

DIT:Planning Reform Submissions

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 December 2020 8:57 AM
To: DIT:Plan SA <PlanSA@sa.gov.au>
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Subject: Tree Targets in PDC

South Australia has historically been seen as a leader within our country in many spheres. Certainly, the well-orchestrated and timely COVID 19 response has been exemplary leadership, for which we are all very grateful.

It has been said that the pandemic is a practice-run for what might happen under the realities of unstoppable climate change, where stable systems start to be unhinged. We know from evidence and long occupation of our country that trees are essential for many of these systems. Their service to the environment is unequalled.

SA has recently done excellent work with heat mapping of the urban environment, an initiative I am proud of in my local council of Charles Sturt. This evidence-based research points to the vital role of established trees and their canopies, along with grass and other plants in cooling local environments. There are also carbon exchange benefits which abate climate change. What is known is that metropolitan Adelaide, largely through design policies for urban infill, is losing tree cover, down from 21.5% to 19.5% from 2013 to 2016.

Why then such meagre targets for tree canopy in the draft Code? Even NSW, with its notorious greed and commercial drivers, has proposed a tree canopy of 15% or more for Sydney, 25% for medium-high density areas and 40% for low density.

The new Code is an opportunity to provide for a more vigorous application of targets to increase our tree canopy, a win-win for our whole community and environment now and in the future. Get out of jail cards to fell existing trees should be abolished if the State is to meet any of its targets in the SA Government 30-Year Plan. This includes protections and controls for existing large trees and abolishing the current exemption for government departments with regard to tree destruction on road reserves.

I live in the City of Charles Sturt, which along with Port Adelaide Enfield, have the lowest tree cover in metropolitan Adelaide and hence, the most exposure and vulnerability to a heating city. I urge you to review the demolition provisions in the Code, as this is where we have and are losing so many of our large trees. Along with this initiative, requiring developments to incorporate existing trees would be a major leadership step in making infill development a contributor to cooling, not to heating of our urban environment.

Under Minister Rau's changes, my next-door property was able to demolish all its trees and build to the maximum height with 95% of its land covered by building. These changes did not promote a liveable environment for anything other than people enclosed by built form. Where do the birds get habitat, the insects and other significant assets in our chain of life? I urge you to revert to previous protections for significant and regulated trees prior to Minister Rau's changes, including considering stronger leadership to stop the destruction of trees and soft landscaping when approval for demolition of urban infill is sought.

The Draft Planning and Design Code fails the test of leadership in its non-ambitious measures for tree retention and planting criteria on both large and small sites. This plan is for the future, but it relies on the previous generation's generosity in leaving public land. There is not enough public land to offset the planting of small new trees to make up for those established trees lost. Allowing private developers to pay for planting offsets on public land is a flawed and cowardly measure that will result in a much less liveable city for all our grandchildren.

Planning frameworks have long-lasting impacts and significance on the future. We know that climate change will happen in our lifetimes with detrimental and unknown effects. What legacy is our generation leaving those to come with these weak targets for green life that would provide some measure of prudent insurance as this happens? Is it rational for us to structurally weaken the presence of these beacons of stability, established trees, in the forthcoming Design and Planning Code? Let's reclaim our mantle as a bold and prescient State, as we did with renewable energy targets, and lift our targets for trees for everyone's benefit.

Best wishes with your deliberations

Becky Llewellyn


I acknowledge Aboriginal nations as the First People of Australia. The land I live on was and always will be Aboriginal land.