
Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report

Tree Management Policy – draft (Stage 1 of 1)

Consultation period: 24 February to 30 March 2025

Contents




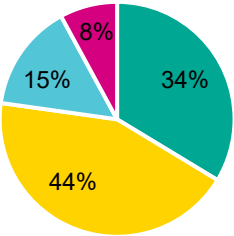

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1. Summary




At its meeting of 18 February 2025 Council resolved to place the draft Tree Management Policy (draft Policy) on public exhibition. In response, the draft Policy was publicly exhibited for community feedback between 24 February 2025 and 30 March 2025. During the public exhibition period 130 submissions were received. The majority of submissions (and comments) were very supportive or somewhat supportive of the draft Policy. Some respondents who were not supportive indicated the draft Policy needed to be strengthened and was too vague and subjective.

This report provides details about the public exhibition of the draft Policy, analysis of the feedback received, responses to key matters arising from the feedback and includes the verbatim responses (Appendix 1).




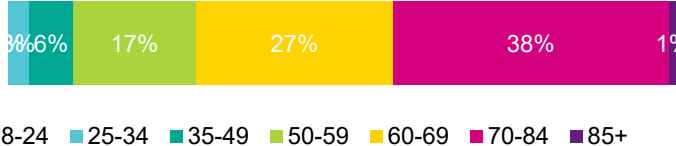
1.1. Key outcomes

 <p>Total unique responses</p>	130	
 <p>How responses were received</p>	<p>Submission form</p> <p>Written responses (email/letter)</p>	<p>Completions: 116</p> <p>Number received: 14</p>
 <p>Online sentiment question:</p> <p>How supportive of the draft policy are you?</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very supportive Somewhat supportive Not very supportive Not supportive at all <p>Total responses = 116</p>	
 <p>Feedback themes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> draft Policy and processes should be strengthened tree management compliance management tree selection and replanting environmental and community benefits education, community engagement, and advocacy 	

