

Kadaltilla

Adelaide Park Lands Authority

Purpose

Build a shared understanding of the Tree Management Policy, clarify Council's risk responsibilities and support informed, consistent decision-making that protects and grows Adelaide's urban forest.

City Operations
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Key Messages

A clear, contemporary framework for managing Adelaide's urban forest

The policy provides a single, overarching framework for how Council manages trees across the city, aligned with the strategic objective of increasing canopy cover and improving tree outcomes.

A shift from managing individual trees to managing the tree population as a long-term asset

It reinforces a whole-of-life approach, balancing tree health, safety, biodiversity, amenity, climate resilience and the need to retain and increase canopy over time.

Better consistency and transparency in decision-making

The policy establishes clear principles and expectations for tree management, providing a consistent basis for decisions about planting, maintenance, protection, removal and replacement across Council.



Key Questions

KEY QUESTIONS

Does the proposed policy provide an appropriate strategic framework for managing trees across the Adelaide Park Lands?

KEY QUESTIONS

Do the proposed principles appropriately reflect the environmental, cultural, social and recreational values of the Park Lands?

KEY QUESTIONS

Are there any areas where Kadaltilla considers greater clarity, guidance or governance is required?

Implications

Implication	Comment
Adelaide Park Lands Management Strategy – Towards 2036	<u>Adelaide Park Lands Management Strategy - Towards 2036</u> The Tree Management Policy supports the Natural Systems, Cultural Landscapes & Climate Resilience goal by protecting, managing, and expanding the urban tree canopy.
2023 –2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Plan Alignment – Environmental Performance Objectives 2.2 Promote ecologically sustainable initiatives and monitor tree canopy cover, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability and design quality 2.3 Consider climate resilience in everything we do Initiatives 2.2 Regularly review tree canopy cover, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability in the Park Lands Measures of Success 2.2 Ecologically sustainable initiatives promoted, and tree canopy cover, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability and design quality have been regularly reviewed

Trees and Local Government in Australia

- Most Councils now view trees not as individual assets, but as a collective asset known as the Urban Forest.
- Councils are responsible for the planting, maintenance, and removal of trees on council land.
- Councils are highly focused on risk due to public liability and associated risk.
- In South Australia, tree indemnity for local government is not an automatic, blanket exemption from liability.
- Most Councils, including City of Adelaide, align their Tree Management Policies and Procedures with relevant Legislation and Australian Standards to manage risk.
- Strategy is where they differ, with canopy targets ranging from 25% to 40% and additional measures related to Biodiversity and Water Management are often integrated with tree planting programs.



History

- The current Tree Management Framework was last updated in November 2019
- The Framework is a mixture of Policy, Guideline and a Risk Assessment Tool.
- Under advice and direction from our Strategy, Planning & Engagement team, the document has been separated into three stand-alone documents.



Journey and Current Position

- We have consistently operated at required levels, with resourcing appropriately balanced between permanent employees and contractors in line with industry best practice.
- Like many organisations, we have experienced an industry-wide shortage of qualified applicants and contractors. While this created challenges, it did not reflect a lack of planning or resourcing.
- Our operational practices already align with, and in many respects exceed, the principles of the draft policy. We have proactively implemented these practices ahead of formal policy adoption.



Future Opportunities

- Implementing smart sensors to monitor soil moisture, irrigation needs and tree environments
- Applying artificial intelligence to predict tree decline, pest outbreaks and maintenance requirements
- Partnering with Education and Science based institutions to monitor trees and develop innovation
- Improving inspection methodologies through technology and data analytics
- Develop models to understand whole-of-life costs to support long-term investment decisions
- Engaging communities in tree planting, stewardship and citizen science programs.
- Addressing industry-wide shortages of qualified arborists by expanding training pathways and traineeships.



Strategy



Strategic Links

- **Livability & wellbeing**

Urban trees provide shade, cooling, and improved air quality, supporting healthier, more comfortable public spaces.

- **Environmental sustainability**

Increases canopy cover, supports biodiversity, and contributes to climate resilience targets (heat mitigation, carbon capture, water management).

- **Asset stewardship**

Trees are managed as long-term living assets, balancing risk, cost, and benefit across their lifecycle.

- **Community value & place-making**

Enhances streetscapes and parks, contributing to identity, amenity, and community pride.

- **Risk and safety management**

Applies a structured, evidence-based approach to tree risk, aligning with organisational duty of care and safety objectives.



Strategic Overview

We have developed an approach to tree management which is built like a simple hierarchy.

- Draft Tree Management Policy (Why we do it) - [Link 1](#)
- Tree Operating Guideline (How we do it) - [Link 2](#)
- Tree Risk Assessment Protocol (How we assess risk and prioritise action) - [Link 3](#)

Each document has a distinct role, but they are designed to work together as one system.



Tree Management Policy

- This is the **strategic** document.

It explains:

- Why trees matter (economic, environmental, social benefits)
- The challenges (events, climate change, development, pests)
- The long-term goals (e.g. increasing canopy cover, resilience)



Tree Management Policy

Key message:

- This document defines what success looks like for our urban forest
- It balances benefits vs risk and sets the City's overall position.

In simple terms:

“This is our vision and commitment for our urban forest”

Tree Operating Guideline

Turning strategy into action

This is the operational part.

It sets out:

- How trees are planted, pruned, maintained, and removed
- How decisions are made about development impacts
- How community requests are handled and the associated timeframes
- Guidelines staff must follow



Tree Operating Guideline

Key message:

Ensures consistency and defensibility in day-to-day decisions.

It translates policy into practical actions on the ground.

