

## ADMINISTRATOR'S MINUTE

7 August 2017

Minute Number: 28

### Tree Canopy Enhancement Program (CCL152-17)

Many parts of the Georges River are characterised by natural features which include an established tree canopy. In other parts of the LGA, there is a need to increase the number of trees in order to improve the natural environment.

The tree canopy is a living asset, which is highly valued by the community and envied by those who live in areas which do not have a similar coverage of trees.

Changing lifestyles however, has meant that some residents find they no longer have space or the desire for big trees on their property. In addition, the extent of development across the area is leading to the removal of many significant trees. Whilst Development Consent conditions require that trees removed be replaced, compliance is not consistently followed up.

On the 3 April 2017, Council took the decision:

*“That in recognition that the established true canopy across Georges River is being reduced, that a report be presented to Council on the establishment of an Urban Tree and Bushland Policy which will include requirements for on site and / or off site tree replacement.*

*That Council commence a public education program regarding its controls around preservation and protection of trees in its local government area, including highlighting the potential penalties for offences regarding removal or injury to protected trees.”*

Report CCL152-17 “Canopy Enhancement Program” proposes that:

*“Council support the development of a Canopy Enhancement Program as a mechanism to maintain and increase urban tree canopy within the Georges River Council Local Government Area (LGA).*

*The Canopy Enhancement Program is a key mechanism in providing trees for planting in locations where an increase in urban tree canopy has been identified by the Urban Forest Strategy.*

*The Canopy Enhancement Program will operate under two frameworks. Under the first (Tree Replacement Bond) replacement trees are planted on the site where the original trees were removed. A bond is paid and is partially refunded once Council confirms that the replacement trees have been planted and maintained for a minimum of 6 months. The second (Tree Removal Offset Fee) operates where it is not practical to plant replacement trees on site and the offset fee paid by the applicant is used by Council to plant replacement trees upon predetermined Council owned sites.*

*Urban tree canopy (also known as urban forest) is the totality of trees and shrubs on all public and private land in and around urban areas (including bushland, parkland, gardens and street trees) and is measured as a canopy cover percentage of the total area. As an example, the City of Sydney has pledged to increase canopy cover from 15.5% to 23.25% by 2030, and then to 27.13% by 2050 via their Urban Forest Strategy.”*

The report proposes a number of options and funding methods which will be explored with Council and the community, and sets out the steps to be taken to finalise the program.

### **Urban Forest Strategy**

An overarching Urban Forest Strategy will develop a holistic approach to tree management on private and public land within Georges River. \$70,000 from the State Governments Stronger Communities Grant has been allocated in the 2017-18 Budget, to develop the Urban Forest Strategy and Implementation Program.

Development of the Urban Forest Strategy and its component Canopy Enhancement Program will be important elements in improving the natural environment of Georges River, particularly considering the extent of development which will occur in the future. There is considerable work to be undertaken to develop the supporting politics and I am proposing that in parallel community comment be obtained. This will be in addition to the formal public exhibitions which will form part of the adoption process.

### **MOTION:**

1. That report CCL152-17 “*Canopy Enhancement Program*” be considered in conjunction with the minute.
2. That the report “*Canopy Enhancement Program*” be place on Council’s website, to encourage community input to the development of the program.
3. That Council support the development of a Canopy Enhancement Program using the two frameworks outlined in this report to assist in maintaining and increasing the City’s tree canopy and to support the implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy.
4. That a further report be presented to Council in November 2017 seeking endorsement of a draft Canopy Enhancement Program for public exhibition.

  
John Rayner PSM  
**Administrator**