the removal of dead branches from the crown of the tree.

Tree service – a tree service is a term used to describe the combination of tree works that will be undertaken to enable a tree to be safe and grow to its full potential, ie crown lift, deadwood, crown thinning, pruning.

(5) Tree Planting

OBJECTIVE

To provide and maintain at least one tree per allotment within all developments within the Shire, which will produce an aesthetically pleasing and environmentally enriched Shire.

i) Guidelines

(a) All trees that are to be planted on Council controlled land will be the responsibility of Leeton Shire Council.

(b) Streets and reserves will be determined for street tree planting as part of the Council's ongoing planting program.

(c) Selection of new tree locations will be based on a number of factors such as

- ❖ Existing trees within the vicinity,
- ❖ Location of services and footpaths,
- ❖ Sight distances and
- ❖ Driveway locations.

(d) Residents of properties fronting a nominated new planting site will be advised in advance of the intended:

- ❖ Planting schedule,
- ❖ Approximate location
- ❖ Species to be planted.

The residents will also be encouraged to "adopt" this tree and care and water the tree during its initial few years of development.

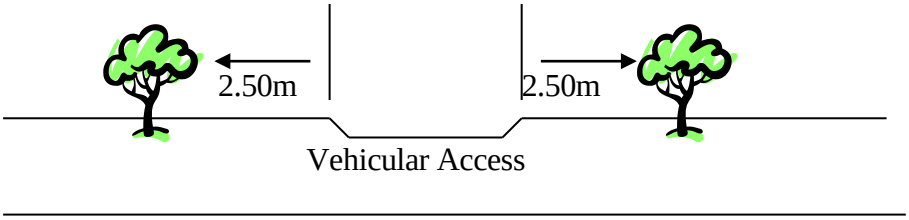
(e) No resident shall plant any tree, shrub or other plant on any part of the Council reserve without Council approval.

(f) Logs, sleepers, rocks, gravel, letterboxes, bark, woodchips, plants, hedges and irrigation systems or any other structure shall not be placed on the Council reserve unless approved by Council.

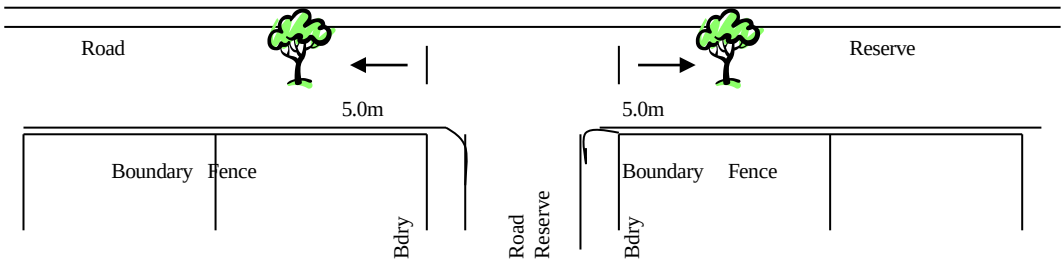
(g) Any of these plants or structures that do appear on Council property without consent and are a nuisance or hazard may be removed following notice to the owner.

(h) Where tree planting is approved for Council footpaths it is general policy that only one tree per block frontage be planted.

(i) Planting of trees on footpaths where vehicular access is provided to the residence, a tree shall not be planted closer than 2.5 metres to the provision made in the kerb for the drive entrance.



(j) Tree planting on corner blocks - NO tree shall be planted closer than 5 metres from the fence line of the building block as per the diagram.