In simple terms:

“This is how our teams manage trees every day”

Tree Risk Assessment Protocol

International Society of Arboriculture's (ISA) Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) methodology

This is the risk decision framework that explains:

- How tree risk is assessed using an industry-based method (TRAQ)
- How risk is defined (likelihood × consequence)
- How trees are prioritised based on location and usage (high vs low activity areas)
- What actions are required for different risk levels

It also reinforces key principles:

- Tree risk **cannot be eliminated**
- Overall risk is **low**
- Risk is managed to a **reasonable and acceptable level**



Tree Risk Assessment Protocol

Key message:

**This provides a defensible, evidence-based method for risk decisions
It supports prioritisation of available resources**

In simple terms:

“This is how we decide what is risky and what to do about it”

How They Work Together

1. Policy → Sets direction and priorities
2. Operating Guideline → Defines how work is done
3. Assessment Protocol → Informs risk-based decisions within that work

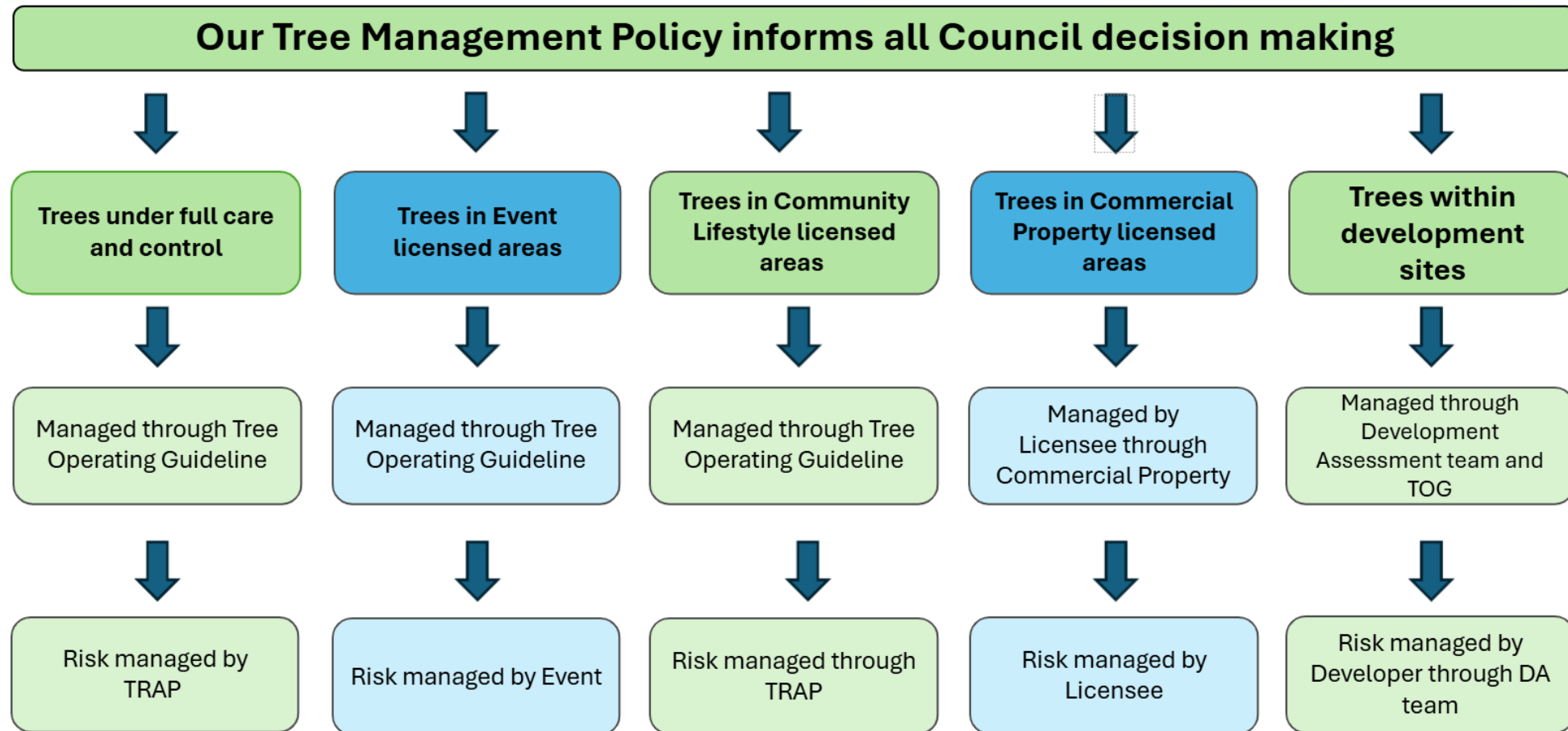
Scenario: A large tree within a playspace

Policy → Lets us know trees are valuable and safety must be managed

Protocol → Identifies this as a high-use area → higher inspection frequency →
Assesses risk level (e.g. Moderate or High)

Operating Guideline → Defines what action is taken (nothing, pruning, exclusion zone, or removal) → Ensures it meets legislative and standards requirements

Tree Management Hierarchy



Integrated Policy Approach for Olive Trees

The **Park Land Olive Management Plan**, endorsed by Council in March 2001, is a legacy document that is proposed to be rescinded.

The protection of heritage Olives, along with all other heritage trees is now managed through the **National Heritage Management Plan (September 2024)** and information provided in the **Adelaide Park Lands and City Layout Designed Landscapes and Historic Planting Report**.

- Heritage olive trees are both trees and heritage assets, so can be effectively managed through the existing **Tree Management Policy** and **Heritage Management Plan**.
- This provides a consistent, integrated approach to tree health, risk, maintenance, conservation and heritage significance.
- Updating a separate Olive Management Plan would largely duplicate existing policy requirements and create an additional layer of governance and documentation.

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Thank You

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