

Survey Report

23 August 2019 - 21 September 2019

Feedback Form - Draft Tree Management Policy

PROJECT: Tree Management Policy

Your Voice Snowy Valleys



Feedback Form - Draft Tree Management Policy : Survey Report for 23 August 2019 to 21 September 2019

Q1 - What is your feedback?

9/15/2019 10:22 PM

I am very pleased that Council is formalising a tree management policy. However I am not happy about point 4.2 vii where Council is not obliged to treat pests and disease within land under Council control. To me the management of pests and diseases is a vital part of caring for significant trees - and the safety of the public & property. If this point is not amended I think the policy is of little value.



9/19/2019 04:31 PM

The new Draft Policy persists with the time-honoured approach of TSC to deny the community and apparently councillors as well as Council itself, any costing information that should in the normal professional course be available and essential for financial management in the wider community interest. Please refer to uploaded pre-prepared documents:

(2 responses, 0 skipped)

Feedback Form - Draft Tree Management Policy : Survey Report for 23 August 2019 to 21 September 2019

Q2 You can also choose to upload a pre-prepared submission document here (optional)



[View](#) [Download](#)

9/19/2019 04:31 PM

Optional question (1 responses, 1 skipped)

FOR WEBSITE: The new Draft Policy persists with the time-honoured approach of TSC to deny the community and apparently councillors as well as Council itself, any costing information that should in the normal professional course be available and essential for financial management in the wider community interest.

Please refer to uploaded pre-prepared documents:

(DRAFT) TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

SVC-ENG-PO-065-01

Comments:

It is unfortunate to find significant resemblance to the notorious tree management policy of Tumut Shire Council, (TSC), a policy under which practice has been to provide total domination by Introduced Deciduous Trees, (IDT's), most especially in Tumut, but also in surrounding towns. Such practice has persisted no matter what the cost, and without regard to detrimental consequences and costs now and into the future. Recording and allocation of costs of and due to IDT's has been avoided notwithstanding financial management obligations. Even the obvious and readily observed costs incurred in the clean-up of fallen 'Autumn leaves' has been allocated so as to hide it amongst costs of other activities.

The continuing determination to have the town of Tumut appear to be on the other side of the World is unsustainable in every sense. Is Tumut prepared to be recognisably Australian? - Not with the unsightly thickets and avenues of IDT's announcing approach to and arrival in, Tumut. A tree policy recognising the diversity and value of Australian Flora is required for a sustainable future. And key to it all is recording and properly allocating costs of **and due to** all trees, to enable competent financial management of tree assets.

Addressing elements of the Draft Tree Management Policy:

- 1 **COST:** Conspicuous by its absolute absence is the word "*cost*", or any of its derivatives, alternatives, or any other words of similar meaning;
 - 1.1 The only hint of any consideration of matters financial, is the reference: "*within budgeted resources*", which in terms of persistent practice by TSC means a continuation of neglect of recording and allocating costs in any fashion allowing costs of and due to trees being recognised and differentiated from a range of other costs borne by Council;
 - 1.2 TSC further pursued a practice whereby costs of and due to trees would not be identifiable from costs of lawns, gardens, park furniture, infrastructure including paths, roads, drains, etc. Best available knowledge is that TSC bundled costs of and due to particular trees it held significant, with costs of road repairs and maintenance. Such practice is to be deplored, and be recognised as an abrogation of responsibility to the community, and neglect of Council's obligations in law as to financial management. The practices of TSC obscured and secreted costs of which all should be aware, including the community, councillors, and Council itself;

2 DEFINITIONS:

2.1 What is a tree?

2.2 In SE Australia there are two very distinctly different types of tree. TSC in its 'Tree Policy' identified those two types as:

2.2.1 "deciduous species", and "indigenous species". No further definition was provided, although 'deciduous species' are readily recognised as those sourced from 'the other side of the World', and most readily identified by the absence of foliage during Winter; in the Australian context appearing to not be alive. As to 'indigenous species'; the intent is not clear, but one would reasonably expect such species to be indigenous to the relevant local geographical area.