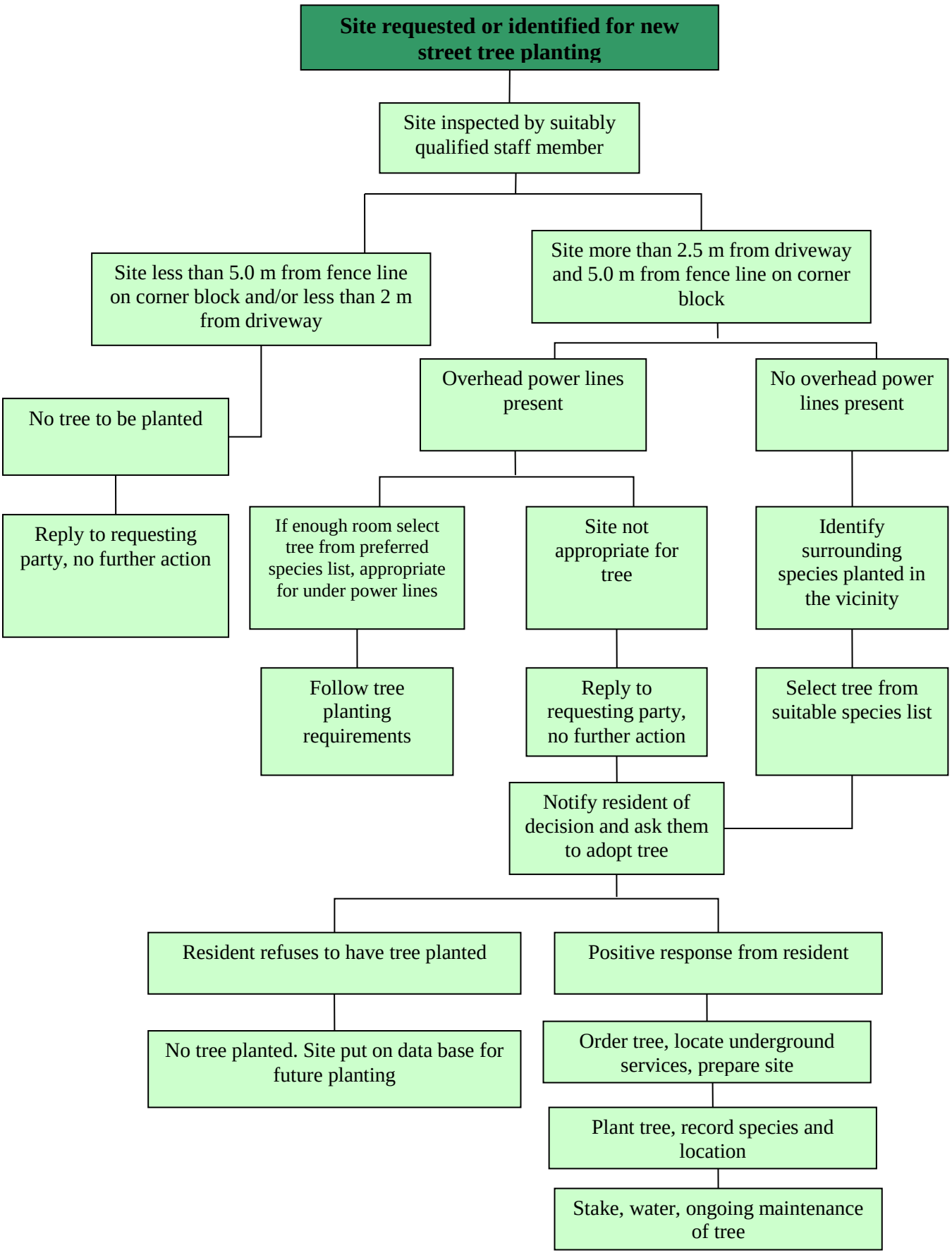
This information will take some time to be gathered and presented. Until this planting policy is complete:

(k) The final location, size and species of tree to be planted will be determined by the Manager, Parks and Recreation Services prior to planting.

(l) New trees will be staked once planted using 2 wooden stakes and Hessian to keep the tree upright and stable until it can establish itself.

(m) Where overhead power lines are present, careful consideration shall be given to the type of species to be planted. Trees will be chosen so that they do not interfere with the clearing distances outlined by Country Energy Guidelines for trees around power lines.

