

2 December 2022

Parliamentary Inquiry into the Urban Forest Fact sheet 1

The Environment, Resources and Development Committee has begun an inquiry into the urban forest, with a focus on tree species selection and other measures to preserve and improve the tree canopy in metropolitan Adelaide and a focus on trees for urban infill developments.

Preamble

An urban forest encompasses all the trees in an urban area, including trees on private land such as gardens and businesses, trees on state government land such as public schools, state parks and reserves, and trees on local government land such as local parks, reserves and streets.

Tree canopy in the Adelaide metropolitan area is declining significantly in many suburbs as subdivisions and urban infill replaces gardens, trees, and brownfield sites with hard surfaces such as buildings, paving, driveways, and roads to support higher density living. A recent [report](#) from the Conservation Council of SA estimates that Adelaide is losing 75,000 trees a year. According to a recent [Nearmap](#) study (March 2022), 131 Adelaide suburbs (representing 47% of suburbs overall) experienced a relative residential tree canopy loss exceeding 10% between 2011 and 2021. A recent [Aerometrex](#) study into tree canopy coverage for the whole of Adelaide based on 2018 data estimates that 23.37% of the metro area had tree canopy coverage, with 51.9% of tree canopy cover on private land, 25.9% on state government land, and 10.9% on local government land. This [study](#) identified at risk and code red suburbs (mostly to the immediate west, east, and south of the CBD) recommending targeted greening initiatives.



River Red Gum in Clarence Park. Photo: Dean Nicolle

It is widely recognised ([Aerometrex](#), [Hill](#)) that reductions in tree canopy which provides shading and cooling through evapotranspiration results in increased temperatures locally through [urban heat island effect](#) due to hard surfaces absorbing and re-radiating more heat than vegetation. This has implications for the [liveability](#) of urban areas as climate induced temperature rises combine with greater urban heat island effect to render some locations [inhospitable](#).

As the climate changes, urban areas need to prepare for more extreme drought and heat and the impact such extremes will have on urban trees and plants ([Hill](#)). Many of the current species of trees that comprise the urban forest (*trees on private land, street trees and park and reserve trees*) may be unable to thrive in a hotter, drier climate and will need to be progressively replaced with more resilient species and fitted with water sensitive urban design [infrastructure](#) to assist with tree health and survival. Tree management practices such as pruning/removal for powerline clearances also have potential for [modification](#) to benefit canopy and tree health overall.

Terms of Reference

The Inquiry will examine:

1. Best practice and innovative measures to assist in the selection and maintenance of site appropriate tree species to improve the resilience of the urban forest, with a focus on trees for urban infill developments;
2. Legislative and regulatory options to improve the resilience and longevity of trees comprising the urban forest; and
3. Any other related matters.

How can I get involved?

The Committee is keen to hear from individuals and organisations with an interest in the inquiry topic. The Committee is now accepting written submissions addressing the inquiry's terms of reference. Submissions should be addressed to the Parliamentary Officer, Environment, Resources and Development Committee, and emailed to erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au or posted to GPO Box 572, ADELAIDE SA 5001. Submissions close **Friday 24 February 2023**.

Public hearings may be held at a later date. You can stay up to date with the Committee's activities by checking the Parliament website (www.parliament.sa.gov.au/en/Committees/Committees-Detail) or by following the Parliament of South Australia on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Further Questions?

Contact: The Parliamentary Officer
Telephone: 08 8237 9284
Email: erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au
Website: www.parliament.sa.gov.au