2.2.2 TSC went on to provide a "**Preferred street tree species list**", which while little to no help in defining the above terms, divided the same into "**Exotic**", and "**Native**". Species in each sub-list was identified as "Deciduous", or "Evergreen". The 'Native' list included only one species identified as 'Deciduous', but also included two other species identified as 'Evergreen', which Councillors will recognise to be erroneously so described, they being 'Liquidamber' species, which 'everybody knows', are not only 'Deciduous', but also 'from the other side of the World'. The identified deciduous 'Native' species was a Tasmanian species correctly stated to grow to only 2 metres. Simple inquiry revealed this species to have a common name of "Tanglefoot", in obvious recognition of its growth habit. - Why was this species included in a 'preferred street tree' list for/by TSC? A less suitable species would be difficult to find.

2.2.3 It is recommended that legacy reports, procedures, etc, from TSC be carefully scrutinised for their suitability for ongoing management and advice in respect of trees of any species. The need for significant correction is only too obvious. Council is obliged to provide a professional standard of management for all public trees, especially those considered or known to be 'man-made' in the Shire. Properly recording and allocating costs of and due to all trees, whether they be individuals, a member of a grove, or one of an avenue, is a fundamental first step to Council's financial management obligations.

3 **ADVICE & RESPONSES:** - Over a period of some years, TSC received through consulting engagements, contract performance and experienced community input, advice, or requests in which advice was implicit, as to tree related practices. Without exception, such advice was variously deflected, deferred, delayed, misinterpreted, glossed-over, and/or ultimately ignored. A few of many examples follow. SVC has confirmed it regards trees as assets, they being part of the responsibilities of Council's Assets Department:

3.1.1 Elm Tree Management Plan - 11 May 2011 - Treelogic – Melbourne, VIC

" 4.2 Legislative considerations

"The following excerpt is provided from Asset Management Planning for NSW LG Position Paper, NSW Department of Local Government 2006. While the introductory statement does not include trees, it must be asserted that trees are a fundamental consideration for asset management planning under the *Local Government Act 1993*. *'Infrastructure assets include roads, water and sewerage assets, drains, bridges, footpaths and public buildings. A strong and sustainable local government system*

requires a robust planning process to ensure that those assets are maintained and renewed in the most appropriate way on behalf of local communities. As custodian, local government is responsible to effectively account for and manage these assets and to have regard to the long-term and cumulative effects of its decisions. This is a core function of councils and is reflected in the Charter, in section 8 of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).

The previous statement highlights the importance of developing a long term urban forest plan that addresses the technical challenges of managing such a dynamic resource; complicated by the variable needs of society and other forms of urban infrastructure.

"4.2.1 Local Environment Plan (LEP)

"The Local Environment Plan provides some general aims that relate to trees, such as: (a) to encourage the proper management, development and conservation of natural and man-made resources within the Shire of Tumut by protecting, enhancing or conserving:

- i prime crop and pasture land,
- ii timber, minerals, soil, water and other natural resources,
- iii areas of high scenic, recreational or nature conservation value, and
- iv places and buildings of archaeological or heritage significance, including Aboriginal relics and places,

The significant elms of Tumut, Adelong, Batlow and Talbingo may reside within two of the man-made resources categories indicated above. Strategic and routine tree management needs to be considerate of the statutory instruments that relate to tree care."

"9. Implementation Cost Estimates

"... The main challenge with providing estimates of additional costs for the management plan is that the estimates assume that routine tree management is currently being undertaken. Therefore, if routine management is not being provided, the implementation costs will be grossly underestimated.

The tree survey conducted in 2011 suggests that a rigorous tree maintenance program has not been performed over recent years and given the quantity of work estimated from the survey, it could be suggested that even a rudimentary tree maintenance program is not being provided. ..."

The reference by Treelogic to TSC's Elms being "man-made", is probably in recognition of such introduced deciduous trees, (IDT's), being brought to Australia by our species. In the case of Tumut's Elms, Lombardy Poplars, and London Plane Trees, it could also recognise that such trees do not exist in nature anywhere in the World, but for development or interference by man. While many other IDT's have been modified by man, Tumut's favoured three would not exist but for their being man-made, some of the consequences of which include the Elms having female sterile hermaphroditic flowers, and all Lombardy Poplars being male, no females at all! Each Elm and Poplar is a clone of every other member of its species.