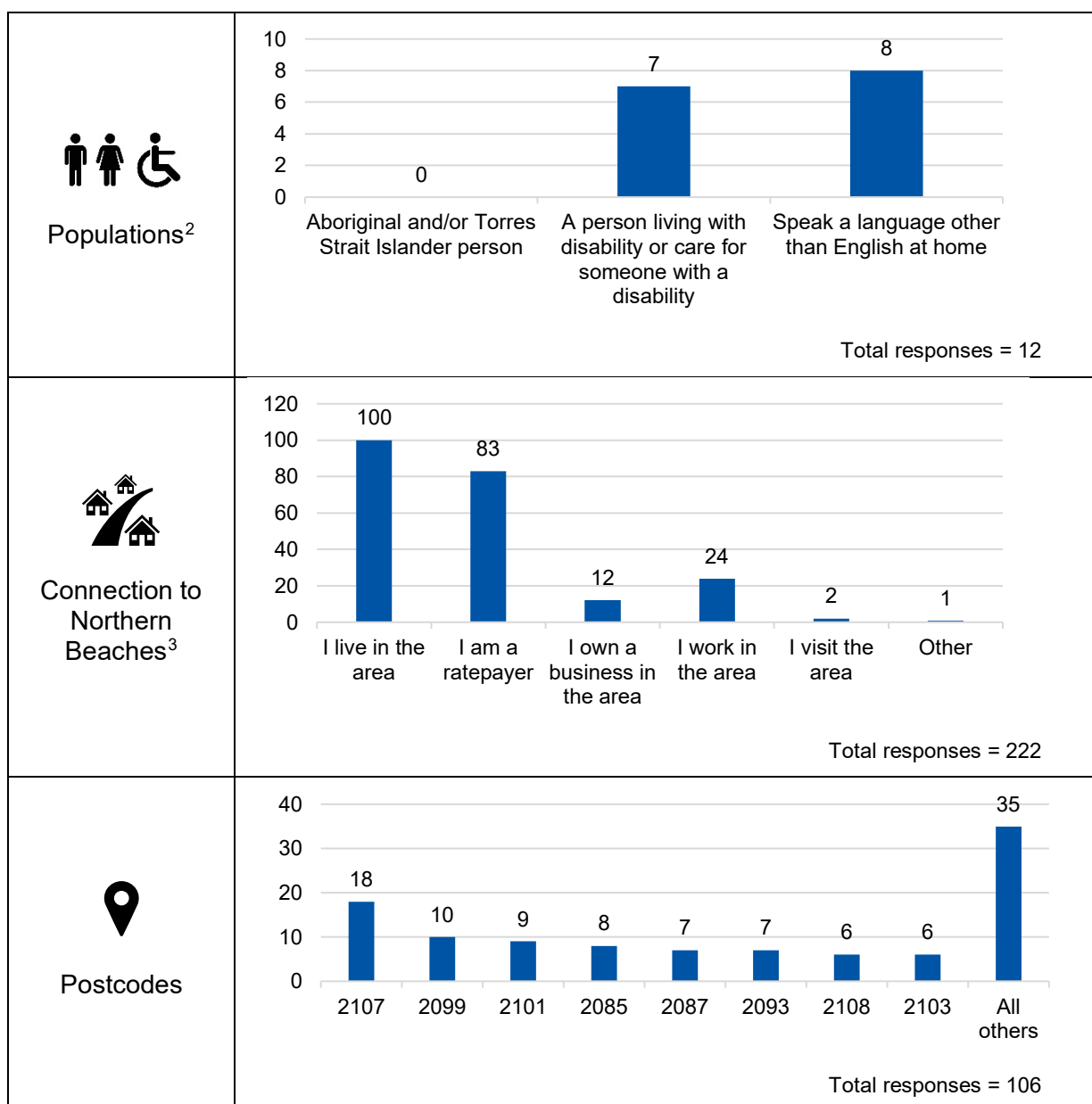
1.2. How we engaged

 Have Your Say: visitation stats	Visitors: 1,996	Visits: 2,617	Time onsite: 2 days, 14 hours 8 mins Avg: 1 min 45 sec
 Media and collateral	Pittwater Life: 1 story, 1 editorial Peninsula Living: 1 story		Distribution: 32,000 Distribution: 87,000
 Electronic direct mail (EDM)	Community Engagement (fortnightly) newsletter: 2 editions Council (weekly) e-News: 2 editions Stakeholder email: All resident association groups via Community Liaison		Distribution: 22,424 subscribers Distribution: 57,260 subscribers Distribution: 51

1.3. Who responded¹

 Gender	 <p>43% 47% 2% 2%</p> <p>■ Woman ■ Man ■ Prefer not to say ■ Other</p> <p>Total responses = 112</p>
 Age groups	 <p>3% 6% 17% 27% 38% 1% 1%</p> <p>■ 18-24 ■ 25-34 ■ 35-49 ■ 50-59 ■ 60-69 ■ 70-84 ■ 85+</p> <p>Total responses = 108</p>

¹ Demographic data was gathered by request only. The data represented only includes those respondents who provided this detail.



2. Background

Five tree related policies from the former councils remain in force, and there is a need to harmonise these policies to reflect a common approach to managing trees across the Northern Beaches Local Government Area (LGA).

A draft Tree Policy has been prepared which reflects the intent of the former policies, is consistent with the Northern Beaches Tree Canopy Plan (TCP), adopted in 2023, and strengthens tree assessment and protection requirements. The purpose of the engagement on the draft Policy was to inform the community and to seek feedback. The intentions are to consider the communities feedback and where appropriate amend the draft Policy.

