

2 December 2022

## Parliamentary Inquiry into the Urban Forest Fact sheet 1

The Environment, Resources and Development Committee has begun an inquiry into the urban forest, with a focus on tree species selection and other measures to preserve and improve the tree canopy in metropolitan Adelaide and a focus on trees for urban infill developments.

### Preamble

An urban forest encompasses all the trees in an urban area, including trees on private land such as gardens and businesses, trees on state government land such as public schools, state parks and reserves, and trees on local government land such as local parks, reserves and streets.

Tree canopy in the Adelaide metropolitan area is declining significantly in many suburbs as subdivisions and urban infill replaces gardens, trees, and brownfield sites with hard surfaces such as buildings, paving, driveways, and roads to support higher density living. A recent [report](#) from the Conservation Council of SA estimates that Adelaide is losing 75,000 trees a year. According to a recent [Nearmap](#) study (March 2022), 131 Adelaide suburbs (representing 47% of suburbs overall) experienced a relative residential tree canopy loss exceeding 10% between 2011 and 2021. A recent [Aerometrex](#) study into tree canopy coverage for the whole of Adelaide based on 2018 data estimates that 23.37% of the metro area had tree canopy coverage, with 51.9% of tree canopy cover on private land, 25.9% on state government land, and 10.9% on local government land. This [study](#) identified at risk and code red suburbs (mostly to the immediate west, east, and south of the CBD) recommending targeted greening initiatives.



River Red Gum in Clarence Park. Photo: Dean Nicolle

It is widely recognised ([Aerometrex](#), [Hill](#)) that reductions in tree canopy which provides shading and cooling through evapotranspiration results in increased temperatures locally through [urban heat island effect](#) due to hard surfaces absorbing and re-radiating more heat than vegetation. This has implications for the [liveability](#) of urban areas as climate induced temperature rises combine with greater urban heat island effect to render some locations [inhospitable](#).

As the climate changes, urban areas need to prepare for more extreme drought and heat and the impact such extremes will have on urban trees and plants ([Hill](#)). Many of the current species of trees that comprise the urban forest (*trees on private land, street trees and park and reserve trees*) may be unable to thrive in a hotter, drier climate and will need to be progressively replaced with more resilient species and fitted with water sensitive urban design [infrastructure](#) to assist with tree health and survival. Tree management practices such as pruning/removal for powerline clearances also have potential for [modification](#) to benefit canopy and tree health overall.

### Terms of Reference

The Inquiry will examine:

1. Best practice and innovative measures to assist in the selection and maintenance of site appropriate tree species to improve the resilience of the urban forest, with a focus on trees for urban infill developments;
2. Legislative and regulatory options to improve the resilience and longevity of trees comprising the urban forest; and
3. Any other related matters.

### How can I get involved?

The Committee is keen to hear from individuals and organisations with an interest in the inquiry topic. The Committee is now accepting written submissions addressing the inquiry's terms of reference. Submissions should be addressed to the Parliamentary Officer, Environment, Resources and Development Committee, and emailed to [erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au) or posted to GPO Box 572, ADELAIDE SA 5001. Submissions close **Friday 24 February 2023**.

Public hearings may be held at a later date. You can stay up to date with the Committee's activities by checking the Parliament website ([www.parliament.sa.gov.au/en/Committees/Committees-Detail](http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/en/Committees/Committees-Detail)) or by following the Parliament of South Australia on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

### Further Questions?

**Contact:** The Parliamentary Officer  
**Telephone:** 08 8237 9284  
**Email:** [erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au)  
**Website:** [www.parliament.sa.gov.au](http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au)



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# Urban Forest Inquiry

## Your Questions Answered

The Environment, Resources and Development Committee has commenced an inquiry into the urban forest, with the following **terms of reference**:

1. Best practice and innovative measures to assist in the selection and maintenance of site appropriate tree species to improve the resilience of the urban forest, with a focus on trees for urban infill developments;
2. Legislative and regulatory options to improve the resilience and longevity of trees comprising the urban forest; and
3. Any other related matters.

## **What is the Environment, Resources and Development Committee?**

The Environment, Resources and Development Committee (ERDC) is a Standing Committee of the Parliament of South Australia. It has six members – three from the House of Assembly (Presiding Member Jayne Stinson MP, Nick McBride MP and Erin Thompson MP) and three from the Legislative Council (Hon Emily Bourke MLC, Hon Michelle Lensink MLC and Hon Tammy Franks MLC).

Parliamentary Committees support the functions of Parliament in two ways: by conducting inquiries into matters of importance, and by scrutinising Government decision-making. The ERDC has important scrutiny responsibilities in respect of planning law in SA, and a broad remit to inquire into general environmental matters, the use and conservation of the State's resources, and the development of the State.

## **What is the Urban Forest Inquiry?**

The ERDC has resolved to inquire into the urban forest. The Committee is concerned about the effect of residential subdivisions, urban infill and higher density living on the declining tree canopy in metropolitan Adelaide. As indicated in the terms of reference outlined above, the Committee is keen to explore best practice measures to ensure that the most suitable tree species are planted and given the best opportunity to survive and thrive in a changing climate. The Committee is also interested in investigating any legislative or regulatory options that might support the resilience of new and existing trees in the urban forest.

## How do I get involved?

The Committee is keen to hear from individuals and organisations with an interest in the inquiry topic. The Committee is now accepting written submissions addressing the inquiry's terms of reference. Submissions should be addressed to the Parliamentary Officer, Environment, Resources and Development Committee, and emailed to [erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:erdc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au) or posted to GPO Box 572, ADELAIDE SA 5001. Submissions close **Friday 24 February 2023**.

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## What happens next?

Following the collection and consideration of written and oral evidence, the Committee will prepare a final report to be tabled in Parliament and published online. This may include recommendations for the State Government to consider and provide a response.

## Further Questions?

<b>Contact:</b>	The Parliamentary Officer
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<b>For comment:</b>	Presiding Member Jayne Stinson MP, 08 8371 5600 or 0416 964 469