- 3.2 Treelogic was again consulted in 2015, providing an update of the 2011 report on 21 October 2015. The same advice was provided, as there continued to be no tree management program, and no costing and appropriate allocation of costs, borne by TSC, on which Treelogic might rely for the purpose of providing more informed estimates. The only indication of things financial continued to be ever-increasing amounts hidden with other things in budgets, with no recognition of tree work performed. Surely this is a failure of basic practice in management. In my engineering and management experience, such obligations were more competently addressed in government administration as long ago as the 1960's. What has happened in Tumut?

- 3.3 In addition, advice also provided by Treelogic to TSC, on both occasions, was:
 ... elms have been known to shed large limbs without warning and often without clear signs of defect. All tree species have the potential to shed limbs; but elm trees seem to have a higher incidence than many other species when they reach old age. Consequently, management of ageing elms needs to consider the removal or exclusion of potential targets from their vicinity, ...

Recently in Melbourne, an Elm just like Tumut's Elms, fell over killing a passer-by. TSC had experience of Elms behaving in similar unsafe fashion, an Elm fell over on the Snowy Mountains Highway, (Fitzroy St near the Ambulance Station), and there have been notable incidents in Council's Caravan Park and elsewhere. It is not apparent that any preventive measures to exclude potential targets, have been adopted, notwithstanding the generally poor condition of Tumut's Elms.

- 3.4 Practice by TSC persisted in the face of good advice, to purchase, plant, establish, maintain, variously at greater than otherwise necessary cost, to populate towns and approaches with man-made Introduced Deciduous Trees, (IDT's); all the time ignoring detrimental consequences in so many significant respects. And all this under a Policy very similar to that now proposed. At no time has there been any semblance of a cost - benefit analysis, any recognition of detrimental community health effects, instead it has even been falsely stated that these tree species alien to Australia, have no negative environmental impacts; a blatantly false statement. Such species, in addition to detrimentally impacting community health, also detrimentally impact Australian land, Australian waters, and our Australian air.
- 3.5 A further example of TSC practice apparently permitted or encouraged by a Policy similar to that now proposed, is the purchase, (at around the time of Amalgamation), planting, and very expensive maintenance, of about 100 man-made trees derived from a North American Maple, the species which gave Canada its Red Maple Leaf emblem. The trees were planted in Talbingo, in an area indicated in the 'Open Space Strategy' to be an open eucalyptus woodland. These alien trees were planted as an avenue on a pathway. As the trees grow and mature, they in their deciduous way will dump Autumn Leaves on the path, which in the absence of frequent clean-up will create unsafe conditions for walkers, joggers, cyclists, etc. It should be obvious that there was no cost - benefit analysis, or any real thought for the Tumut-based decision; should there have been, this particular species and type of tree would not have been directed to be purchased and planted. - And the longer-term complaint will be that too much is being spent in maintaining Talbingo's Open Space; the same complaint that years ago prompted the development funded by a Council grant, to develop an Open Space Strategy to reduce those very costs.

In respect of this Tumut-directed performance in Talbingo, the following submission was forwarded to SVC on 14 November 2018:

Inappropriate Trees in Talbingo

I have become aware of the species of many Tens of trees planted during the past year, (and regularly subject to expensive maintenance), in and near Miles Franklin Park, and possibly elsewhere.

That aside, and in a 'nutshell', as time to do more at present is not available. The tree species is Acer Rubrum, (an Introduced Deciduous Tree, 'IDT', of course, as was always the case for TSC, whether contrary to its own Policy or not).

The cultivar is indicated to be "Autumn Red", but it may also be called 'October Glory' (in the Northern Hemisphere), which is claimed to be all female, hence no pollen. However Wikipedia informs: "the tree can sometimes switch from male to female, male to hermaphroditic, and hermaphroditic to female." - Why should we trust a 'man-made' cultivar? The risk is too great: see below. Of course the trees so beloved by Tumut notwithstanding their detrimental impacts are also 'man-made': the Lombardy Poplar; the Atinian Elm (called 'English' by Tumut), and the London Plane Tree. Three 'man-made' species we would definitely be better without!

