



19 December 2017

Street Tree Master Plan
Sunshine Coast Council
Locked Bag 72
Sunshine Coast Mail Centre QLD 4560

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Sunshine Coast Council Street Tree Master Plan

The AILA commends Sunshine Coast Council on the development of their comprehensive and well considered Draft Street Tree Master Plan. The level of detail and information available provides a broad background coupled with specific examples which underpin the recommendations and policy directions of the document. Consideration of the impacts of climate change on the selection of tree species and necessity for mitigating tree planting highlights the long term and strategic nature of this plan. The plan also addresses current and topical impacts on the development of street trees and Council is to be congratulated for coming up with some workable solutions to improve the delivery and quality of street trees to the Sunshine Coast.

The Draft Sunshine Coast Street Tree Master Plan is a very comprehensive document which sets a clear policy direction for Council. However the level of detail provided in Part A: Street Tree Master Plan Report is difficult to take in during a single read and potentially will discourage people from reading the full document. This document contains useful and interesting background information as well as specific policy directions and recommendations. We fear that there is a risk that policy and recommendations towards the rear of this document will not be visited regularly. We encourage Council to consider separating Part A into two different documents. One with a clear set of policy directions and recommendations, and the second with the valuable background information found throughout the report. We believe that this would assist policy makers and implementation staffs to be able to more easily access the actionable content of the Master Plan.

The separation of Part B: Street Tree Strategies as a technical reference document with specific street tree recommendations for the various Sunshine Coast regions is an excellent resource both for Council and the private sector delivering Council assets. The tailored local information and planting palettes provide a clear framework with enough choices for flexibility and delivery of cohesive and successful street tree planting for each region.

AILA notes with interest and concurs with Council's commentary on the provision of adequate space for tree planting in new residential streetscapes

While planning codes may intend for street trees to promote amenity in new residential streetscapes and to be given priority over other infrastructure elements (see Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014, Part 9: Development codes, 9.4.2 Landscape Code for example), less space and greater competition in today's multi-use road verges means that many residential developments will simply not have the capacity to support the growth of healthy, large or long-lived street trees.

It is suspected that an adequate tree canopy may fail to establish in many of the local streets of currently under-construction and future residential developments if the situation doesn't change. Part A -Page 44



AILA is encouraged that a recommendation has been included to “Amend drawings in applicable Planning Scheme codes (via formal Planning Scheme amendments) to show increased minimum road widths in local streets.” (Part A -Page 46). AILA also notes the following restrictions to adequate tree canopy cover in local streets:

- Reduced front and rear building setbacks
- Reduced lots sizes
- Enlarged house sizes
- Provision of solar access for rooftop solar.
- Reduced road reserve width.

These points indicate that one of the greatest contributor to the provision of adequate tree canopy in local streets and new residential subdivisions is lack of space for the development of adequate trees. While AILA commends Council’s proactive strategies to increase canopy area within local streets through use of intersections, roundabouts, medians and parkland these do not address the core problem of space for trees throughout the road verge and on house blocks. Therefore active review of the Planning Scheme in relation to road design, road widths, building setback and site coverage along with advocacy on this issue with the authors of road design manuals such as Queensland Streets and Austroads should be a key priority action for this Master Plan.

As provision of space for trees is outside the purview of Council departments responsible for the delivery and maintenance of Street Trees it will be important that the Street Tree Master Plan gains review and support across Council from departments responsible for delivering new infrastructure, estate master planning, and approval of development applications to ensure that coordinated strategy is taken across Council to achieve the desired outcomes of the Master Plan.

Members have also made the following specific comments on the Master Plan Report:

- Part A: Figure 2 - Page 45 – While truncations on corners to create space for large trees is a good idea care would need to be taken to preserve safe vehicle sight lines. Safety issues and sight-lines are very important factors in the choice of street trees. No trees should obstruct any traffic signs, signals or lights. Large canopy trees on corner lots might work well as long as they don’t obstruct necessary sight-lines We recommend that the figure be updated to show how the tree planting sits outside of the safe site line zone.
- Discussion of safety and sight lines should include commentary on the provision of clear trunks species along roadways to maintain visibility to pedestrians and other road users. Consideration should also be given to the overhanging of roads and footpaths to ensure that trees do not endanger pedestrians or are at a risk of damage by vehicles. Highlighting the importance of specifying trees of the right shape and size for the locality and guidelines on overhanging could be useful.
- Part A: Page 45 – Clarity should be provided on comments made around use of tree vault systems. In urban areas these have proved to be incredibly successful in establishing trees in hard pavements and where soil volume has been limited. They have been used successfully by Council on projects such as Bulcock Street. It appears that the concern lies around the quality and type of soil used to backfill the tree vault and its ability to provide long term nutrition for the tree. It is therefore recommended that advice on the preferred type of soil to be used in these systems is included.