² Respondents could select more than one option

³ Respondents could select more than one option

3. Engagement objectives

Community and stakeholder engagement aimed to:

- identify community and stakeholder concerns, local knowledge and values in relation to the draft policy
- build community and stakeholder awareness of participation activities
- provide accessible information so community and stakeholders can participate in a meaningful way
- provide balanced and objective information to assist in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions, in relation to protection of the environment, and environmental sustainability
- ensure public feedback is representative of the population.

4. Engagement approach

Community and stakeholder engagement for the draft Policy was conducted between 24 February and 30 March 2025 and consisted of a series of activities that provided opportunities for community and stakeholders to contribute.

The engagement was planned, implemented and reported in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Strategy & Policy.

A project page⁴ was established on our have your say platform with information provided in an accessible and easy to read format.

The project was primarily promoted through our regular email newsletter (EDM) channels. All resident association and key stakeholder groups were emailed directly to advise them of the consultation.

Feedback was captured through an online submission form embedded onto the have your say project page. The form included a question that directly asked respondents for their level of support on the proposed draft policy.

An open-field comments box provided community members a space to explain or elaborate on their support, not support or neutral sentiment as well as any other feedback they wished to contribute.

Email and written comments were also invited.

5. Findings

The feedback received indicated positive support for the draft Policy's objectives and principles. Many respondents reiterated the value of trees to the Northern Beaches, highlighting the environmental, community and aesthetic benefits of trees and the importance of improving the tree canopy. The importance of tree selection of both native and non-native trees was also highlighted in some submissions. The feedback received also indicated support for the harmonisation of the existing 5 tree-related policies.

Key themes arising from a review of the submissions and comments received and staff responses is set out in Table 1 below.

<https://yoursay.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/tree-management-policy-draft>

Table 1: Public Exhibition of the draft Tree Management Policy - Summary of issues, suggestions, requests, other considerations and responses

Theme	Issues, suggestions, requests and other considerations raised	Responses
Draft Policy and processes should be strengthened	<p>Draft Policy wording:</p> <p>Considered too vague and needs to be strengthened.</p> <p>Draft Policy needs to be strengthened and / or, remove subjective words / terms.</p> <p>Definitions and further information needs to be provided for <i>stakeholders</i>, <i>tree retention measures</i>, <i>reasonable justification</i> and what constitutes <i>healthy trees</i>.</p>	<p>The draft Policy will be implemented in conjunction with all relevant legislation, guidelines, Australian standards and Council's policies, strategies and directions, the draft Policy is deemed to be suitable for its purpose. It is not the purpose of the draft Policy to replicate or replace relevant legislation, planning instruments, guidelines, Australian standards or Council's policies, strategies and directions. Rather the draft Policy sets out the objectives and key principles for the sustainable and strategic management of trees on public and private land. Additional references have been added to the draft Policy for completeness including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 No 63 (NSW)</i> • <i>Biosecurity Act 2015 No 24 (NSW)</i> • Northern Beaches Compliance and Enforcement Policy NB-P-2025 • Northern Beaches Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy NB-P-05 • Northern Beaches Policy Framework NB-P-01 • Standards Australia (2007) Australian Standard Pruning of amenity trees (AS4373:2007) • Standards Australia (2015) Tree stock for landscape use (AS2303:2015) <p>Stakeholders are identified and defined specifically for each community engagement project undertaken (for projects including those related to trees) in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy and Strategy. The draft Policy will operate in keeping with the Community Engagement Policy and Strategy. No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p> <p>Tree retention measures and justification are as per Council's tree and risk assessment framework. Council's internal risk assessment framework has been developed in accordance with the Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy NB-P-05. It is proposed to review the risk framework in</p>

