

**ELECTRONIC ATTACHMENTS
FOR
BUSINESS PAPER**

**TUESDAY 20 MAY 2025
6:30 PM**

Item 3 Post Exhibition - Urban Forest Policy

Attachment 3: Engagement Report

2



URBAN FOREST POLICY

Engagement Outcomes Report

3 March – 4 April 2025



Executive Summary

From 3 March to 4 April 2025 the community was invited to provide feedback on draft Urban Forest Policy, which was placed on Public Exhibition. During the engagement period, 1,206 people visited the Your Say project page, with 36 community members participating in the online survey, 56 residents providing comment via 5 Pop-Up sessions, and 15 submissions via email or phone call.

The Exhibition Period not only aimed to inform community of the draft document, and Council's desire to develop a revised Policy and approach for urban tree management, but also to capture feedback that would directly inform the finalisation of the document. Community members from all five wards engaged passionately, providing feedback on both the document itself, as well as their vision for Urban Forest within the Inner West and their priorities to be considered in the development of a future Strategic Action Plan.

Promotion and engagement methods

Promotion method	Stakeholders engaged
Project page on Your Say Inner West	1,206 people viewed the project page. 349 downloads of the draft document
Emails to key stakeholders	1,313 registered members on the Your Say Inner West platform

Engagement method	Stakeholders engaged
Online survey	36 surveys completed
LGA Wide Pop-Ups	56 local residents were engaged. 5 Pop-ups across the LGA
Direct contact from residents	11 email submissions from individual residents 4 phone calls with interested community members

INNER WEST

What We Heard

Overall, the community were broadly supportive of the proposed draft document, and even more so of Council's commitment to developing a renewed approach for Urban Forest management. 86% of survey participants indicated support for an updated policy, and all but one pop-up participant shared the same belief.

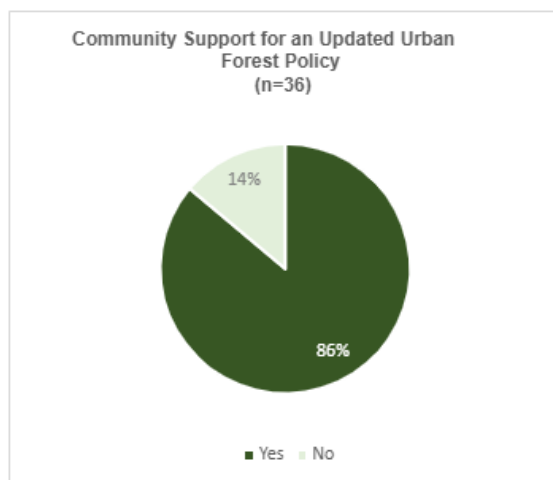
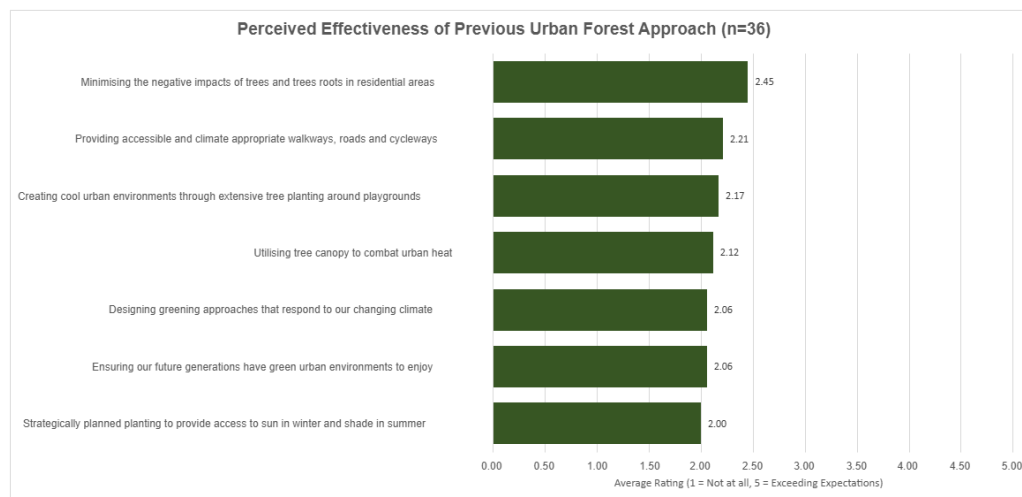


Figure 1: Survey participant support for an updated urban forest policy

This level of support directly aligns with previous community sentiment captured by Council on other engagement and customer services interactions. Ultimately, this draft Policy, and the broader update of Council's Urban Forest approach, is a response to the community's dissatisfaction with the previous Policy and management approach, which survey participants highlighted was particularly ineffective:



