

<b>POL</b>	<b>STREET VERGE IMPROVEMENTS</b>	<b>AEW1</b>
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<b>POLICY CODE:</b>	AEW1
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	Engineering and Works
<b>BUSINESS UNIT:</b>	Engineering Department
<b>SERVICE UNIT:</b>	Parks Services
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Parks Manager
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## **BACKGROUND:**

A verge is defined as the portion of Crown land which lies between the edge of a road and the adjacent property line. The City has a duty of care to ensure that verges are safe and secure for the public. Under Clause 9.4 of the City of Cockburn's Local Law 2000, verges which contravene this policy, or are poorly maintained or non-permissible, may be redeveloped to comply with this policy at cost to the land owner adjacent to the verge.

The City encourages its residents to maintain and improve the verge adjacent to their property.

Maintenance of private driveways (known as 'crossovers') across the verge is the responsibility of the landowner they are connected to.

## **PURPOSE:**

- To value the verge as an important component of the streetscape,
- To promote the principles of environmental sustainability,
- To encourage biodiversity and strengthen ecological corridors,
- To provide direction and guidance to residents on permissible verge treatments,
- To encourage stewardship of the City's verges to improve amenity,
- To provide advice to property owners to improve verges to an appropriate and consistent standard; and
- To advocate and provide advice on implementing and maintaining water-wise verges.

## **POLICY:**

The City of Cockburn recognises that the appearance of street verges is important to owners/occupiers, because of the potentially significant aesthetic impact of verges on their dwellings and properties.

This policy maintains the community's safety and provides advice and guidance on the constraints and opportunities residents should take note of when improving the City's street verges.

(1) Environmental Value

Road verges in the City of Cockburn occupy an area equivalent to 25% of all City parks combined.

The lawns, shrubs and trees on the City's verges cool the air temperature around homes by shading the soil from the direct heat of the summer sun.

Vegetation on verges has additional benefits as it provides shelter and habitat, which helps support and protect wildlife. Trees and shrubs on verges can provide a source of food for wildlife and they also act as ecological linkages allowing wildlife to travel between areas of bushland that the City manages.

(2) Pride and a Sense of Ownership

Development, improvement and enhancement of verges promotes pride within the community through increased public amenity and fosters a sense of verge ownership. Property values increase in streets that are well maintained and cared for.

(3) A Shared Resource

A street verge is an important space for access and services. Specific areas within this space have been apportioned a role either by the State Government, utility providers or the City of Cockburn. These parts are detailed below:

- i. Utilities: The verge has been created to allow utilities to be supplied to the private lots that line the City's roads. The joint Utility Provider's Code of Practice has allotted specific sections of all road verges for particular utilities, which are:
  - Telecommunications,
  - Electricity,
  - Gas,
  - Water,
  - Sewers; and
  - Trunk or regional services such as high pressure gas lines.
- ii. Crossovers: A crossover, also known as a driveway, is the strip of land which runs at a right angle to the road, dissects a verge and can be

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established to connect a property to the road. The driveway or Crossover may be installed by the City, or by the owner at a subsidised cost, if it complies with City specifications.

- iii. Street Trees: There is a narrow strip of soil approximately 60cm wide and usually between 2.4m and 3m from the front property boundary that has been set aside for the planting of street trees by the City.
- iv. Footpaths: Some verges do, or will eventually, include a footpath. The City's policies concerning when and where footpaths will be laid in new and existing residential streets will determine if a footpath is to be introduced alongside the kerb, or close to the front property boundary. They will also determine at what point new footpaths will be introduced into a street.

#### (4) Permitted Verge Improvements

The following describes what the City will permit when verges are improved.

##### i. Grass

One of the simplest forms of verge improvement is to establish a drought tolerant lawn on the verge. Some species of grass 'brown off' in the summer if not irrigated, but will regrow when the winter rains resume. Some commonly used 'dry' grass species are:

Kikuyu – a tough coarse grass useful where high wear and low maintenance is required.

Couch – a finer less resilient grass than Kikuyu, couch can give a fine manicured appearance many home owners desire. New varieties of couch have been developed to avoid the grass 'browning off' when subjected to frost.

Buffalo Grass - Tropical lawns such as buffalo grass may also be used but require a more intensive regime of maintenance and irrigation.

##### ii. Shrubs & Groundcovers

Some shrubs and groundcovers can be excellent choices for the landscaping of road verges if suitably maintained and kept to a maximum height of 600mm.

The City encourages the adoption of low water demanding (water wise) planting regimes on its verges. Shrub species must not obscure the sight lines required by vehicle drivers entering and leaving the verge of adjacent properties, or those using the crossover to enter the lot immediately next to the planted verge.

A strip 1.5m wide along the back of the road kerb must be made available for pedestrians to use, and shouldn't be planted with shrubs. Pedestrians

can use this area as a safe refuge out of the way of passing vehicles, should the road become busy. This 1.5m wide strip can also be used by the City at a future date if and when it installs a permanent footpath.

