

Ku-ring-gai Council

Policy

Urban Forest Policy

Version Number 2

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Urban Forest Policy

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Controlled Document Information

Authorisation Details

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Related Document Information, Standards & References

Related Legislation:	<p><i>Commonwealth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ecological Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> <p><i>New South Wales</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> <i>Electricity Supply (Safety and Network Management Regulation) 2014</i> <i>Electricity Supply Act 1995</i> <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> <i>Heritage Act 1977</i> <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> <i>Local Land Services Act 2013</i> <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i> <i>Rural Fires Act 1997</i> <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021</i> <i>Sydney Water Act 1994</i> <i>The Roads Act 1993</i> <i>Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Act 2006</i>
Related Policies (Council & Internal)	<p>New South Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Greener Places Policy</i>¹ <i>The Greater Sydney Region Plan – A Metropolis of Three Cities</i>²

¹ Government Architect NSW, 2020, *Greener Places (The Green Infrastructure Policy)*

² Greater Sydney Commission 2018, *The Greater Sydney Region Plan – A Metropolis of Three Cities*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The North District Plan³</i> <p>Ku-ring-gai</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Asset Management Policy</i> <i>Biodiversity Policy</i> <i>Bushfire Management Policy</i> <i>Climate Change Policy</i> <i>Drainage works and Maintenance Policy and Procedures</i> <i>Fauna Management Policy</i> <i>Green Grid Strategy (pending)</i> <i>Ku-ring-gai Development Control Plan</i> <i>Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan (2015)</i> <i>Ku-ring-gai Local Strategic Planning Statement</i> <i>Ku-ring-gai Play Space Strategy</i> <i>Ku-ring-gai Urban Forest Strategy</i> <i>Local Approvals Policy</i> <i>Open Space Acquisition Strategy</i> <i>Private Use of Road Reserves and Nature Strips Policy</i> <i>Tree Works Notification Policy</i> <i>Water Sensitive City Policy</i> <i>Water Sensitive City Strategy</i> <i>Weed Management Policy</i>
Related Documents - Procedures, Guidelines, Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Tree Assessment Guidelines to Prune or Remove Trees on Private and Council Managed Land</i> <i>Ku-ring-gai Council Drainage Asset Management Plan (2014)</i> <i>Unsafe Plants in Non-Rural Areas Code of Practice 2024, Department of Climate Change Energy Environment & Water</i>
Other References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Australian Standard AS 4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees (Reconfirmed 2020)</i> <i>Australian Standard AS 4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites (Reconfirmed 2020)</i> <i>Australian Standard AS 2303 Tree Stock for Landscape use</i> <i>Safe Work NSW Guide to Managing the Risks of Tree Work 2023</i> <i>WorkCover Code of Practice for Amenity Trees 1998</i> <i>NSW Rural Fire Service 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice 2015</i> <i>Ku-ring-gai Community Strategic Plan 2032</i>

Version History

Version Number	Version Start Date	Version End Date	Author	Details and Comments
1	19 February 2020	19 March 2024	Greg Narker Penny Hemsworth	First version
2	16 April 2025	April 2029	Fleur Rees	Revision one

³ Greater Sydney Commission 2018, *The North District Plan*

Policy Statement

Ku-ring-gai, with its high rainfall, ridgelines capped with rich shale soils and steeply incised sandstone valleys, has evolved a special tall forest character, which is one of the defining and valued characteristics of the area.

Ku-ring-gai's Urban Forest has been modified over the years which has left extensive bushland within gullies, leading to scattered remnant vegetation and bushland along ridgelines, including a significant number of threatened species and ecological communities.

The diversity, heritage, visual and cultural landscape character of Ku-ring-gai has been further defined through the planting of exotic and non-endemic native species within the Urban Forest.

Council is committed to protecting and enhancing this character and identity through sustainable management of its Urban Forest. This includes:

- Integration of green landscaping elements within built infrastructure
- Conservation of our magnificent environment for future generations
- Balancing benefits from the protection, health, and growth of the urban forest against associated risks

Policy

Purpose

The following guiding principles establish a high-level framework for the management of Ku-ring-gai's Urban Forest:

1. That Ku-ring-gai's Urban Forest is a valuable resource with significant economic, environmental, and social benefits.
2. That our Urban Forest is intrinsically linked to Ku-ring-gai's cultural integrity and character and its protection and management is essential to the look, feel and liveability of Ku-ring-gai.
3. That the use of large canopy trees where planting opportunities exist, is essential for maintaining Ku-ring-gai's unique visual character.
4. That the Urban Forest is a component of Green Infrastructure, requiring appropriate planning and financial resources.
5. That a resilient Urban Forest plays a critical role in ecosystem health and urban ecology and can help to mitigate human activities and adapt to climate change.
6. That Urban Forest planning and management provides for the protection and enhancement of remnant vegetation, bushland, and biodiversity (including Threatened Species, Threatened Ecological Communities).
7. That our Urban Forest sustains biodiversity, providing habitat and food source for native wildlife.
8. That the composition, structure, distribution, and condition of our Urban Forest plays a critical role in supporting local and transient wildlife.
9. That the Urban Forest should be managed as a continuous resource regardless of ownership boundaries.
10. That a part of the Urban Forest is made up of garden vegetation containing hedges and garden beds providing residents with hobbies, privacy, food, and aesthetic amenities, and as such will experience changes over time.
11. That urban forest management and protection be informed through the use of relevant legislation, policies, strategies standards, codes and approved guidelines.

