



Australian Institute of
Landscape Architects

01.02.20

Steven Marshall MP
Premier of South Australia
GPO Box 2343,
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Tree Canopy Cover in Adelaide

Dear Premier,

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, South Australian chapter, (AILA SA) applaud your recent commitment to tackling 'climate change's role in creating catastrophic bushfires, hotter suburbs and the erosion of beaches' (The Advertiser, 31 January 2020).

AILA SA has for many years advocated within government, pragmatically and practically, on solutions to creating cooler suburbs and greener outcomes.

Indeed, we have partnered with several State Government departments in preparing a cross government policy aimed at addressing hotter suburbs and the impacts of a changing climate.

In particular, we draw your attention to [Healthy Parks Healthy People SA](#) (HPPH SA) a co-designed, co-managed Public Health Partnership Authority initiative between the South Australian Department for Health and Wellbeing (DHW) and Department for Environment and Water (DEW).

The [HPPH SA](#) partnership has identified six key principles for green infrastructure in urban settings. These principles will help to keep growing our city in a way that protects and enhances our existing green spaces alongside the creation of new open space destinations.

Healthy Parks Healthy People SA has developed a document [Creating Greener Places for Healthy and Sustainable Communities: Ideas for Quality Green Public Space in South Australia](#) to explore how we can all work together to enhance our green spaces.

Further, in my experience working in local government, I saw first-hand the benefits of local government tackling the practical side of climate change, and I personally support your government's efforts to reform local government.

One area that may benefit from some reform is the so-called 'sustainability ratio' applied to managing assets across a local government area.

In my personal view, this ratio appears to be based on spreadsheet assessments generally of the level of asset renewal due in a particular financial year, and almost all South Australian councils dutifully follow this methodology. It is measured on the turnover of assets to ensure our roads are upgraded according to their condition.



I noticed that often the assessments (and therefore their level of renewal) were based on analysis of the condition of assets that were 3, 4 or even 5 years old, and often completed by external consultants.

This meant that often the assumptions on the yearly spend were not accurate and could result in assets being renewed that did not really need it. I confirmed this on many occasions when I went and personally inspected the streets and parks outlined for renewal. Often, visually, they appeared in good condition and not in need of renewal. Engineering assessments by my staff often proved me correct.

So, I see this is an opportunity to address your statements from last week in concert with local governments.

If there was a recommendation and potential support from the State Government for 1-2 years to reduce the annual 'sustainability ratio' and instead focus on creating new assets – aka – new tree planting measures – aimed at achieving the State's current target of 20% canopy cover – we would see a massive jump in suburban canopy cover using existing funds more efficiently, within existing funding streams.

This would at once increase the canopy cover, address your concerns about our hotter suburbs, use ratepayer's money more effectively and mitigate and reduce our carbon emissions.

As President of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects in South Australia and past President of the National body, our membership is approaching 25% of our 3,000 members across Australia in local government.

We would be willing to work with you on immediate and practical ways to address the issue of hotter suburbs and our coastal beaches.

Thank you for your leadership on such an important matter.

I look forward to being able to help in any way you see fit and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss in detail.

Yours Sincerely,

Daniel Bennett

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Fellow, AILA
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Cc:

Stephan Knoll MP - Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Local Government /Minister for Planning
David Speirs MP - Minister for Environment and Water
Stephen Wade MLC - Minister for Health and Wellbeing