



## Deputation to Council 280621

On behalf of WACRA I am presenting this deputation to Council in support of **Growing Green: Tree Canopy Improvement Strategy 2021 to 2045**.

WACRA Committee and members are delighted that Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Many other resident groups are still trying to get their councils to recognise this emergency. There is a strong surge of sentiment amongst resident groups across Adelaide (and nationally) that **it is absolutely time to act decisively on climate change**.

### KEY POINTS

1. It is great to see the **Growing Green: Tree Canopy Improvement Strategy 2021 to 2045** finally make it to Council. It has been a long time coming, and no doubt involved a lot of work by a number of Council staff.
2. It is distressing to note that **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, and despite other initiatives through the Council and the community not preventing this decline to date.
3. Given this it is essential to see a **25% canopy commitment by 2045**. WACRA is fully behind the motion and Council endorsing this strategy. Given the time it takes for canopy to develop, we all need to work collectively to achieve this objective as quickly as possible.

### CHALLENGES AHEAD

This goal of 25% canopy cover is a challenge due to a number of factors:

1. A **Planning and Development Code** that provides no real protection for trees, and via the tree removal offset scheme effectively encourages tree removal from private property.
2. A **hotter drier climate** that will put massive stress on established trees (especially non-native species), and hinders the healthy establishment of new trees without sufficient supplementary irrigation.
3. An ongoing need to **educate the community** around the value and beauty of trees. One way of doing this is to replace our poor quality small reserves with well managed biodiverse urban forests. Council will also need to add **understory plantings** wherever possible to increase canopy and add resources to support biodiversity.

4. Ongoing **budget demands**. Trees have the highest funding requirement at the start and the end of their lives, so to achieve and sustain a 25% canopy cover Council must be prepared to commit to an ongoing financial outlay. We realise that the Planning and Development Code will increase urban infill and has the potential to increase Council income but reduce land availability for planting canopy. We commit to working with Council calling for a review of the Code to ensure that sufficient space is available to meet the State and Council objectives.

## **WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO WACRA?**

Issues that are of concern to WACRA are:

1. How to educate residents to better understand the crucial role of trees in climate mitigation and community health.
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.
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.
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.
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.

## **SUMMARY**

The number of workshops and other events that are happening around climate change mitigation and adaptation shows a growing community interest and swell of support. But the latest canopy statistics tell us there is still a long way to go. WACRA will continue to work with Council and the community in supporting any initiatives that help in this incredibly important task of establishing a sufficient and sustainable urban tree canopy.

WACRA congratulates Council in considering support of the **Growing Green: Tree Canopy Improvement Strategy 2021-2045**. We look forward to this initiative being taken up by Council.