

Councillor Davis - QoN - CoA Tree Planting

Tuesday, 12 August 2025
Council

Council Member
Councillor Henry Davis

Public

Contact Officer:
Tom McCready, Director City Infrastructure

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Councillor Henry Davis will ask the following Question on Notice:

1. What is the City of Adelaide's tree planting target for the 2025–26 financial year?
2. Of this target, how many trees are proposed to be planted within the built-up areas of the city?
3. What criteria and process does the administration use to determine the suitability of tree species for street planting?
4. Since the commencement of this Council term, how many gum trees have been planted within the built-up areas of the city?

If gum trees have been planted or are envisioned to be planted then:

5. What is the rationale for continuing to plant eucalyptus species within high-density built areas, given their known issues with leaf and branch drop, root invasiveness, and maintenance costs?
6. What evidence does Council rely on to suggest that eucalyptus trees are compatible with narrow footpaths, paved environments, and streetscapes with high pedestrian traffic?
7. What modelling, if any, has been undertaken to assess the impact of evergreen tree species such as gums on winter shading, particularly in areas where passive solar light is important for residential and business buildings?
8. Have any risk assessments been conducted regarding the safety hazards associated with gum trees shedding limbs during high wind events? If so, what were the findings?

REPLY

1. The tree planting target for the 2025/26 financial year is 307 trees to be planted within the Park Lands and Streets.
2. The tree planting target for built up areas (streets) in the 2025/26 financial year is 200 (new) trees (subject to detailed design and street survey).
3. In addition, the Administration is currently undertaking a review of tree planting opportunities in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years in order to present to the Council a detailed two-year plan plus a further three-year forecast plan for a total of five years as per the resolution of Council on the 27 May 2025 - Item 7.2 - Public Realm Greening Program Update

THAT COUNCIL

1. *Notes the Public Realm Greening Program Update as contained in this report.*
2. *Agrees to develop a 5-year tree planting plan, with a focus on the coming 2 years, which will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, to guide budget and business planning, ratepayer awareness raising and stakeholder engagement, which describes using past and current investigations:*
 - *Potential sites for tree planting based on high-level mapping of streets and based on considerations such as location of underground services and urban heat mitigation benefits.*
 - *Provides an estimate of how the proposed planting program helps to achieve canopy cover targets in the City, focusing on areas within the CBD and north Adelaide, excluding the Park Lands*
 - *Describes the current and future species mix and maintenance and requirements for watering*
 - *Reports on trees planted each year, planting locations and species.*
4. Council has a preferred tree planting list currently comprising of 80 trees species with 49 being exotic and 31 natives. This list has been developed over time and the trees on this list are considered by Council's Arborist and Technical Services teams as the most appropriate trees for planting in the City of Adelaide, subject to the site characteristics and environment.
 - 4.1. The process involved in determining if a tree can be planted and species is complex and requires five key stages:
 - 4.1.1. Site Conditions,
 - 4.1.2. Tree Suitability,
 - 4.1.3. Environmental Outcomes,
 - 4.1.4. Maintenance and Life Span, and
 - 4.1.5. Stakeholder and Public Consultation.
 - 4.2. Tree sizes vary from small trees, up to eight metres in height, to large trees over 15 metres. Two important attributes for tree selection contained in the list are shade capacity and biodiversity outcomes. Given the commitment to these outcomes, tree selection focuses on these attributes.
 - 4.3. This list provides for a range of trees that can be chosen for any situation and is updated regularly to incorporate new trees and to remove trees that appear not to thrive in an urban environment. Diversity of species is important as it assists in preventing a disease impacting a singular type of tree.
 - 4.4. A report to the Infrastructure and Public Works (IPW) Committee on 20 May 2025 detailed the steps in determining what trees can be planted in chosen locations and included a flow chart that shows the complexity in choosing a tree to minimise future risks. The flow chart can be viewed [here](#) (Link 1) and the report can be viewed [here](#) (Link 2).
 - 4.5. Note as part of Council's Capital Works Monthly Report, numbers planted, location and species of trees are provided.
5. In relation to the planting of gum trees, since commencement of this Council term (November 2022), approximately 132 gums have been planted in city streets.
6. Large eucalypt planting is discouraged in highly pedestrianised areas unless there is sufficient space. Large eucalypt species are planted in locations where they can thrive, have a high success rate for growth and cause minimal to no disruption to below ground services. For example, this year Council planted eucalypts in the central median of West Terrace and Wakefield Street where root damage will be minimal.
7. Council has undertaken a review of its eucalypt species and those that are planted within streets are not known for dropping limbs. It should be recognised that all trees drop leaves and any large tree, whether it is native or exotic, could drop branches at any time. It should be noted that eucalypt species planted by Council are very resilient, grow quickly, support native birds and insects.
8. Council does not plant large eucalypt trees in streets with narrow footpaths. Small or dwarf eucalypt species are considered in these situations along with exotic species. For example, in Royal Place, four Dwarf Lemon Scented Gums were planted in 2024/2025.
9. The shade impact of evergreen trees is well understood by Council's Arborist and Technical Services teams. Evergreen trees will block a percentage of sunlight throughout the year (including winter).

10. Consideration has been given to passive solar design through the planting of deciduous trees. Their impact upon the streetscape and surrounding properties is well understood and assists in managing sunlight for heating and cooling buildings as well as pedestrian areas. These trees provide shade in the summer and allow sunlight to permeate in the winter when their leaves fall.
11. As part of its risk mitigation strategy, Council's Arboriculture Team inspects trees regularly based on their location given that all mature trees have the capacity to drop branches in high winds. Trees located within high use event spaces in streets and parks are inspected annually, while other trees in streets and parks are inspected every three years.
12. When selecting a tree for any location, several considerations are taken to minimise future risks. Please refer to Link 1 in paragraph 4.4, which details all the steps taken to minimise the risks from trees chosen for all sites.

Staff time in receiving and preparing this reply	To prepare this reply in response to the question on notice took approximately 5.5 hours.
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