12. That Urban Forest planning and management recognises the presence and importance of native and remnant vegetation, including Threatened Ecological Communities.
13. That development within Ku-ring-gai is designed to protect and enhance the economic, environmental, and social benefits of the Urban Forest.
14. That protection and management of the Urban Forest be supported and enhanced through the use of alternative engineering approaches that accommodate trees and other vegetation and provide for their long-term viability.
15. That risk to life, property, infrastructure, and the environment be managed through best practice tree assessment, maintenance, and planting in accordance with Council's adopted Risk Management System.
16. That structural diversity of the Urban Forest be maintained and protected through the maximisation of space for planting (including deep soil) and improvement in the quality of the growing environment (including soil health and structure).
17. That the health and condition of the Urban Forest be optimised by increasing species diversity and establishing a diverse age distribution of trees.
18. That sustainable Urban Forest targets/Indicators (including canopy coverage targets) be established and recognised as a provisional basis for monitoring the quality, and quantity and effectiveness of any special functions of Ku-ring-gai's Urban Forest.
19. That monitoring and management of the Urban Forest be undertaken through a planned, systematic, and integrated approach.
20. That partnerships, advocacy and community engagement are integral to effective Urban Forest management.

Scope

Council's Urban Forest Strategy, Urban Forest Replenishment Program and Urban Forest Monitoring Program will support this Policy and will provide the framework and resources for the management of the Urban Forest.

Responsibilities

This Policy applies to all sections of Council.

Council's Manager Urban Heritage and Planning has overall responsibility for compliance with this Policy. Implementation of this Policy is the responsibility of the General Manager and all Directors, Managers, Supervisors and Council Staff.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Age distribution	The varying life spans and growth rates within a tree population.
Canopy Coverage	An indicator of the quantity of urban forest often used as a measure of an urban forests general capacity to provide economic, social, environmental and aesthetic benefits
Ecosystem services	Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as regulation of floods, drought, land degradation, and disease; supporting services such as soil formation and nutrient cycling; and cultural services such as recreational, spiritual, religious and other nonmaterial benefits ⁴ .
Green Infrastructure	The network of parks, reserves, gardens, nature strips and water systems (creeks, dams, water retention and stormwater management systems) that deliver environmental, economic, and social values and benefits to urban communities. Including both natural and built elements such as green roofs (landscaped roof top gardens) and green walls (vertical gardens).
Other vegetation	Includes but not limited to shrubs, ferns, grass, vines, palms, tree ferns, epiphyte, cycads, and xanthorrhoea.
Structural diversity	The various vegetation layers of the urban forest including groundcovers, shrubs, and trees.
Threatened (in reference to species or ecological communities)	Threatened species or threatened ecological communities are those threatened with extinction or destruction. In the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species the term 'threatened' encompasses, from most to least likely to become extinct: critically endangered; endangered; and vulnerable. This terminology is widely used in Australia, including in legislation relating to biodiversity conservation and protection.
Urban Forest	All the trees, other vegetation as well as the soil, seedbank and water that support these. It includes the network of vegetation within both public and private ownership, encompassing the spectrum of vegetation growing within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural soils that exist independent of human involvement • Altered soils, including gardens, bio-retention basins, raingardens. • Engineered structures such as tree cells / vaults, vertical and roof top gardens

⁴ *Ecosystems and human well-being: a framework for assessment / Millennium Ecosystem Assessment ; authors, Joseph Alcamo [et al.] ; contributing authors, Elena M. Bennett [et al.], 2003. Available online: http://pdf.wri.org/ecosystems_human_wellbeing.pdf (Downloaded: 21/08/2019)*

Term	Definition
Urban Forest Management/ Urban forestry ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The management and minimisation of threats to the forest.- The science and art of managing trees, forests and natural ecosystems in and around urban communities to maximise the physiological, sociological, environmental, economic and aesthetic benefits that trees provide society.
Urban Heat Island	An area that is significantly warmer than surrounding rural areas due to human activities.

⁵ Derived from; Schwab, James C (Ed.), 2009. *Planning the Urban Forest: Ecology, Economy and Community Development* American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report No. 555