

Tree Risk-Benefit Strategy

Establishing the Context

Trees provide many important benefits

The benefits that trees give us are many. The more obvious values are visual beauty in the landscape, timber, and the crops we harvest. Further benefits include essential wildlife habitat, pollution filtering, and reducing the harmful effects of both weather and climate change. Trees also have important social value as part of our culture, history, or because they commemorate an important event. As if those benefits weren't enough, an increasing body of scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that trees are fundamental to our physical health, mental wellbeing, and quality of life.

Risk from tree failure is extremely low

Compared to other everyday risks that we readily accept, the overall risk to us and our property from tree failure is extremely low. The annual risk of a death is much less than one in a million. Given the number of trees we live with, and how many of us pass under them each and every day, being killed or injured by a tree is a very rare event.

Of course, trees are natural living structures and can sometimes shed branches or fall over. But this usually happens during severe weather, and when they have very obvious defects. Because we need the many benefits from trees, we also have to accept that some may fail during severe weather.

Our Duty of Care Reasonable Proportionate Reasonably Practicable

We have a duty of care to manage the risk from our trees. But that duty also says we should be reasonable, proportionate, and reasonably practicable when managing the risk. What this means is, there's a balance we need to strike between the many benefits trees provide, the risk from them, and the costs of managing the risk. By taking a balanced approach, we don't waste resources by reducing risk - and losing the benefits - where the risk is already acceptable or tolerable.

Risk-Benefit Tolerance

What is an acceptable level of risk from our trees?

The Tolerability of Risk Framework (ToR) is an internationally recognised approach to making risk management decisions where risks are imposed and have benefits. ToR identifies Broadly Acceptable and Unacceptable levels of risk. Between these two risks is a region where the risk is Tolerable if it is 'as low as reasonably practicable' (ALARP).

Our Tree Risk-Benefit Ratings



We are going to manage the risk from our trees using ToR principles. **VALID** has rationalised ToR specifically for tree risk-benefit management. There are three easy to understand traffic light colour-coded risk ratings.

Red - Unacceptable risks will be reduced; for example, by pruning or felling the tree, or managing the level of occupation beneath it. Risk reduction work will be given priority where the risk is highest, and where it is most cost-effective.

Amber - Tolerable if ALARP risks will also be reduced when they are *not* ALARP. These risks will not be reduced when they *are* ALARP.

Green - Acceptable risks will not be reduced.