STRATEGY

• Initiate the policy and procedures for claims for damage as provided in this TMP.
• Identify trees with a Safe Useful Life Expectancy (SULE) of five years or less and assess on an individual basis for possible replacement.
• Implement measures to ensure adequate community consultation regarding tree removal/replacement programs.

ACTIONS

• Implement the strategy for consideration of street tree removal, replacement and protection.
• Develop a strategy for regular and staged inspections of street trees to identify hazards and maintenance works based on identified risk zones.
• Ensure the inspection procedure is standardised, systematic and established in writing.
• Obtain independent legal advice regarding the implications for risk management of adoption of this TMP.
• Adopt the policy and procedures for claims for damage as provided in the TMP.
• Prepare written risk management procedures that are standardised and systematic. These strategies will explain the positive steps that Council will take to avoid or mitigate the risks posed by trees on public property, and how works will be prioritised to manage the risk.
• Report on insurance claims in accordance with advice from Council’s insurer and Council adopted procedures.
• Assess the removal and replacement of trees that are not suitable for their location and for which risk minimisation strategies will not be successful. The planning process should be comprehensive and include community consultation with regard to all aspects of the removal and replacement works. Special consideration should be given to preserving Significant Trees.
• Compile and maintain a schedule of approved plumbers with agreed rates for insurance work to minimise the cost to Council of repair work.
• Revise Council’s tree management guidelines to be consistent with specifications for root guards and tree planting.
• Adopt the policies of community involvement as outlined in this document.

2 Pruning for health and safety

Pruning is an effective way of eliminating a number of risks including low branches near footpaths and roads, structural defects such as dead branches or other limbs, storm damage, canopy thinning prior to root pruning works and sight lines clearances for signs, traffic lights and street lights. Tree pruning occurs for practical and health and safety reasons, not as a result of aesthetic or cultural delicacy.
STRATEGY

Ensure pruning practices are aimed principally at the overall health and vigour of the tree.

ACTIONS

• Revise Council’s internal tree management guidelines so they are in line with Australian Standard AS4373-1996 Pruning of Amenity Trees and Occupational Health and Safety requirements. Address all aspects of maintenance including pruning, planting, watering, removal, fertilisation and weed prevention.

• Identify staff training requirements and implement a program of staff development.

• Encourage membership of professional arboricultural organisations so that Council remains up-to-date with developments in tree care and maintenance.

2.1 PRUNING FOR CLEARANCE OF ELECTRICITY WIRES

Many people in the community are dissatisfied with the way street trees are pruned to keep them clear of electricity wires. Over-pruning of street trees has in the past resulted in a scarred and ugly landscape and occasionally a loss of trees. Pruning under electricity cables to the minimum clearances is authorised under Section 48 of the Electricity Supply Act 1995 which effectively overrules council-originated Tree Preservation Orders and other environmental planning instruments, but not State heritage or protection orders.

Pruning works within three metres of power lines can only be carried out by suitably qualified personnel and in Waverley’s streets the safety clearance standards are:

• 1.5 metres from low voltage overhead mains, and

• 0.5 metres from low voltage overhead Aerial Bundled Cables (ABC).

These safety clearances have been determined to ensure reliability of power supplies and help prevent personal injury and damage to property. However, while EnergyAustralia does all it can to make sure that appropriate work practices are maintained and that contractual and environmental requirements are met, severe street pruning can result in an unsightly ‘V’ shaped canopy. For this reason Council has resolved to undertake as much as possible of the clearance pruning of our major tree-lined streets and to enter into contracts with Energy Australia to provide aerial bundle cabling of designated streets.

In 1991 EnergyAustralia, in partnership with local councils, introduced a subsidy scheme for Aerial Bundled Cable (ABC) which allows for reduced safety clearances thereby maintaining the appearance of the trees without compromising safety. ABC is an economically viable short-term solution that eliminates many of the problems associated with overhead cables. Several Councils, including Waverley, have installed ABC in select streets with very positive results. Waverley Council is already very advanced in its ABC program, focusing on streets containing trees.

Image 12: Street tree pruning that is inappropriate – aesthetically and arboriculturally.