- Part A: Page 49 – It is important that all levels of Government work together to achieve good street tree planting outcomes along our roads, especially major thoroughfares. Recommendations for working with DTMR should be considered to ensure that major corridors on the Sunshine Coast can be embellished appropriately and safety with street trees to enhance the amenity and character of significant entries and roadways across the region.
- Part A: Page 52 – Reference is made to the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme, Landscape Code Acceptable Outcome AO28.1 in relation to providing trees at 6m intervals. It should also be noted that this AO also includes the note of achieving 80% shade at maturity. We believe that the % of shade cover target is of greater value than an average of 6m spacing. Different trees grow to different sizes and therefore providing an 80% shading target allows the designer flexibility to select and space trees to achieve this target. This 6m figure is reference elsewhere in the document also.
- Part A – Page 54, Table 8 – Increasing the frequency of planting under power infrastructure to compensate for loss of tree mass has some merit, however care should be taken in planting trees (or shrubs in this circumstance) too close together where the denser lower mass of vegetation may restrict views and safety. For example 3m intervals could be too close together for many smaller bushy trees suitable for under powerline planting.

AILA supports the reactivation of Council's nursery for the development of tree stock which it is difficult to source commercially. The trial of local species as street trees is encouraged by AILA to support the range of diversity of trees which can be used in streetscapes and support local bio-diversity. AILA encourages council to continue to support local nurseries by not competing with them for provision of commonly available tree species to the market.

- Part A: Page 76 – the discussion of street tree species suitability and problems is good but may be lost in Part A. A more concise form of this information (ie. list of plants to be used sparingly and reasons why) is suggested of inclusion in Part B, which will be more readily used by the industry.
- Part A: Page 78- Care should be taken in excluding species from use due to variable form and characteristics. For example *Callistemon viminalis*, Weeping Bottlebrush, can be an excellent specimen for under powerlines and when planted in the correct conditions can form a good small tree with spectacular floral display. Another example is *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, Blueberry Ash, which can be an elegant narrow growing upright tree, particularly the 'Prima Donna' variety with its pink flowers.
- Part A: Page 86 – Placing the Guiding Principles this far into the document is an example of how important policy direction may be overlooked by having it so far into the document. Consider including near the start of Part A or as part of a more concise policy section of the Master Plan as discussed earlier .
- Part B – The information on street tree configurations is repeated from Part A. Consider having this information in only one part of the document. Part B appears to be a logical place for this information. This section could be strengthened by providing advice on tree offsets from other elements within a streetscape such as light poles, driveways, pedestrian crossovers, drainage pits and underground services as examples.
- Part A: Page 77 – AILA members support the commentary that *Lophostemon confertus*, has been over-used as a street tree and that they can grow to be too big as street trees being more suitable for planting in parks or wildlife corridors with sufficient space.
- The conflict of trees with underground services such as sewer, stormwater, water, electrical and telecommunications is discussed in the document. Unfortunately in the narrow road verges it if



often impossible to plant a street tree without causing problems in the future. Consideration should be given to how Council may be able to influence the alignment and location of services within the road verge to allow for street tree planting.

- Location and distance of tree planting alongside existing bushland should be discussed. Planting adjacent to mature trees in bushland can cause the street trees to grow crooked and to lean towards the street and in such circumstance smaller or no trees may be more appropriate.

NEXT STEPS

AILA looks forward to your response to the issues we have raised. If clarification of any of the issues outlined is required, please let us know. Representatives from our membership would also be willing to meet with you or your colleagues on specific methodologies and issues going forward if this would be of assistance.

Should you have any queries or wish to discuss, please contact Georgina Scriha, AILA Queensland Chapter Manager on 0417 666 622 or georgina.scriha@aila.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Don'.

Ian Don
AILA Queensland Advocacy Committee Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Safstrom'.

Carl Safstrom
AILA Sunshine Coast Committee