Theme	Issues, suggestions, requests and other considerations raised	Responses
		<p>relation to trees and consider if it can be strengthened.</p> <p>A definition of a healthy tree has been added to the draft Policy.</p>
	Iconic tree register: Reword to 'Tree Register' or 'Significant tree register' and provide criteria / definition.	The establishment of an Iconic Tree Register is a commitment in the TCP and is planned to be launched on Council's website in late 2025. Criteria and definitions will be included in the information on Council's website for the Register. No change proposed to the draft Policy.
	<p>Comments on draft Policy specifics:</p> <p>Draft Policy should specify that Council will investigate and pursue the rehabilitation of a tree and that the removal of a tree will be a last resort.</p> <p>Needs to allow for flexibility and consider the needs of the surrounding area and wildlife.</p> <p>Expand on and increase the Advocacy and Education actions/ section.</p> <p>Draft Policy should detail best practice for tree management on private land.</p>	<p>The draft Policy provides the principles under which we propose to carry out tree management. The retention of trees and the improvement of the Northern Beaches tree canopy is a key principle of the draft Policy and the TCP.</p> <p>Opportunities to rehabilitate a tree is a usual consideration during tree assessment. The draft Policy has been amended to refer to tree rehabilitation to confirm that rehabilitation will be considered where practicable.</p> <p>Where required the impacts on 'surrounding areas' and wildlife are considered in tree management. No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p> <p>Information regarding 'best practice' for managing trees on private land can be found on Council's website. No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p> <p>There are a range of actions in the TCP regarding raising community awareness about trees, involving volunteers and education initiatives. These actions are implemented when funds and resources are available. No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>

Theme	Issues, suggestions, requests and other considerations raised	Responses
Tree Management	<p>Private Land:</p> <p>Property owners and individuals should not be restricted on private land particularly regarding removal of non-native trees.</p> <p>Landowners should be able to prune imposing trees from neighbouring land as they see fit.</p> <p>The draft Policy does not go far enough to protect trees on private land.</p> <p>Permits should be required for trees 3m and above, not 5m and above.</p> <p>Existing trees should not be allowed to be removed and should be incorporated into new developments.</p> <p>Process to remove trees for development should be easier.</p>	<p>Management of trees on private land is governed by relevant legislation particularly the State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021 NSW (SEPP) and relevant Development Control Plans, for example regarding pruning neighbours trees, height of trees and removals in relation to development. No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p> <p>An Exempt Species list is available on Council's website – the tree species listed are suitable for removal without consent unless identified as a heritage item or within a heritage area.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Removal and/or pruning of trees on Council land:</p> <p>If a tree is dangerous, damaging private or public property or creating mess it should be easy to apply for it to be removed or pruned.</p> <p>Improved notification to the community when a tree on Council land is to be removed.</p> <p>Trees should be allowed to be pruned to improve views.</p> <p>Trees need to be protected from pruning for improved views.</p>	<p>Trees are assessed in accordance with all relevant legislation, Council policies and directions including the Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy NB-P-05 and Framework and action is taken accordingly.</p> <p>The removal of trees will generally not be supported to reduce normal leaf, flower, or fruit drop.</p> <p>The draft Policy sets out the community notification to be implemented as part of our tree management processes. Based on our experience this is deemed to be suitable. Noting that prior notification is not required to remove trees identified as high risk, where there is immediate danger and / or in emergency situations.</p> <p>Public trees are protected and it is our position that trees are not to be pruned for private views. When planting on Council land, views are a consideration during species selection.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>