ii) Tree Selection and Planting Flow Chart



iii) Leeton Shire Council Tree Preferred Species List

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height Metres	Canopy Spread Metres	Root System	Classification	Fruit	Suitable under Power Lines
Chinese Elm	Ulmus Parvafolia	8-15	7-10	Medium, can be invasive	Medium	N/A	No
Bradford Pear	Pyrus Calleryana "Bradford"	10-13	6-10	Medium	Medium	N/A	No
Flowering Plum	Prunus cerasifera nigra	4-7	3-5	Medium	Medium	N/A	Yes – High Lines
Chinese Pistachio	Pistacia chinensis	5-12	6-8	Medium, can be invasive	Medium	N/A	No
Ornamental Plum	Prunus blireana	3-6	2-4	Small	Small	N/A	Yes – High Lines
Chinese Tallow	Sapium sebifeum	10-12	8-10	Small	Medium	Small Berries	No
Crepe Myrtle	Lagerstroemia indica	4-8	3-6	Small	Small/Medium	Small Seed Pods	Yes – High Lines
Evergreen Ash	Fraxinus griffithi	4-5	4-5	Small	Small	N/A	Yes – High Lines
Manchurian Pear	Pyrus ussuriensis	8-15	8-12	Medium	Medium	N/A	No
Water Gum	Tristaniopsis laurina	5-10	4-6	Small	Small	Small Nuts	Yes – High Lines
Brush Box	Lophostemon confertus	8-12	6-8	Medium-Large, can be invasive	Medium/Large	Medium Nuts	No

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height Metres	Canopy Spread Metres	Root System	Classification	Fruit	Suitable under Power Lines
Tupelo	Nyssa sylvatica	10-18	8-12	Medium-Large, relatively deep	Large	Small Berries	No
Jacaranda	Jacaranda mimosifolia	10-13	8-12	Medium	Medium/Large	Seed Pods	No
Quercus Sp	Various	15-25	10-18	Medium-Large	Small		No
Acer Sp	Various	5-25	2-20	Small-Large	Small/Large	Samara	No
Ulmus Sp	Various	8-20	6-15	Medium-Large		Thin Capsule	No
Acacia Sp	Various	<5	<5	Small	Small/Medium	Seed Pods	Yes – High Lines
Callistemon Sp	Various	<5	<5	Small	Small/Medium	Small Nuts	Yes – High Lines
Eucalyptus Sp	Various	6-20	6-12	Small-Large	Large	Nuts	No
Hakea Sp	Various	<5	<5	Small	Small/Medium	Nuts	Yes – High Lines
Melaleuca Sp	Various	<5	<5	Small	Small/Medium	Nuts	Yes – High Lines
Allocasuarina Sp	Various	8-15	6-10	Medium-Large	Large	Small Nuts	No
Banksia Sp	Various	<5	<5	Small	Medium	Cones	No

* Note: This list will be expanded in time as new trees are constantly being trialled.

(6) Trees in New Developments

a) Leeton Shire Council will ~~then~~ plant the appropriate street trees in the new developments once it is satisfied that work is completed and the tree will not be damaged by any further construction.

c) Once these trees have been planted they will be the ongoing responsibility of Council. This will include pruning, watering and replacement if tree fails.

(7) Tree Maintenance

The Shire of Leeton recognises that trees are a long term asset and that mature trees are irreplaceable in the short term. Therefore, it is critical that tree care and maintenance is performed to conform with the Australian Standard (AS 4373-1996 Pruning of Amenity Trees) in order to:

* maintain public safety
* maintain the health and form of the trees
* maintain prescribed clearances for services and traffic needs
* ensure traffic safety and visibility of street signs and street lighting
* minimise future work requirements.

i) Pruning and Tree Servicing

a) All tree pruning works to be carried out in accordance with AS 4373-1996 – Pruning of Amenity Trees.

b) In all pruning operations, only skilled and suitably qualified staff or contractors are to undertake pruning of Council's trees.

c) Any contractor that provides tree works to council must produce current qualifications and insurance policies before works can commence.

d) At all times Council staff and contractors must conform with **ALL** Occupational Health and Safety, WorkCover and Council Safety Guidelines when carrying out tree works. This includes the wearing of PPE and the drafting and implementation of a Traffic Control Plan (TCP).

e) Pruning or servicing of Council owned trees is not permitted by anyone other than Council staff or approved contractors.

f) A clear space of 2 metres is to be maintained above and along pedestrian access ways to ensure the safe passage of pedestrians.

