



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked By: Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Addressed to: Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management

Redirection: Minister for City Services

Reference: Environment

Hearing Date: 31/07/2024

In relation to: Tree canopy, Urban Forest

QON lodgement Date: 01/08/2024

Answer Due date: 8/8/2024

- 1) Has the recommendation of the 20-21 Estimates Committee that the ACT Government report on planting to ensure new suburbs achieve 30% tree canopy cover over time been fully implemented?
- 2) When can we expect the next update on the outcome of the Assembly Resolution of 31 March 2021 where the government committed to providing annual updates on the Urban Forest Strategy, and will it include detailed progress on the 30% canopy cover target and information on planting priorities based on remote sensing data?
- 3) What steps has the government taken to develop and implement metrics for planting shrubs and ground covers as recommended by the 23-24 Estimates Committee, and how will they be used to evaluate effectiveness?
- 4) What is the status of the recommendation from the 23-24 Estimates Committee that the government publish online the quarterly revenue and expenditure of the canopy contribution fund once established, and how will the public access this information?
- 5) The government acknowledges that the 30% canopy cover target is for the urban area as a whole and not all areas will achieve this coverage. How does the government plan to address areas with limitations on planting spaces to ensure progress towards the overall canopy cover target?
- 6) What measures are in place to ensure transparency and accountability in reporting progress towards the Urban Forest Strategy goals, and how are achievements and challenges communicated to the public?
- 7) Can you provide examples of recent projects or initiatives that have effectively contributed to the 30% canopy cover target and demonstrated innovative approaches or successful use of performance metrics?
- 8) How will the integration of green roofs, shrub beds, wetlands, and rain gardens contribute to achieving the 2045 target for tree canopy equivalents, and what role do these elements play in the overall strategy?

Tara Cheyne MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- 1) TCCS has produced a *Report to the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory - Urban Tree Canopy Coverage* annually since 2021. The reports outline TCCS progress towards achieving 30% tree canopy cover by 2045.
- 2) TCCS has now completed a fourth yearly update outlining progress against delivery of the Urban Forest Strategy to be tabled in the Assembly this year.
- 3) As provided in the government response to the 2023-24 Estimate Committee recommendations: Volunteer groups deliver most of the plantings of shrubs and ground covers, and this is done within parameters stipulated by TCCS or EPSDD, depending on the location. Plantings may also be delivered as part of new or upgrade works, and these are delivered to contractual specifications.
- 4) As provided in the government response to the 2023-24 Estimate Committee recommendations: The TCCS Annual Report will include revenue and expenditure details associated with canopy contributions.
- 5) City Services planting locations particularly focus on areas of low urban canopy cover and areas where the canopy target is at risk of decline with the ageing of existing trees. Gaps in the existing tree canopy cover will also be filled in suburbs which are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The 2023 planning system includes strengthened tree canopy, permeability and planting area planning provisions for subdivision and residential, commercial and community facility zones, including new assessment outcomes, elements of the new Urban Design Guide and Housing Design Guide and Technical Specifications. Continuing implementation of *Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City* will also support canopy cover in areas with limitations on planting spaces.

- 6) Reporting of progress towards the Urban Forest Strategy goals, including achievements and challenges, is provided annually in the *Report to the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory - Urban Tree Canopy Coverage* and in the TCCS Annual Report.
- 7) There are a range of projects and initiatives that contribute to the 30% canopy cover target provided in the 2023 Report to the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory - Urban Tree Canopy Coverage, which is available on the city services website https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2324634/2023-Urban-Tree-Canopy-Coverage-.pdf. The 2024 update will be released in the coming months.
- 8) The published 2020 tree canopy cover estimate of 22.5% is based solely on tree canopy and does not include an "equivalent" component.

Action 2 of *Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City* is as follows: "Achieve 30% tree canopy cover (or equivalent) and 30% permeable surfaces in Canberra's urban footprint by 2045." The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development engaged CSIRO from 2020 to undertake research into potential approaches to calculating the equivalence between tree canopy and other types of living infrastructure. This research concluded in July 2024 and future steps are being considered.

Raingardens and wetlands contribute to reducing the urban heat island effect as they are landscaped using trees and shrubs. However, this is not incorporated into the Government estimates of tree canopy equivalents at this time.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

Signature: 

Date: 12/9/24

By the Minister for City Services, Tara Cheyne MLA