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	<p>Iconic Tree Register:</p> <p>Criteria for who should be able to nominate a tree on private land should be broader and not needing landowners permission.</p> <p>Any tree 35years or over old should be included.</p> <p>Should include a section for iconic trees of the future.</p> <p>A section for notable streets should be included.</p> <p>Unnecessary as trees are protected by this policy and Planning Controls.</p> <p>All trees should be considered iconic as a part of an ecosystem.</p> <p>A photographic database of iconic trees should be kept and made public.</p>	<p>The establishment of an Iconic Tree Register is a commitment in the TCP and is planned to be launched on Council's website in late 2025. Criteria and definitions will be included in the information on Council's website for the Register.</p> <p>Permission needs to be provided by private landowners to register a tree on the Iconic Tree Register.</p> <p>A photographic database will be included with the Iconic Tree register.</p> <p>Notable street trees are captured by the street heritage register, town centre planning and location / structure plans.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
Compliance Management	<p>Recourse for illegal removal or vandalism:</p> <p>Draft Policy needs to provide more creative and significant penalties for vandalism and enforcement should occur at all hours.</p> <p>Recourse for illegal removal or vandalism: Council to prosecute offenders at the Land and Environment Court.</p>	<p>As stated in the draft Policy, vandalism and unauthorised tree removal or pruning is managed in accordance with Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2024 and relevant legislation and guidelines including for example the Enforcement Guidelines for Councils (2015), Ombudsman, NSW.</p> <p>Reference to Council's Compliance and Enforcement Guidelines 2018 has been added to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Risk Policy:</p> <p>Should be made publicly available and be included as part of the draft Policy.</p>	<p>Council's Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Policy is available on Council's website and has been added to the list of reference documents in the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Tree assessments:</p> <p>Concerns of the validity of privately contracted arborist reports.</p> <p>Concerns over conflicting assessments between Council</p>	<p>We accept and reviews reports received from arborists who are registered and suitably qualified at level 5 or above.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>

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	and private arborist assessments	
	<p>Compliance:</p> <p>Planting - how will Council's compliance with the draft Policy and Tree Canopy Plan be measured, will there be a quota that needs to be met.</p> <p>Technology, such as mapping, should be used at regular intervals to ensure compliance and this data should be made available to the public.</p> <p>Insufficient number of Rangers to police public compliance with draft Policy.</p> <p>Need a designated Ranger to assess 10:50 clearing.</p>	<p>The TCP sets out a range of actions which we implement as approved and when funding and resources are available. These actions include planting a minimum of 5,000 trees annually in priority areas (outlined in this Plan) and LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) surveys of the height, density and other characteristics of trees (and vegetation) on the Northern Beaches undertaken every 4 years. The LIDAR data is then used to determine for example canopy height and cover.</p> <p>Council's Rangers manage the full range of compliance matters, including compliance related to trees, across the entire LGA. Resources are allocated according to operational needs at the time. The funding and resourcing of Rangers is considered annually through the development of Council's Delivery Program and budgets.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Permits for work on private trees:</p> <p>Exhibited to allow for public review, input & monitoring</p>	<p>The approved process requires among other things that a copy of the permit be displayed on a front fence, and then a photo is provided to Council as evidence of replanting.</p> <p>No change proposed to draft Policy.</p>
Tree selection and replanting	<p>Tree selection:</p> <p>Importance of non-native trees.</p> <p>Feedback is critical of historic and current tree selection on Council land (Coastal Banksias should not be planted on nature strips as they cause damage, do not plant gum trees, do not plant Camphor Laurels along creeks).</p>	<p>The TCP sets out key principles including that we are to - provide a diverse range of species of varying families and genera, prioritising local native tree shrub and ground cover species where possible (non-native trees are included).</p> <p>Due diligence is carried out by us to ensure that the appropriate species is selected for each location.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Location:</p> <p>Ensure that Council land is fully utilised, increasing trees on all reserves and nature strips.</p>	<p>The TCP states that one of our goals is that the built environment integrates with the natural environment. For example, we consider the potential for improving tree canopy and tree coverage in planning for improvements to Council's parks. The target</p>

