

Artificial turf on council-controlled road verge

Road verges play an important role in the environmental health, visual appeal, character and safety of a neighbourhood.

The traditional road verge within our region consists of grass with council provided gardens and street trees. However, there is growing demand for alternative road verge treatments, especially artificial turf. Council recognises that there can be benefits to using artificial turf in some locations such as in residential courtyards and sport courts, however council does not support treatment of artificial turf on residential road verges.

The below points provide reasons why artificial turf is not supported.

Utilities

- There may be utilities located underneath the road reserve such as water, sewer, electrical, gas, and/or telecommunications which may require emergency access. Service providers do not cover the cost to restore alternative verge treatments (i.e. artificial turf).

Health and safety

- Under the Land Act 1994 council has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of persons using local government-controlled land and roads and to preserve features of the natural and built environment and other aspects of the amenity of local government-controlled areas.

Street trees

- Having artificial turf installed presents a barrier to council installing street trees.

Product deterioration

- The sub-surface may sink or wash out, pinned edges may become loose and present a tripping hazard.
- It is subject to vandalism including burn marks from push bike skids and cigarette butts.
- Animal faeces and urine, leaf drop, food and drink spill and dropped chewing gum may affect the product.

Experience and look

- Numerous studies have found that solar radiation on artificial turf increases its physical temperature, sometimes up to a 65°C increase. This causes it to become hot under foot and increases the ambient temperature adding to the urban heat island effect (*Jim C. Y., 2016, Intense summer heat fluxes in artificial turf harm people and environment, Landscape and Urban Planning 157 (2017), 561–576*).

- Artificial turf has a noticeably different look to adjacent turf and does not fit the 'natural' theme of an existing streetscape or landscape.
- Artificial turf does not provide same feeling and experience as walking on natural grass.

Environmental impact

- Natural grass areas provide microhabitat for worms, insects and organisms living in the soil, grass and root zone. This is part of the ecosystem that attracts birds, macropods and other wildlife to an area.
- Plants need to absorb nutrients, water and oxygen through the soil for nutrition and fertility.
- Compaction of the sub-surface prior to installation compromises the health of trees and gardens due to pressure on roots and lack of oxygen.
- Tree roots may be interfered with (cut) during preparation of the area, ultimately compromising the health and life expectancy of conflicted trees or vegetation.
- The product is non-renewable and at the end of its life is sent to land fill.

Planning Scheme and Environment and Liveability Strategy

- Council has an established position that is consistent across the 2014 Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme and 2017 Environment and Liveability Strategy that does not recommend installation of artificial turf on road reserves. This considers a number of factors such as stormwater management, temperature mitigation of public areas and preserving the natural character and amenity of neighbourhoods.

For any further queries, please contact council on (07) 5475 7272.

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