

Update on Tree Martin Management

Tuesday, 14 October 2025
Council

Strategic Alignment - Our Environment

Public

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this noting report is to provide an update on Tree Martin management in response to Council's decision on 22 April 2025 ([Link 1](#)).

It outlines the actions which have been taken to manage the presence of roosting Tree Martins in Leigh Street and Rundle Mall, the supports provided to wildlife carers, and the Administration's ongoing liaison and coordination with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Green Adelaide regarding Tree Martin management.

The report is structured to respond to the seven matters in which Council has requested advice, as follows:

1. Installation of temporary educational signage
2. Reimbursement of volunteer groups' out-of-pocket expenses
3. Dedicated parking permit category or exemption for animal rescue vehicles
4. Advice, consultation, rationale that informed the decision to install netting on Leigh Street
5. Continued liaison with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW)
6. Inclusion of Tree Martins in the City's Biodiversity and Urban Ecology Strategy
7. Progress of a temporary Tree Martin Response Working Group.

The Administration is preparing a Tree Martin Management Plan in 2025/26 with the support of Ecosure Environmental Consultancy and ongoing input from Green Adelaide and DEW through the City of Adelaide's Project Governance Group.

The Administration is continuing to liaise with DEW and Green Adelaide to align approaches to Tree Martin management and protection.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT COUNCIL

1. Notes the progress regarding Tree Martin management as contained in Item 15.2 on the Agenda for the Council meeting held on 14 October 2025, in accordance with Council's decision on 22 April 2025.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Our Environment Lead and advocate for the environmental value, productivity, quality and biodiversity of the Park Lands, squares, open space and streetscapes. Protect and restore native habitat in our city.
Policy	Not as a result of this report
Consultation	Not as a result of this report
Resource	Not as a result of this report
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Tree Martins are a “protected animal” under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972</i> (SA).
Opportunities	Not as a result of this report
25/26 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Proposed 26/27 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Not as a result of this report
25/26 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

DISCUSSION

Background

1. Tree Martin birds migrate and roost in trees located in the Adelaide CBD for approximately five months between December/January and April/May each year.
2. This roosting behaviour presents a tension in the urban realm between the public health and amenity considerations of hospitality and retail businesses, and their customers, and the Council's strategic commitments to promote urban biodiversity and protect the welfare of wildlife.
3. This tension has been encountered since 2015 in Leigh Street (a key food and beverage zone) and most recently in 2025 in Rundle Mall (the city's premier retail precinct).

Purpose

4. At its 22 April 2025 meeting, Council resolved:

That Council notes the following actions undertaken by the administration in collaboration with Green Adelaide include:

- *Removing netting on four trees on Leigh Street*
- *Adjusting lighting including around adjacent infrastructure in Rundle Mall*
- *Supporting Rundle Mall traders and retailers in relation to additional window treatments*
- *Engaging a wildlife specialist to help inform decision making around this complex and dynamic situation.*

And requests administration provide advice in relation to:

1. *Installation of temporary educational signage in key locations including Leigh Street and Rundle Mall to:*
 - *Inform the public about the presence of Tree Martins,*
 - *Provide guidance on what to do if a dead or injured bird is found, and*
 - *Raise awareness of the importance of the species and the City's role in wildlife protection;*
 2. *Contact with relevant volunteer groups to determine any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by their members, including but not limited to parking, food for the birds, and incidental costs, and prepare a report for Council's consideration regarding reimbursement of these expenses;*
 3. *Preparation of a report on the feasibility of introducing a dedicated parking permit category or exemption for animal rescue vehicles operating within the City of Adelaide, to ensure timely response during wildlife rescues;*
 4. *Preparation of a public report detailing all advice, consultation, and rationale that informed the decision to install netting on Leigh Street, ensuring transparency and accountability in Council's decision-making processes;*
 5. *Continued liaison with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to coordinate efforts regarding native wildlife protection, and ensure Council's approach is consistent with state-level biodiversity and conservation strategies;*
 6. *Inclusion of Tree Martins in the City's Biodiversity and Urban Ecology Strategy, to ensure this species is considered in future planning decisions, including lighting, tree management, and urban development;*
 7. *Ongoing progress of a temporary Tree Martin Response Working Group, comprising relevant staff, community members, wildlife experts, and business representatives to guide Council's immediate and long-term response to the presence of Tree Martins in the city.*
5. Responses to each of the seven requests for advice are detailed below under the relevant subheading.

Installation of temporary educational signage

6. Signs were erected in Rundle Mall on 24 April 2025. The signs featured a QR Code link to online information about the presence of the Tree Martins in Rundle Mall, processes in place by Council, key wildlife volunteer groups and responsible Agencies including the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Green Adelaide to protect them, and guidance on what members of the public should do if they encounter a deceased or injured Tree Martin.

Reimbursement of volunteer groups' out-of-pocket expenses

7. SA Native Animal Rescue (SANAR) is an incorporated association of wildlife carers, registered as a not-for-profit charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).
8. During the period March – May 2025 appropriately permitted SANAR carer volunteers were present in Rundle Mall monitoring the welfare of Tree Martins and assisting with the care of injured birds.
9. The Administration reimbursed SANAR volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses incurred during this period on a one-off basis. This included car parking expenses and the purchase of a soft carrier to transport the Tree Martins.

Dedicated parking permit category or exemption for animal rescue vehicles

10. Following a review of available options, the Administration established a process for parking permissions to be granted to animal rescue vehicles on notification of their car parking location.
11. The process and available concessions were put in place for the 2025 response and communicated to the animal rescue provider supporting the Tree Martin work.