Further reference to Wikipedia as to Acer Rubrum informs:

- 1. The species is highly invasive, with a preference to disturbed areas free of indigenous species, as exists beside Jounama Pond, (and it loves water); in North America, its "home", many consider it a pest. Enhancing its invasive ability are its winged seeds;*
- 2. Many cultivars of the species are stated to be "highly allergenic";*
- 3. Horse-lovers will appreciate(?), that the leaves, alive or fallen, of the species are "extremely toxic to horses"; whether similarly toxic to Talbingo's Kangaroos or any other Australian wildlife, is unlikely to have been tested in North America.*
- 4. "its low root system can be invasive and it makes a poor choice for plantings near paving."*

We already have a number of invasive 'IDT's'; most of which invade very successfully by way of root suckers, and at least one of which invades by seeding, having succeeded in seeding all over town, and also across Jounama Pond into the Native Forest.

Increasing the detrimental impacts of this species, an avenue of them follows each side of a concrete path, such that in Autumn, the fallen leaves from time to time will create slip hazards for walkers and cyclists, as well as a demand for otherwise unnecessary maintenance.

- And it should never be forgotten: the fallen leaves of deciduous trees are poison to our waterways and their aquatic creatures.

When there are so many native species to grace our roadsides and parks, why do we persist in planting introduced deciduous trees, no matter what the cost to our land, our waters, our air, and our community far into the future?

It is submitted that Standards/Policies pursued by TSC in this respect, should be curtailed and reversed, in the interests of a sustainable future.

I would be pleased to discuss this and related issues, including assembling volunteers to reduce costs, at your convenience.

4 CONCLUSION:

To adopt a policy similar to that of TSC, can reasonably be expected to continue the practices of TSC, which has seen planting of IDT's 'everywhere', without regard to costs or detrimental consequences. Further such practice includes the absence of recording or allocating costs so as to enable recognition of the costs of trees, any particular types or species of trees, any particular group, grove, avenue, of trees, or any particular tree.

Existing practice, in summary and generally, is that all trees are to be IDT's, no matter what the cost, so long as those costs are not identifiable by Council and the Community.

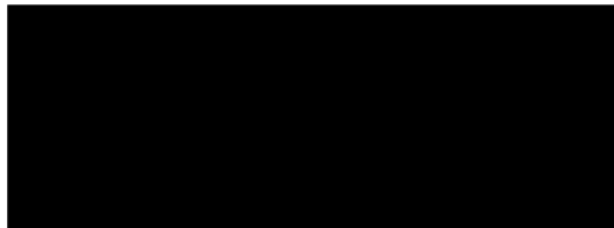
SVC must do better than this. In respect of tree assets and their consequences, let there be no further:

Absence of a professional standard of costing;

Lack of accountability;

Hidden costs to community;

False and misleading allocation of costs.



17 September 2019



Subject: Tree Policy



Can you raise this with the update of the tree policy meeting please?

My main concerns are with the current tree policy we are not looking at routine maintenance, instead we are taking a reactive approach, thus intern I feel leads to poorer tree health which then increases the amount of removals and considerable cost to the council.

Trees need to be regularly pruned and shaped mulched and fertilised right from a young age up to maturity, then the level of maintenance should reduce considerably because of the correct maintenance practices have been in place during the establishment phase.

Trees should be categorised into variety, age and health and maintained according to risk to the public.

Elm Drives ICONIC Elm trees are not getting much recognition from council, I think these specimens are a huge part of our region and think they certainly have a part to play in tourism in Tumut and surrounds. Nothing has been done over the last few years to revive these trees. I am aware that they are aging and some trees pose risks but these risks could also be dramatically reduced if we undertook a ROUTINE MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE as mentioned above.

I think we rapidly need to adapt an elm beetle treatment program ASAP. We need to engage the police to stop the 4X4 activity and vandalism on the racecourse surrounds that is compacting and damaging roots around these trees. (not to mention the damaged caused to grass, litter and general tidiness of the town)

I recently read a document from Melbourne city council, they actually label there iconic trees as an asset and some of them are valued up to \$400 000 per specimen. I'd love to know the true value of Tumut's Elm Trees I also think council should find out asap before we lose them.

I must say I was a proud Tumutarian when I saw the ICONIC Elm Trees photographed on the front page NRMA Open Road Magazine.

Thanks for your time