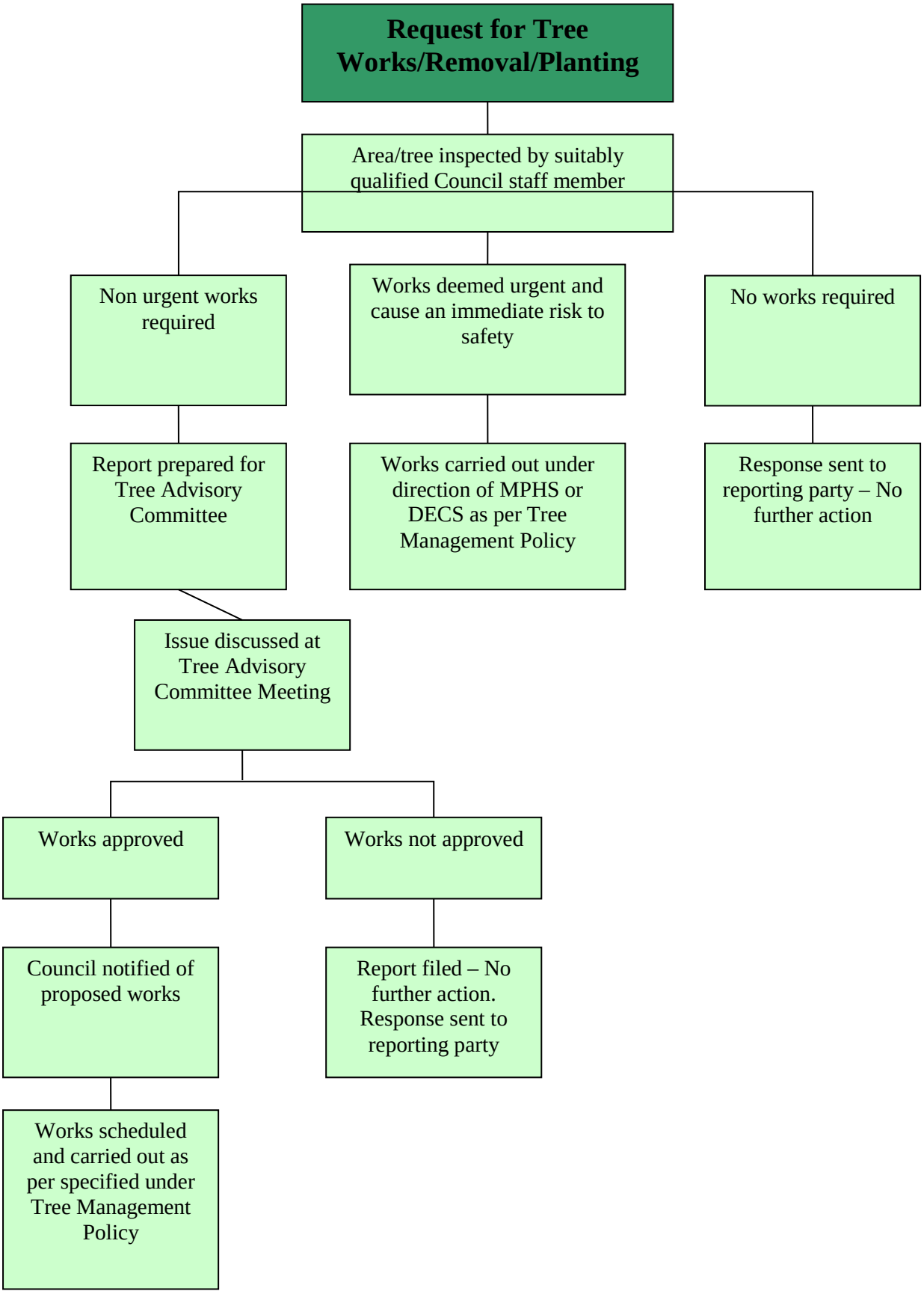
g) A clear space of between 3.6m and 5m is to be maintained above and along roadways for the safe passage of vehicles. This distance is determined by the type of road and the type of traffic that uses that road. E.g. a road that has large trucks and B Doubles will need 5 m clearance.

h) Vegetation and trees near roadways are to be maintained so as not to pose immediate or potential danger to life, property or road users.

i) Sight distances, signage, adequate drainage and waterway clearances must be kept clear of vegetation and remain clear at all times.

j) Where a tree on private land is causing a problem with sight, pedestrian or vehicular access, Council will remedy the problem where the encroachment is over Council land only. Any further works deemed necessary by Council to be carried out by the property owner will be subject to a letter of request from Council to the owner or an order in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1993.

ii) Tree Management Flow Chart



iii) Risk Control Strategies for Tree Roots

Council has recognised that the majorities of its tree plantings are not at the age or located in its main thoroughfares to pose a large risk to pedestrians. However at the risk of someone tripping on a Shire footpath, sealed or unsealed, as a result of an invasive tree root, still exists and will increase as the tree population matures.