Advice, consultation, rationale that informed the decision to install netting on Leigh Street

12. The seasonal roosting of Tree Martins in the Callery Pear Trees of Leigh Street was first observed in 2015 with concerns about public health escalating in May 2020.
13. Administration consulted with Leigh Street property and business owners, DEW and Green Adelaide, and implemented the following responses:
 - 13.1. The investigation of the removal of the Callery Pear Trees and their potential replacement with alternate tree species. An assessment on 5 June 2024 by qualified arborist Symatree, established that the Callery Pear Tree is hardy and well-suited to Adelaide's climatic conditions, is commonly planted as a street tree in Greater Adelaide, provides a strong visual presence which softens the building facades of Leigh Street, and its mature scale is well-suited to the footpath widths, property setbacks and overall scale of Leigh Street.
 - 13.2. An inspection of all ten Callery Pear Trees in Leigh Street was undertaken by qualified arborist Symatree, who recommended pruning to address minor defects in six of the trees, as well as clearance pruning from adjacent building facades, which would not adversely impact the health or aesthetic contributions of the trees. This tree pruning was performed by City of Adelaide's Senior Arborist and an independent arborist.
 - 13.3. Development Assessment approval of a canopy for Shobosho bar and kitchen.
 - 13.4. The investigation of bird control measures for commercial buildings, including sonar, ultra sonar and laser technology.
 - 13.5. Increased, detailed scrubbing and pressure washing of the pavement and urban elements in Leigh Street by the Administration. The cleansing regime was increased during the migration season from daily to three-times daily, and regular monitoring and spot cleaning was implemented.
14. Despite these investigations and actions proving helpful, they did not sufficiently reduce the public health implications of very large roosting populations of Tree Martins and their associated bird faeces and feathers interacting with outdoor dining hospitality venues.
15. As a result, Administration canvassed further options with Leigh Street property and business owners, Green Adelaide and DEW, and determined to initiate a pilot program to net the Callery Pear Trees on Leigh Street in August 2024.
16. Following a period of implementation, the Administration, based on advice, made the decision to remove the netting on four trees in Leigh Street located away from hospitality venues with outdoor dining facilities, two each at its northern and southern ends. The nets were removed from the four trees on 23 and 24 April 2025.
17. The advice received from Green Adelaide was that it was unlikely that the Tree Martins would return to roost in the Leigh Street Callery Pear Trees prior to the end of the 2024/2025 migratory season.
18. The subsequent behaviour of the Tree Martins was such that they did not return to Leigh Street in 2025.
19. In supporting Tree Martins in the urban realm, there is a need to balance urban biodiversity outcomes with obligations for local governments to perform public health functions, including food safety under the *South Australian Public Health Act 2011* (SA). To that end, tree netting is considered an important management tool to achieve a balance between urban biodiversity and urban amenity and public health.

20. On this basis the tree nets will remain on the Leigh Street Gallery Pear Trees located in the zones where hospitality venues have outdoor dining facilities, noting Leigh Street's volume of bars and eateries.

Progress of a temporary Tree Martin Response Working Group

21. The Administration established a temporary Tree Martin Working Group to provide advice to Administration on short-term management actions to be implemented during the 2024/2025 migratory season. The Group included representatives from DEW, Green Adelaide, SANAR volunteers, retail traders, the City of Adelaide, and the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA).
22. The temporary Tree Martin Working Group first met on 23 April 2025 and met on a weekly basis until the final meeting on 21 May 2025. The role of the temporary Working Group concluded with the end of the Tree Martin migratory season.
23. Based on the discussions and advice of the temporary Working Group, several actions were put in place in the Rundle Mall precinct, including:
- 23.1. The installation of signage in Rundle Mall informing the public of the Tree Martins' presence and providing a QR Code link to further information online.
 - 23.2. The installation of temporary, lightweight lights on the catenary wires running down Rundle Mall.
 - 23.3. Increased cleansing in the vicinity of the Chinese Elm Trees during the migratory season, to prepare this section of Rundle Mall for traders and the public each morning.
 - 23.4. Changes to the operations of the Apple Store, including turning store lights off (at times) to prevent tree reflections on its glass shop front, closing of its Mall-front doors to prevent birds getting trapped in the store, and the installation of film on the glass shop front to improve the visual indication for the birds of the hard surface.
 - 23.5. Educating other retailers about actions they can take in their shops to minimise the likelihood of Tree Martins casualties.

Continued liaison with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW)

24. Since May 2025, the Administration has continued to liaise with DEW and Green Adelaide to align approaches to Tree Martin management and protection.

Inclusion of Tree Martins in the City's Biodiversity and Urban Ecology Strategy

25. The Administration is preparing a Tree Martin Management Plan in 2025/26 with the support of Ecosure Environmental Consultancy.
26. Green Adelaide participated in the procurement evaluation process and Green Adelaide and DEW are playing an ongoing role in the City of Adelaide's project working group.
27. The Tree Martin Management Plan will be developed in alignment with the Council's Integrated Climate Strategy 2030, Goal 3: A City Where Nature Thrives.
28. The State Biodiversity Plan is yet to be developed following the assent of the *Biodiversity Act 2025* (SA).

Next Steps

29. This report responds to and closes the Council decision on 22 April 2025 regarding Tree Martin management.
30. A Governance Group overseeing the delivery of the Tree Martin Management Plan is in place. There is ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and representation from DEW, Green Adelaide, the City of Adelaide and AEDA.
31. In preparation for the return of the Tree Martins, communications are being developed to share with community, businesses and stakeholders commencing in October 2025.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 – [Council - Meeting Minutes - 22 April 2025](#)

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

- END OF REPORT -