



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 58

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES
JO CLAY MLA (CHAIR), SUZANNE ORR MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), MARK PARTON MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Ms Jo Clay MLA:

In relation to: Urban Forest and Lawson

- 1) 25,000 trees will be planted by 2023 to enhance our urban forest. What progress has been made so far – are you on track for meeting this target? How close will this take us to our 30% tree canopy coverage target?
- 2) Lawson has the third-lowest canopy coverage in the ACT, and some of the hottest land surface areas. What is the government doing to reach its 30% tree canopy coverage target in every suburb? How is the program being targeted to prioritise vulnerable Canberrans?
- 3) How often is it measured to account for changes as the tree canopy grows? When is the next measure planned?
- 4) How do we decide what species of tree to plant? What criteria are used to decide which sorts of trees are appropriate for planting? E.g. Native vs exotic, deciduous vs evergreen, fast vs slow growing, expected tree lifetime, etc.

Chris Steel MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

- 1) Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) is on track to meet the target to plant 25,000 trees by 2023. TCCS planted more than 7,600 trees in streets and parks across Canberra between 2019 and 2020 and intend to plant an additional 9,000 trees in 2021.

It is estimated that achieving an increase in canopy cover to meet the 30% target will require over 450,000 additional trees over 25 years. TCCS is increasing planting numbers each year and has developed a propagation schedule with Yarralumla Nursery to enable the timely supply of the necessary trees until 2024.

- 2) Tree planting is prioritised in areas with low urban canopy cover and within suburbs that have been identified by CSIRO mapping as being most vulnerable to the impacts of urban heat. As a recently developed suburb, Lawson's tree canopy cover is expected to increase steadily over the next couple of decades as the trees planted during suburb establishment mature.

A key goal of the TCCS planting program is to promote an equitable distribution of tree canopy cover across the city, however, it may not be possible to achieve a complete equitable distribution across all suburbs due to the different ways suburbs have been designed.



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- 3) Canberra's urban tree canopy cover data was measured in 2015 and again in 2020. The intention is to maintain regular tree canopy cover measurements into the future.
- 4) Trees planted on public land are selected according to their tolerance to Canberra's conditions and the constraints of the nominated planting site. TCCS's seasonal tree planting programs are primarily composed of those trees listed in the *Municipal Infrastructure Standards 25: Plant species for urban landscape projects* that have proven to perform well in frost, heat and extended dry periods. New species that are predicted to be resilient to Canberra's future climate are being trialled in very small numbers.

The diversity of our urban forest is a key consideration when selecting tree species and a focus is placed on reducing numbers of over-dominant tree species in favour of planting a diverse range of species appropriate for our climate. Planting programs generally aim to achieve a balance between native and exotic species.

Many of Canberra's streets have an official street tree species and these consistent plantings are important for creating a unified streetscape that helps to tie the street together. TCCS aims to continue enhancing and preserving consistency in the majority of our streets yet recognise that some streetscapes have lost consistency over time. Such streets offer an opportunity for the original street tree to be replaced in line with current design priorities.

Maintaining solar access, proximity to other infrastructure, sight lines and pedestrian circulation are just some of the design considerations that are taken into account when selecting a tree species for a particular location. Fast growing tree species are prioritised over slower growing species, particularly in areas where existing canopy cover is low.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services

Signature:

Date:

19/3/21

By the Minister for Transport and City Services, Chris Steel MLA