For this reason the following tree management principles apply in addition to the tree pruning and servicing strategies set out under section 7 of the Tree Management Policy:

- Where roots are exposed through erosion on footpaths, where possible the area shall be top dressed with soil and where necessary seeded with grass seed, to ensure that no trip hazards are present.

- Where possible all new bike tracks are to be constructed from flexible bitumen surfaces to allow for some slight movement due to roots without causing a public safety risk. These flexible surfaces are also easy to reinstate after root pruning.

- Where tree roots are known to have effected surfaces such as fences or footpaths, non structural roots may be pruned by a qualified arborist, root retardant and or root barriers applied and the surface reinstated with the area adequately backfilled to ensure minimal impact upon the tree.

- Where possible all root zones should be kept free of traffic, especially vehicular traffic to reduce the risk of soil compaction that can have a detrimental effect upon tree health. Where compaction has occurred then careful aeration may be carried out by a suitably qualified person and the area immediately fenced off to allow for the tree to recover.

- Where a large population of established trees exists and there needs to be major work carried out to install ore repair services, directional drilling and under boring under the root zone shall be preferred over excavation to reduce damage to the trees root zones.

- A co-ordinated inspection program of root systems is in place between the Engineering and Parks and Horticultural sections of Council. Where possible this program is a proactive approach to hazard root identification. All Engineering and Parks staff are encouraged to report any hazardous roots they notice when doing routine works such as footpath inspections, tree pruning or watering, mowing, rubbish collection or kerb maintenance.

- Council has not set any minimal distances from underground services for new tree plantings. However, all new tree planting sites must follow the tree planting flow chart which requires all services to be located before planting. Suitable species are then chosen from the approved species list to be planted in areas where underground services exist.

Note: The above management strategies are designed to reduce the risks associated with street tree roots whilst preserving the health of the Shires tree population.

iv) Systematic Approach and Procedures for Tree Management

All procedures for the implementation and management of trees within the Leeton Shire are clearly set out in the Tree Management Policy, along with the above amendments, to ensure a safe and sustainable population of amenity trees within the Leeton Shire.

As mentioned there is not a large mature tree population within the Shire compared to some areas that were settled earlier than the Leeton area. There is however a large population of Sugar Gums which have reached maturity and are in a state of decline.

For this reason great effort has been made by Council to inspect all Sugar Gums and collect a variety of data, which is documented in the Tree Management Policy.

This information is then used to prioritise which Gums will be either removed or pruned each financial year to reduce the threat of public safety risks.

All other Council controlled trees within the Shire are inspected regularly by Parks staff with the appropriate action instigated as per the Tree Management Policy.

Council endorses the use of the following documents by the Manager of Parks and Horticultural Services to resource and utilize the following documents for the implementation and management of its tree population.

1. Current Statewide Best Practice Manual – Trees and Tree Roots.
2. Current Australian Standard for Pruning Amenity Trees.
3. Current NSW Code of Practice – Amenity Tree Industries.

(8) Trees Near Power Lines

Council must rely on guidance and assistance from Country Energy in relation to trees near power lines.

a) Council will not carry out any pruning works that require workers to enter the minimum clearance zone around all power lines and other infrastructure set out by Country Energy.

b) If branches or limbs are within exclusion zones, Country Energy or their nominated contractor will be contacted to carry out the necessary works.

c) When pruning works are carried out by Country Energy or their nominated contractor on Council trees, it will be the responsibility of Leeton Shire Council to clean up all removed branches and dispose of them at its own cost unless previously arranged.

d) In the event that Country Energy or its contractor must remove a Council tree, Council must be notified prior to the removal so a Council officer can inspect the tree and grant permission if appropriate.

(9) Tree Removal

Council acknowledges that the removal of trees can be an emotional issue within the community. It also acknowledges that trees are not permanent fixtures for all time.

Trees have a life cycle and there comes a time when trees decline to a stage where they must be removed, or when disease or damage means that tree replacement is the most responsible long term approach.

Before any Council owned tree is to be removed it must be inspected by the Manager Parks and Recreation Services or other delegated Council officer.

