

**Submission  
No 40**

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

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Well-managed urban forest is fundamental to optimising liveability in urban areas.

The planning system must ensure that urban forest in NSW's urban areas is adequately accommodated in the planning system.

Urban forest provides significant environmental, ecological, social and economic benefits. These include but are not limited to:

- mitigating heat,
- improving air quality,
- sequestering and storing carbon,
- improving water quality,
- ameliorating stormwater impacts,
- improving physical and mental health,
- enhancing social cohesion,
- contributing to biodiversity and providing habitat and food for wildlife.

It is believed that at least 30% and up to 40% urban forest canopy is the level of canopy target to which should be aspired. Currently the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Area has around 20% urban forest canopy.

The NSW planning system must address the following matters to ensure that appropriate urban forest targets are set and achieved. It is recommended that:

1. Councils are required to mandate urban forest canopy targets in their Local Environmental Plans (LEPs).
2. LEPs specify urban forest canopy targets for all land use zonings.
3. State and federal government controlled property (eg. schools, hospitals, defence land, universities and TAFEs, transport corridors, power and telecommunications corridors, etc.) are required to have urban forest canopy targets and to develop strategies to achieve those targets.
4. All private land should be required to contribute to urban forest canopy.

5. The planning system investigates and introduces incentives for contributing urban forest canopy. For example, property that contributes 60% canopy may receive rebates compared with a similarly rated property with less than 10% canopy.

6. Larger species size and increased longevity should be recognised in relevant planning instruments as significant factors in improving sustainability of the urban forest and achieving greater urban forest benefits. Consent for the removal of trees usually requires replacement trees to be planted. Often the number of new trees exceeds the number of trees approved for removal in an attempt to adequately compensate for the loss of existing canopy. However, this can have a counter-productive outcome. Ten short-lived, small stature wattle trees will provide nothing like the medium and long-term urban forest benefit that a single relatively large species size , relatively long-lived eucalypt will.

7. Development should be required to be tree friendly. Buildings must be designed and constructed to tolerate soil movement that can be anticipated in a soil environment that provides up to 60% canopy. Stormwater, water supply, sewage, transport, telecommunications and power infrastructure should be designed and constructed to co-exist with the necessary green infrastructure.

8. Existing urban forest canopy should be sustained for as long as possible. New and retrofitting development should be required to fully consider and retain existing trees as much as possible. Approval should only be given to remove existing trees when a strategy to improve the urban forest canopy can be clearly demonstrated.

9. The Australian Standard Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970 should be referenced in the legislation, relevant SEPPS and DCPs.