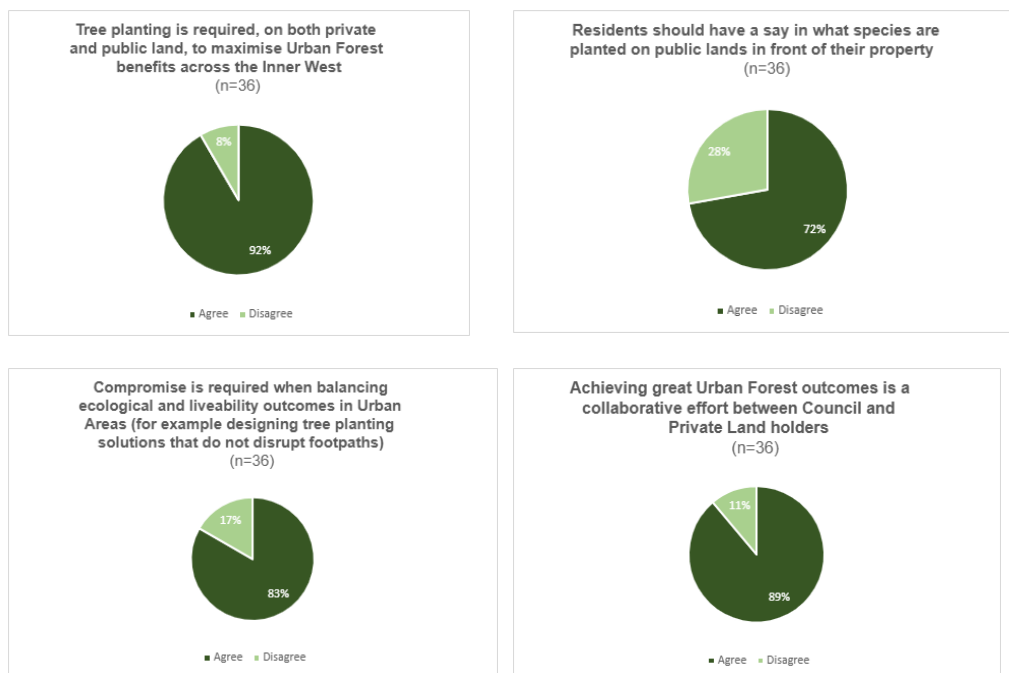
Broadly, the community felt the current proposed draft Policy was on track in responding to community priorities within the space, but felt a number of elements could be further refined to ensure transparency and guidance for all stakeholder in a collaborative urban forest management ecosystem, those being:

1. The desire for Council to designate and commit to measurable urban forest targets.
2. A desire to emphasise the importance of urban forest in achieving ecological outcomes and increasing biodiversity in the LGA.
3. Prioritisation of the urban greening of town centres and play spaces, to mitigate urban heat.
4. Further detailing, and making public, the technical studies or core measures that are the catalyst for developing the Policy and the positions taken within it.
5. Clearly defined tree removal/pruning request guidelines and protocols to ensure transparency between council, stakeholders and residents.
6. The inclusion of accountable actions and commitments from Council.
7. Consideration for a more robust tree removal notification process, than that which is proposed within the draft.

In addition to direct feedback on the draft Policy, the community engagement aimed to capture a deeper understanding of the community's priorities and values around the management of Urban Forest in the Inner West. Broadly, engagement participants felt



that achieving the objectives of the policy required a collective effort between private land holders, residents, and Council, and provided a clear indication of community values in achieving these objectives.



Aligned with these core values, community members across all engagement methods highlighted a number of priorities that they wish to see the Policy and Strategic Action Plan respond to. Those most commonly captured across the exhibition included:

1. Prioritising tree planting and urban canopy along major roads
2. Prioritising tree planting in town centres to mitigate the impacts of urban heat.
3. Prioritising tree planting adjacent to play spaces.
4. Developing accessible tree removal and pruning resources for community to better understand the process, response times and options available to them when exploring the removal of part or all of a tree on private land.
5. Designing a collaborative "tree custodian" program that enables residents to plant trees and large scrubs on verges and council owned land, whilst maintaining alignment with broader strategic direction and compliance



6. Council to nominate clear accountable actions and commitments to urban forest objectives outlined in the policy.
7. Exploring alternate tree removal guidelines besides the proposed size index, to remove ambiguity and prioritise the retention of healthy trees over enabling of compliant tree removal.
8. Increased and more robust tree removal public notice procedures and process, to ensure all neighbouring residents are aware of impending removal and have opportunity to raise enquiry.
9. Considered and clear species selection guidelines to ensure the delivery of urban forest that is resilience in the face of increasing density and climate change.
10. Utilising Council owned and managed parks and open space for large tree species and achieving tree canopy targets.
11. Valuing the value of urban forest in achieving biodiversity outcomes and designing appropriate response to achieve these.

Overall, across all engagement methods we heard overwhelming community support for Council's need to deliver a new Urban Forest Policy and subsequent management approach. All engagement participants highlighted the need for improvement in this space, irrespective of their diverse visions for urban forest in the Inner West.