Assessment of condition is to be based on the trees

* Health
* Structure
* Form
* Life expectancy
* Safety
* Damage caused or potential for damage

Assessment of the trees suitability is to be based on

* Compatibility with the surrounding streetscape
* Potential to cause damage or nuisance
* Suitability of species to the growing space and conditions
* Response to pruning or other actions designed to preserve tree.

When a tree poses an immediate hazard which cannot be alleviated through any means other than removal of the tree, the decision to remove the tree will be made by the Parks and Recreation Services Manager. This decision will be final and supported by Council.

One exception to this rule will be if the particular tree is listed on the significant tree register, then the decision to remove it will be made by Council.

Requests to remove trees must be in writing and must contain reasons for seeking the removal. Trees will then be inspected and a decision made with the resident receiving a response in writing.

If it is felt that the tree is significant or the removal may cause controversy, the removal will be referred to the Tree Reference Group for consideration. A photo and short report will be completed on all trees that are removed and presented to the reference group, where possible this will be done prior to removal. If the removal is a

emergency then it shall be signed off by the Parks and Recreation Services Manager and where possible Director of Environmental and Community Services or the General Manager

Once a Council tree has been removed, the preferred method of stump removal shall be grinding with the area finished with loam or sand to ground level.

Stump grinding is preferred because of the minimal disruption that occurs to the Council verge and underground services.

At the completion of the tree removal the site will be inspected by a Council officer and declared safe. Once the site has been declared safe the site will then be considered for a replacement tree. If the site is suitable for a replacement tree it will then go onto the tree planting list to be planted when appropriate.

Where a Council tree needs to be removed for a new development to take place, Reference to the tree must be made in the Development Application. Such issues of change of access, appropriateness of tree to new development etc will be considered valid reasons for removal. The decision to remove the tree will be made during the application process and tree removal will be at the cost of the developer.

Council trees will not be removed by request without a valid reason for their removal. Valid reasons are outlined under the tree assessment suitability and condition criteria in Section 8, Tree Removal.

(10) Palm Trees

Leeton Shire Council has some historic Avenues of date Palms *(Phoenix canariensis)*. These plantings are of great significance to the Leeton Shire Council and should be well maintained and preserved.

a) All palms will be serviced every two years with all dead fronds removed. Crown lifting will take place to preserve sight and access clearances.

b) Self seeded palms will be removed either by herbicide application or mechanical means where appropriate.

c) Council will actively lobby Country Energy to relocate overhead power lines where they impact on the potential, growth and habit of these historic palms.

d) Replacement palms should be according to the original planting regime ie two species planted in sequence – Washington Palms and Date Palms only.

(11) Inspection of Trees

a) Council planted street and park trees will be inspected in accordance with Council's Risk Assessment and Tree Management Strategy.

(b) This Strategy will determine the frequency of inspections and prioritise any required tree works.

(12) Reporting of Tree Works

a) Any inquiry that is made either from staff or members of the public will be recorded on a Works Request Form.

b) This request will be inspected by a senior parks staff member and appropriate action recommended.

c) If required a response will be issued to the reporting customer.

(13) Prioritisation of Tree Works

a) Once a tree problem has been reported and inspected it will be categorised into one of two areas, urgent and non-urgent.

b) Any tree that poses an immediate safety risk shall be listed as urgent with works to commence within 3 working days. Any problems that may be detrimental to the long term health of the tree will also be listed as urgent.

c) If a tree is investigated and the problem does not pose an immediate safety risk or effect the health of the tree then it will be listed as non-urgent.

d) Non-urgent trees will be put onto a works list with the necessary action taken during normal routine tree works. These tree works usually occur between the months of April to August.

e) Determination of whether a tree is urgent or non-urgent will be made by a suitably qualified senior Parks and Horticultural Services staff member upon inspection.

(14) Conclusion Risk Assessment And Tree Management

Council will develop and maintain a Street Tree Risk Assessment matrix that will log, assess, rate and map every street tree in Leeton, Yanco, Whitton, Murrami and Wamoon to prioritise the Management Strategy for each tree.

Policy History:

Date of Adoption/Amendment	Resolution Number
25 June 2003	03/327
27 July 2005	05/392
26 June 2013	13/136
22 February 2017	17/018