Many shrub species will take time and attention to establish. It should be noted that the repair, upgrade or introduction of new utility services into a verge may require shrubs to be disturbed or removed. The City of Cockburn's Road Excavation and Reinstatement guidelines provide for only the minimum reinstatement of disturbed vegetation by utility providers.

The City provides a list of recommended water wise plants to support verge improvements in its detailed verge guidelines document.

### iii. Edible Gardens

Herbs and small vegetables are permitted on the verge subject to the following:

1. They are maintained regularly and do not pose a sight line hazard at road intersections or to adjacent property owners;
2. Not grown in built or prefabricated structures; and
3. Timber stakes may be used to support the plants; however they must be set back 2m from the kerb and regularly maintained.

### iv. Trees

Street trees will be supplied and installed by the City upon the request of the property owner. The City will select a species of tree that complements the character of the gardens and existing tree planting on the street. Residents requesting a street tree are required to nurture and water the tree to help with establishment.

Detailed information on species, tree planting, crossovers and other verge issues are not covered by this policy. Further direction on these matters is available in the City's verge development guidelines document and related policies.

### v. Irrigation

Preference is given for verge improvements that require little or no water, with no installation of permanent irrigation. The City has a list of recommended shrubs and trees that support a no/low- water use landscape in its verge development guidelines document.

Reticulated irrigation on the road verge is permitted by the City, however, where irrigation is used, sub-surface drip irrigation is recommended.

The cost of installation and maintenance of irrigation is the responsibility of the adjacent land owner. Please bear in mind that it is common for water service providers to restrict water use during summer months.

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Residents are required to be aware of their allocated watering days. In some cases residents seeking to develop a new verge landscape may be eligible to seek an exemption from water restrictions.

The City does not usually irrigate road verges, with the exception of special status verges such as major road, public open space verges and other civic facilities.

vi. Mulch

Mulch is permitted and encouraged as a verge treatment that assists to limit verge water use. Mulch varieties that utilise a minimal amount of water are preferred.

Mulched verges are required to be maintained and kept neat and clean. Weeding and pruning may be necessary for verge maintenance as well as mulch reapplication as required.

vii. Synthetic Turf

The installation of synthetic turf is generally not supported as it's not a WaterWise treatment. However in order to mitigate the impacts of heat and water runoff the following conditions apply:

1. All applications for synthetic turf to be in writing and approved by the City;
2. Street tree for every 20m<sup>2</sup> of coverage (street tree species to be approved by the City);
3. Installed with a porous base material;
4. Not to be used as a parking treatment; and
5. Maintained in a neat and level state.

Where the City conducts works to verges with synthetic turf, the City will only make the verge safe upon the completion of the works. All costs associated with reinstatement of the synthetic turf will be the responsibility of the property owner.

viii. Paving

Paving to the entire verge will only be permitted where it is proven necessary for the provision of parking to the property. All paved areas must allow for the provision of a street tree. Applications are to be forwarded to the City for evaluation and approval.

Where it has been deemed that paving to the entire verge for parking is not supported, applicants will only be permitted to pave up to 25% of the verge surface area excluding the crossover, as determined by the City.

Conditions for paving include:

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1. Utilising comprised unit pavers of adequate thickness and strength and with a restraining perimeter kerb to prevent failure of the sub-grade under load;
2. Paving robust enough to withstand repeated use by vehicles;
3. Strong enough to support the load of the vehicles using it (refer to the City's crossover specifications);
4. Compliant with the City of Cockburn's Road Excavation and Reinstatement Standards;
5. A minimum of one street tree protected by a trafficable tree grate and a robust tree guard, and/or barrier kerb must be provided;
6. The intended layout of parked cars on the verge shall be easily understood by visitors. Parking bays must conform to Standards Australia's most recent standard for on-street parking and the Western Australian Road Traffic Code 2000 as amended; and
7. Stormwater must not be shed from the verge onto the carriageway. Should the parking area require the provision of a stormwater drainage facility the City will provide standard soak well and grate details to be used. The owner will be responsible for the installation and regular maintenance of the soak-well and for repairs to the grate.

(5) Non-Permissible Verge Treatments.

The road verge must not contain any objects that can cause injury to the public: either pedestrians or vehicle users. Safe use of the verge at night must be anticipated when considering what might constitute a risk to the public. The following is a list of typical features that are not permitted on verges:

- Letterboxes
- Man-made structures
- Fences
- Barriers
- Steps
- Walls
- Bollards
- Garden stakes
- Bunting
- Signs
- Fountains
- Ornaments
- Basketball hoops
- Ornamental lighting, loose bricks, rocks, logs, inorganic granular material i.e. gravel
- Concrete and/or Asphalt (other than for crossovers)

The above list is intended as an indicative guide and clarification from the City may be given for elements other than planting and paving not on this list. However non-permissible verge treatment introduced by the adjacent property owner can increase their liability for any harm or inconvenience caused.

(6) Other Information

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This policy is to be read in conjunction with the City's Street Verge Improvement Brochure and Verge Development Guidelines, available on the City's website and in hardcopy upon request.