

MAINTENANCE OF NATURE STRIPS IN URBAN AREAS POLICY



Responsible Department: Development and Economic Growth
Responsible Section: Community Facilities
Responsible Officer: Community Facilities Manager

Objective

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

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

Nature Strip

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

Acceptable Condition of Nature Strips

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

Introduction

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

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

Policy

1. Council's Responsibility Regarding Nature Strips

Council will maintain nature strips adjoining or within:

- Public reserve areas such as, bushland, parks or gardens;
- Council facilities such as public buildings, recreation grounds or swimming pools;
- Central Business Districts; and,
- Horse paddocks (or similar) where the owner does not regularly mow their land

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

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

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

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

3. Street Trees

Street trees are managed in accordance with Councils Policy on **Public Space Tree Policy**.

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

4. Landscaping Nature Strips

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

Landscape developments may include the following features (provided they remain less than 500mm above the road edge and do not provide a public hazard): garden beds, rockeries, retaining walls, paving, shrubs, ground cover plants, bark or similar materials.

When assessing requests to landscape the nature strip Council will consider:

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

5. Prohibited Activities

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

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

6. Areas of neglect, where nature strips create an eyesore or safety hazard.

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

References

- *Local Government Act (NSW) 1993.*
- *Roads Act, 1993.*

History

MINUTE NUMBER	MEETING DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
435/2007	3 July 2007	Adopted
26/2012	21 February 2012	Reviewed
210/2013	2 April 2013	Reviewed
164/2017	15 August 2017	Reviewed