



Act Releases its first urban forest strategy

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Achieving a 30% canopy cover in 25 years will require protection, maintenance, education, conservation, community partnerships and the planting of over 450,000 trees according to a draft Strategy, released today by the ACT Government for public consultation.

Canberra's incredible trees are a key part of Canberra's identity. The ACT's Urban Forest Strategy provides a framework for maintaining and growing a healthy and sustainable urban forest, ensuring it is renewed and enhanced for future generations.

ACT Minister for City Services, Chris Steel notes "one of the best things about Canberra is our spectacular urban forest and we need to retain and enhance this asset for future generations.

"The urban forest is facing major challenges. Many of the large historic tree plantings are reaching the end of their life, we have changing climate conditions and there are challenges presented by urban densification.

"The Urban Forest Strategy will provide a pathway to achieve our target of 30% canopy cover by 2045 while also setting out what we will need to do to ensure our urban forest remains resilient to a changing climate and to help cool our city."

According to modelling undertaken by the CSIRO in 2019, to achieve ACT's target of 30% canopy cover, over 450,000 trees need to be planted over the next 25 years. The planting of 25,000 trees has been funded by the ACT Government as part of the first stage of the planting program.

Minister Steele adds “to grow our urban forest we will plant more trees and more diverse and resilient species. We’ll also need to ensure new trees receive great care and ongoing maintenance in order to thrive, and take a ‘whole-of-forest’ approach to managing our canopy.

“Urban forest strategies have proven a great resource in many cities across the World such as Melbourne and Sydney. This plan draws on many of the best examples of how we can grow and protect our urban forest including placing a high monetary value on the benefits of mature trees to protect them from development.

“A partnership with the community to help grow and manage our urban forest is vital to the success of the plan and we would like to hear from the community about their views on the draft strategy so that we can work together on achieving its goals.”

Minister Steel also announced the trial of a water sensitive urban design in the Jamison shopping centre to test the use of stormwater runoff to grow healthier and more resilient trees. The trial is expected to get underway in March 2021, with the tender for construction to be released before the end of this year.

At the Jamison shopping centre eight new trees will be planted in a trench that is specially designed to harvest stormwater. The trench is made of several layers that include high quality soils, filter media, structural soil cells and a gravel drainage system.

Minister Steel adds “we need to care for the trees we have and provide the room and conditions to thrive. Part of the draft urban forest strategy includes installing water sensitive urban design elements in urban infrastructure like carparks and street verges.

“This installation improves soil structure and nutrients and aims to reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff before this enters our stormwater system. Systems like this promote tree growth and mean a tree is less reliant on active watering.”

The trees planted in the trench will be monitored over the next two to three years and compared to a nearby control site where eight new trees will be planted outside of the water sensitive urban design treatment.

Source: <https://www.ausleisure.com.au/news/act-releases-its-first-urban-forest-strategy/>