

Submission
No 4

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING SYSTEM AND THE IMPACTS
OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND
COMMUNITIES**

Organisation: Saving Sydneys Trees

Date Received: 31 October 2023

SPECIFIC URBAN & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS and suggestions are itemised: -

Saving Sydneys Trees wishes to contribute to the Planning system and the impacts climate change has on the environment and communities

Committee.

(Committee 7)

We are a community based Association that uses a Face Book platform and has over 10 Thousand Followers and a Reach that far exceeds when issues arise. Our Followers are well informed and environmentally aware and concerned.

We point out that we make the presumption that the Committee is well versed in the importance of not only cooling the planet but in the attributes that Tree Canopy, Vegetation and Green spaces and Turf and root system covering has in Mitigation of Climate impacts.

These include not just temperature but flood, wind and other elements.

Documentation on the Health \$\$Cost implications and cost of Living (Inflation etc.) carried forward from Climate and the lack of mitigation is extensive. Human Rights is now arising as a common criticism of poor planning that now sees Australia with low Canopy cover and rising temperatures.

Calls for 30-40% cover in areas now devoid of space to plant or soils to sustain.

This Committee is seen as most important in directing reforms that will provide better outcomes for our Children.

We point out to those who may not have seen them, but feed/hay trucks are already visible in our highways as conditions move in on us already.

The flow-on impacts are far reaching and will require \$\$\$s to be effective in many directions.

We have compiled a list of implementations that we believe are doable now and have economic and employment prospects that will be needed and make an immediate difference.

We hope you understand them and offer our assistance if further clarification is needed.

Urban tree canopies

The role of the EPA would seem to have been diminished from its stated Objectives, related to addressing pollution and contamination. The environmental implications of maintaining canopy, vegetation and green spaces are not properly considered by the EPA in the planning process. Tree canopies are not being given sufficient recognition of their positive

contributions to preventing heat islands, aiding rainwater soaking, and many other benefits that cannot be comprehensively listed here.

For instance, the associated link with tree removals on Water and Air while contributing to climate and health impacts has seen no involvement from the EPA. We recommend a review of the EPA Objectives to bring them more into line with updated information and increases in their input into land use planning.

In terms of canopy depletion due to infrastructure works, e.g. CBD & South East Light Rail Project saw over 9 hectares of canopy deficit despite offset plantings reaching full potential as presented in the planning. On the plans, every Anzac Memorial fig tree destroyed needed to be accounted for, but this has not happened. Two trees for every tree destroyed was promised and 6-8 for each Significant Tree. These trees have been renumbered and investigated by Saving Sydney's Trees advocacy group and their potential contribution to the environment in 15-20 years' time was found to deliver a 9 Hectare loss. Therefore, within the planning process, there was no mitigation and other provision for longitudinal monitoring of the trees to see if the replacement trees survive.

The Randwick Council Area still suffers from lack of offset space to satisfy the offset promises of the Light Rail Project. While local Pharmacists reported a marked increase in Respiratory associated prescriptions immediately following the tree removals. All adding to the unaccounted numbers for Diminishing and associated Physical and Dollar Costs to the Public.

A Review of Limitations and Influence of Government and other Agencies on EPA Board selection

A Review of EPA and Other Agencies ability to allow "Exemptions" in the Planning Process – This would include State Significant Infrastructure Projects and Developments;

(CBD and South East Light Rail Project also offering an example of NSW Government appointing itself the Governing Agent over Exemptions which resulted in further losses to the Landscape and Public Assets and Amenity)...ALL detrimental elements within the planning process.

In terms of offset planting, we recommend a review of accountability and auditing processes. We suggest a consistent approach across all developments. (NB. 1 square metre of canopy is recognised as 65-litre in terms of its capacity to sequester carbon. So, a system that measures the Canopy and vegetation volume per square metre should be employed so that replacement and increases are accountable... A replacement process of 1 tree for 1 tree such as was used in the WestConnex saw 10-30 square metre irreplaceable trees and canopy and green Spaces taken and offsets of 1 x 1 square metre (65litre) canopy replacement. This should not be repeated.

We ask for the 65 litres = 1 square metre canopy, like-for-like replacement offset Policy upgrade be implemented and that it requires early planting and 5-year minimum maintenance agreements. (This is already being practiced in the ACT and we believe it is achievable in NSW as Best Practice)

In addition, where Offsets are not available “In Area” and additional \$\$Cost that is reflective of the ongoing Health and Economic (Energy) Burden that is created, should be imposed in addition to other levies within the Planning Process.

(This should and could be directly related to State and Federal Budgets expenditure);

To address the increasing tree losses that density development is producing and to safeguard the protection of environmental, heritage and habitat, we suggest the introduction of a system of Mandatory Environmental Assessment of all property on exchange of title. Such a system would ensure the assessment of a property for its ecological and biodiversity assets, allow re adjustment of tree Registers, and Historical Assets (we suggest this to be made a Universal Council Obligation) ;

To immediately help Mitigate Heat Impacts and apply Pollution Controls, we call for the immediate Bundling and Undergrounding of Electricity, NBN and Other Infrastructure Services using Best Practice (e.g. Horizontal Directional Drilling) Technologies;

In reaction to the latest Reports and findings of “Double Dipping” in the previous Offset Processes, we call for an effective Mitigation Strategy to be implemented.

One that provides Accountability, Records, Scoping and Sustainable process into the Future and that Offsets be IN AREA so real mitigation can be achieved;

We ask that Restrictions be imposed on Development in Areas that have not met their 30-40% Canopy Targets;

In Line with the Public Health Impacts and World Health Requirements, we call for Mandatory Particulate Monitoring of ALL Schools and Areas of Large Public occurrence.

The EPA has in the past seen fit to concentrate on Noise, when referring to Air Pollution which saw houses insulated and windows glazed some years ago. However, the Health of the Public through Particulate Pollution from Cars, Industry and Aircraft would seem to have been omitted.

This information is seen as an asset to framing our Urban Design and catering to those areas in need.

Given that currently, The Authority “Sydney Water” seems to process and the EPA tendency to “Refer” matters relating to Water, Sewage, Filtration and Drainage, the increases in pressure on existing Facilities and water output quality, we ask for an Audit and plan to maintain quality standards and Sustainability of our Systems.

It has come to our attention that many of our mangroves, Golf Courses and open spaces have been the providers of much filtration protections (Malabar, Cronulla, Rose Bay “Royal Sydney” and other areas have venues). Density Development has placed added strains on these essential Landscapes which are in need of investigation, to meet the impacts of Rising tides and Climate influences;

Given the mounting Environmental, Health and Pollution negatives of Synthetic Grass and installations, we ask for Review and restrictions on their use and interference with Landscape, Habitat and Natural Drainage water courses;

Given the inconsistency of Councils in NSW (& Australia) in regards to the 45 degree and 10-50 Rules surrounding tree losses and the findings of the 2019/20 Fire reports which indicate a strong case against such widespread clearings. we ask for a Review and Further Restrictions on these Rules in line with "A case by Case" and Science based approach.

These are some of the many issues that relate to the EPA and Other Agencies in the Planning System that our members have raised and we present to you.

We look forward to a Better and Sustainable Future

Most Sincerely

Margaret Hogg

(On Behalf of)

Saving Sydneys Trees