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		<p>is to plant a minimum of 5,000 trees annually in priority areas.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Replanting:</p> <p>Clarify how the location and species selection will be managed.</p>	<p>The TCP sets out a range of actions which we implement as approved and when funding and resources are available. These actions include planting a minimum of 5,000 trees annually in priority areas. Priority locations in the Plan for planting to improve tree canopy include areas that are vulnerable, high heat indexed and low canopy locations e.g. Brookvale, Mona Vale, Dee Why and Narrabeen. Species will be selected in accordance with this Plan and with Council's approval.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
Environmental and community benefits	<p>Climate Change:</p> <p>Trees are important to combat the urban heat island effect.</p> <p>Tree management needs to consider the increase in extreme weather events resulting in increased risks from storms and bushfires.</p> <p>Pruning should be allowed when trees shade solar panels.</p>	<p>Trees play an important role in moderating urban heat and the draft Policy recognises the benefit of trees in urban cooling.</p> <p>Our position in regard to climate change is addressed in more detail in other Council strategies including the Northern Beaches Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2040.</p> <p>Exempt tree works can be undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, regulations and relevant Council policies and directions.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Environment:</p> <p>Draft Policy needs to state the importance of tree landscaping to the Northern Beaches.</p>	<p>The importance of trees is reflected in Council's suite of environmental sustainability policies and strategies and Council's Community Strategic Plan.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Wildlife:</p> <p>Native trees are important to support biodiversity. Trees of all species and age classes are needed to support local wildlife and need to be protected to ensure the future growth of the tree canopy.</p> <p>Protect, improve and increase wildlife habitat and corridors.</p>	<p>The benefits provided by trees for habitat and local wildlife is mentioned in the objectives of the draft Policy and reflected in Council's suite of environmental sustainability policies and strategies.</p> <p>No change proposed to draft Policy.</p>

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	Non-native trees provide essential nesting and roosting for native animals and should be protected.	
Education, community engagement, and advocacy	<p>Education:</p> <p>Educate the community and local businesses that trees are an asset to the community and outline all benefits.</p> <p>Important to communicate to the community regularly and through various methods the importance of trees.</p> <p>Provide a list of recommended trees for small spaces</p> <p>increased education at local schools so the next generation understand the importance of trees.</p> <p>Greater education regarding weeds, invasive and unsuitable plants.</p>	<p>There are a range of actions in the TCP regarding raising community awareness about trees, involving volunteers and education initiatives. These actions are implemented when funds and resources are available. Recent responses include that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council's website has been updated with new information about removing and pruning trees on private and public land, a tree guide (with information about What are the best trees to plant? What is the best way to plant a tree?) a tree photo registry and volunteering for tree planting days A community tree planting day was held at the North Curl Curl sand dunes on 26 April 2025. Community tree planting days are an annual activity undertaken when resources are available and in specific locations. <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Community engagement:</p> <p>Allow the community to easily provide feedback to Council.</p> <p>Council did not listen to the community regarding the trees on Ruskin Row, Avalon.</p>	<p>We conduct community engagement in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy and Strategy. The draft Policy will operate in keeping with this Policy and Strategy.</p> <p>No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>
	<p>Advocacy:</p> <p>Council needs to continue to advocate for the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice be tightened to greater protect trees</p> <p>LEP needs to be amended to ensure draft Policy is more actionable</p>	<p>We will continue to advocate on behalf of the Northern Beaches community for changes to State policies, legislation and plans that support Council's objectives for tree management.</p> <p>Tree Management matters have been considered in the development of the Local Strategic Planning Statement 2040 and the draft Northern Beaches Local Environmental Plan and District Control Plan. This is in keeping with the TCP. No change proposed to the draft Policy.</p>

Appendix 1 Verbatim community and stakeholder responses*

To view all verbatim comments, please click the link below:

[Community Engagement Report - Tree Management Policy - Appendix 1 Verbatim community and stakeholder comments](#)

**Personal details and inappropriate language have been redacted where possible. Spelling and grammatical errors have been amended only where misinterpretation or offence may be caused.*

Document administration	
Version	1.0
Date	31 March 2025
Approval	Content provided and approved by Open Space and Recreation Planning Team. Responsible manager: Damian Ham
Status	Draft
Related Projects	Tree Canopy Plan
Notes	Community and stakeholder views contained in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Beaches Council or indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.