



Tree Vandalism Policy



Prepared by Parks and Waterways Branch
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Document review and approval

This document has been approved by

	Name	Minute No	Date approved
1	<i>Environment Health & Regulation Committee – EHR021-13</i>		<i>10 December, 2012</i>
2			

Revision history

Version	Author	Date	Revision
1	<i>Natural Area Manager</i>	<i>26 November, 2012</i>	<i>Original Version</i>
2	<i>Manager Environmental & Building Compliance</i>	<i>17 March, 2014</i>	<i>Reviewed, no changes necessary</i>

TREE VANDALISM POLICY

1. Background

This policy has been developed in response to an increase in the incidents of tree vandalism in public reserves.

Trees are regularly cut down, poisoned, lopped and otherwise vandalised on public land and reserves in the Sutherland Shire. Trees are damaged for various reasons. Motives for removing or damaging trees include; increasing views; maximising property values and removing a range of perceived potential hazards.

Vandalism of trees on public land is a serious criminal offence. Trees are protected by provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, Sutherland Shire Local Environment Plan 2006 and the Local Government Act 1998. It is also an offence under the Pesticides Act 1999 to use herbicides in a malicious manner to damage property of another person.

This policy provides a framework for council responses to tree vandalism that are consistent with council's Urban Tree and Bushland Policy.

2. Purpose

- Outline the actions that council may take in response to tree vandalism on public land.
- Provide council staff with guidelines for a consistent and appropriate response to acts of tree vandalism.

3. Objectives

- Protect the Sutherland Shire tree canopy.
- Minimise the instances of tree vandalism.
- Promote public awareness of the value of trees.
- Encourage the public to provide council with information regarding acts of tree vandalism.
- Deter potential acts of tree vandalism.
- Facilitate legal action against acts of tree vandalism.

4. Application

This policy applies to any trees vandalised on land owned or managed by Sutherland Shire Council.

5. Definition

Tree vandalism is the unlawful destruction, damage or injury to trees through methods including, but not limited to poisoning, pruning, cutting, ringbarking or removal.

6. Provisions

Council will implement the appropriate actions listed below according to the severity of the vandalism.

6.1. Low impact incidents

Examples may include unauthorised pruning of small trees or the repeated removal of recently planted street trees or landscaping.

- Post letters to surrounding properties notifying residents of the vandalism and requesting information.
- Install a small temporary sign (A1 size) at the site pointing out the damage and requesting information from the public. Signs are to remain until replacement trees have been installed or public amenity and environmental conditions have been restored to council's satisfaction.
- Rehabilitate the site or re-plant trees.

6.2. Medium impact incidents

Examples may include illegal pruning of tree limbs or clearing or poisoning of understorey vegetation.

- Post letters to surrounding properties notifying residents of the vandalism and requesting information.
- Investigate and interview relevant persons.
- Install temporary signs (A1 size) at the site pointing out the damage and requesting information from the public. Signs are to remain until damaged trees have regrown or public amenity and environmental conditions have been restored to council's satisfaction.
- Rehabilitate the site or re-plant trees at a ratio of up to five replacement trees for every tree damaged.
- Issue infringement notices where appropriate.

6.3. High impact incidents

Examples may include poisoning, ringbarking or removal of mature trees or damage to large areas of native vegetation. The vandalism has a significant visual impact to other residents and the public.

- Post letters to surrounding properties notifying residents of the vandalism and requesting information.
- Investigate and interview relevant persons.
- Place a notice regarding the vandalism in the local media.
- Erect a large sign (1.8m x 1.2m) on the ground and/ or install large banners (5m x1m) in the tree canopy. Signs or banners are to remain until replacement trees have reached the height of the tree/s removed or public amenity and environmental conditions have been restored to council's satisfaction.
- Where large trees have died from poisoning brand limbs or the trunk with yellow painted stencil: "Poisoned".
- Retain dead trees once safety concerns are satisfied by council.
- Re-plant replacement trees at a ratio of up to five replacement trees for every tree damaged.
- Offer an appropriate reward for information leading to a prosecution in accordance with council's Vandalism Reward Scheme.
- Consider legal proceedings if sufficient evidence exists.

7. Signage text

The following text may be used on signs erected at tree vandalism sites.

VANDALISM TO TREES

Trees in this area have deliberately been damaged.

Trees are important community assets.

Council will plant five replacement trees for every tree damaged.

Fines up to \$1.1 million may apply.

If you have information regarding these trees contact Council on 9710 0333.