



Submission to Charles Sturt Council re *GROWING GREEN: Tree Canopy Improvement Strategy 2021 – 2045*

WACRA, like Charles Sturt Council, recognises the importance of acting on the Climate Emergency we now find ourselves in. When we restructured the association's committee in late 2019, we established three task groups – Council Connect, Climate Emergency and Coastal Management. All three groups fully endorse Council's *GROWING GREEN: Tree Canopy Improvement Strategy 2021 – 2045*.

In 2021, WACRA has so far made three deputations to Charles Sturt Council. Two were presented by Kate Denton and Pedro Schultz in January, regarding the decline of tree canopy in our city. These deputations highlighted the need for budget commitment by Council and protection of old trees/planting of new trees. They emphasised how trees are pivotal to addressing the climate challenge: tree canopy absorbs carbon, reduces heat, slows wind velocity, improves air quality, reduces runoff and erosion, reduces noise and dust impacts, and produces oxygen. WACRA made a third deputation in July to endorse the *GROWING GREEN* strategy and encourage its acceptance by Council.

Therefore, we are delighted that Council has agreed to a canopy strategy that is ambitious comparative to other councils and aims to address these issues. The canopy percentage in the city has continued to decline. In 2008 canopy cover was 15.51% of Charles Sturt, by 2020 it was just 13.84%. This is despite Council having had a 20% by 2020 canopy goal. It is pleasing to see this decline acknowledged as a driver for the strategy.

In November 2020, WACRA made a submission to the Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 and Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 put forward by Zali Steggall (Member of Parliament for Warringah). In our submission we stated the following:

- WACRA's [mission statement](#) *Building healthy communities* directly relates to the issue of climate change in our communities
- WACRA Climate Emergency Group's [mission statement](#) *Increase awareness of and take action with the community towards mitigating the effects of climate change* directly relates to the issue of climate change in our communities
- We are a coastal community so will be strongly affected by climate change, and want to see not just adaptation (as per the initiative [AdaptWest Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#)) but mitigation.

These statements are applicable to the *GROWING GREEN* strategy. Addressing the Climate Emergency is a matter of both mitigation and adaptation. One without the other is insufficient. The *GROWING GREEN* strategy incorporates both elements and WACRA endorses this.

In May 2021, WACRA provided a response to the *Green Adelaide Draft Regional Landscape Plan 2021-2026* (<https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/green-adelaide-regional-landscape-plan>). Some points of interest relating to Council's *GROWING GREEN* principles are:

- **Tree laws:** Our regulated tree laws are confusing to many residents. Groups such as the Environmental Defenders Office, Australian Institute of Architects, National Trust SA and Nature Conservation Society SA have made recommendations of possible interest to Charles Sturt Council re protecting trees and valuing their worth, largely in relation to new developments, planning applications and home owner support to retain trees (**Principle 3: Protect more trees (and commit to protect them)**)
- **Nature education:** Not only should Green Adelaide implement programs in schools and community environments but they should also target decision makers as they make budget decisions (**Principle 5: Appreciate trees more and engage our community**).

In our July 2021 deputation to council in support of the *GROWING GREEN* strategy, WACRA highlighted the following issues as of particular concern (with the relevant *GROWING GREEN* principles in brackets):

1. How to educate residents to better understand the crucial role of trees in climate mitigation and community health. (**Principle 5: Appreciate trees more and engage our community**)
2. How to get the community to realise its role and become engaged in the commitment to an increased canopy because private property owners are also part of the solution. For every development application there need to be conversations around climate mitigation. This could include discussions about better garden choices, verges, Council support, etc. (**Principle 5: Appreciate trees more and engage our community**)
3. How to engage with developers to ensure new designs go further than minimum Planning and Design Code requirements and go towards supporting the 25% canopy goal. (**Principle 3: Protect more trees (and commit to protect them)**)
4. How to work with other organisations such as Green Adelaide to maximise tree planting opportunities and see this as an addition to Council's committed budget, not a replacement. (**Principle 1: Plant more trees (and continually review planting options** and **Principle 2: Have a plan (and set a target)**)
5. Valuing native flora and fauna. Where possible, it would be good to use Australian species rather than introduced tree species, and where reserve plantings occur to use local indigenous trees to aid in the preservation of local flora and fauna diversity. (**Principle 1: Plant more trees (and continually review planting options)**)

The 'Ideas for community and business activities' webpage on the Charles Sturt Council website (in relation to the *GROWING GREEN* strategy)

<https://www.yoursaycharlessturt.com.au/tree-canopy/what-else-can-i-expect-see> lists 'some examples of different ways we can raise the profile of trees, showcase the many benefits trees offer, celebrate great stories and initiatives, encourage positive action and

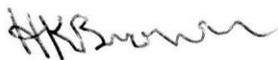
achieve our canopy target.’ These ideas are excellent. Kate Denton, in her January deputation to council, also suggested these two initiatives:

- Assign an environmental officer to all planning approvals.
- Incentivise residents to plant trees and/or become involved.

WACRA is currently endorsing and participating in the ‘My Tree Project’ whereby schoolchildren from three local primary schools will plant their own tree at home or at their school. This project fits under the category ‘School Engagement’. In addition, earlier this year WACRA supported an application for Green Adelaide funding to restore and increase tree canopy cover at Henley High School, and install a native garden. Both projects will have a cooling effect, improve biodiversity, provide educational opportunities about the natural world and the challenges ahead, as well as enhance physical and mental health. These are all aims of the *GROWING GREEN* strategy.

In conclusion, WACRA is keen to support this strategy in whatever ways we can. We can use our website (<http://wacra.org.au/>), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/westernadelaidecra>), general meetings and newsletters to highlight this initiative to our membership (approx. 100) and other interested followers (approx. 200). The *GROWING GREEN* strategy survey (<https://www.yoursaycharlessturt.com.au/tree-canopy/tree-canopy-improvement-strategy-survey>) asks ‘How important are trees to you?’ as well as how important planning, protecting, maintaining and appreciating them are. WACRA’s response to these questions is VERY IMPORTANT. We welcome this strategy and recognise its significance for our western suburbs.

Bert Brown



Chairperson, WACRA