

WHITEHORSE TREE STUDY

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WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

Trees are the most significant determinant of the character of the various areas within the City of Whitehorse, with upper tree canopy covering a significant proportion of the city. The bush garden character in parts of Whitehorse is a major contributor to the liveability of Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

Tree preservation and regeneration is therefore vitally important within the City, not only aesthetically, but also for its role in reducing the urban heat island effect and providing habitat for wildlife.

Whitehorse City Council has undertaken this Study to review, analyse and document the importance of the vegetation and especially tree canopy cover to the municipality and the region. It investigated ways in which this important aspect of the City can be protected and enhanced, as development and future growth inevitably occurs over time. The project focussed on trees on private land, rather than on Council and other public land which is managed in a variety of other ways.

The Tree Study has provided options and recommendations that will aim to ensure the future retention and regeneration of tree canopy, as outlined over the page.

WHAT WE HEARD

Feedback was received in response to the Draft Options Report (May 2016) through a series of drop-in sessions, a feedback form and online survey. The feedback provided valuable direction for further tree protection measures for Whitehorse.

Overall, the majority of responses to the Whitehorse Tree Study have been supportive of controls to protect tree canopy. Of those who expressed an opinion on a preferred tree control option, most had a preference for an extension of the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) controls in Whitehorse. The SLO seeks to conserve and control the kind of development that occurs within areas where vegetation is deemed to be central to the amenity of an area.

In addition, respondents highlighted the benefits of trees to urban cooling, habitat, aesthetics as well as a wide range of other benefits.

Community feedback also suggested minor variations to the preferred controls, greater opportunities for enforcement and penalties (for illegal tree removal), increased education and a need to consider site coverage, setbacks and open space requirements in new development.

THE FINAL OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

As a result of this consultation process, the Draft Options Report was revised and now provides greater detail. See overleaf for more information on the preferred option.



WHITEHORSE TREE STUDY - FINAL OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis and discussion as part of the Whitehorse Tree Study, the recommended option for further tree protection controls in Whitehorse is based on extending the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO).

This option includes:

- Improving planning policy within the Whitehorse Planning Scheme (MSS and Local Policy) and strengthening the Council Plan.
- Extending SLO controls to the remaining residential areas and including the Vegetation Protection Overlay areas. The recommended SLO would aim to protect any tree that has a minimum trunk circumference of 0.5m at 1.0m from the ground and a minimum height of 6 metres.
- Strengthening the landscape plan approval and review process in planning applications.
- Extending education programs and including welcome packs in a number of languages as appropriate.
- Enforcing S173 agreements on new subdivisions to require canopy tree planting on all sites.
- Continuing to advocate for an increase in fines for illegal tree removal, to the State Government.
- Providing incentives such as discounted canopy trees or tree vouchers through Council and community nurseries.

The preparation of any new tree protection control will consider the controls that already exist within the planning scheme and especially within the residential zone schedules, so that new controls build upon the existing variations and do not repeat or contradict these.

VIEW THE REPORT

The Final Options and Recommendations Report can be viewed online:

www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/treestudy.html

WHO CAN I SPEAK TO?

If you have a question or would like further information on the Whitehorse Tree Study please contact:

Vanessa McLean, Strategic Planner, on 03 9262 6180 or vanessa.mclean@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

WHERE TO NOW?

A preferred option for tree protection in the City of Whitehorse has been selected and was adopted by Council on the 18th of July 2016. Details and justification of the preferred option are included in the Final Options and Recommendations Report.

A planning scheme amendment to implement the preferred option is proposed to begin in the 2016/17 financial year. This process will allow for further community feedback based on the draft content of the provisions.

