



TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

National Capital Authority

May 2021



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

In the spirit of reconciliation, the National Capital Authority acknowledges the Ngunnawal People, Traditional Custodians of the land this policy refers to and pays respect to Elders past and present.

**The National
Capital Authority
treescape is diverse,
resilient and sustainable,
enhancing the richness
of landscape character
envisaged by the Griffins'
plan for Canberra.**





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PREAMBLE

Canberra has been a special meeting place for tens of thousands of years for the Ngunnawal People. The National Capital Authority (NCA) manages the land that forms the heart of our nation, with a mission to shape the National Capital as a valued and respected place for all Australians by ensuring it is well planned, managed and promoted, consistent with its enduring national significance.

Trees in the National Capital are fundamental in strengthening the geometry and intent of the Griffins' formally adopted plan for Canberra. The Griffins' design for the new capital city drew upon the natural features surrounding the area and framed avenues and vistas with layered plantings. Trees provide visual strength to the Land Axis from Parliament House to Anzac Parade; they help form and define the main avenues of the National Triangle; as well as establishing other formal spaces.

Trees are also essential to the creation of the attractive parklands, streetscapes, and other spaces. They both complement and soften the built setting of Central Canberra. Canberra is renowned as a Garden City and the 'bush capital', which demonstrates the important status trees hold in the Canberra landscape.

The NCA is committed to the 'National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development' in managing development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

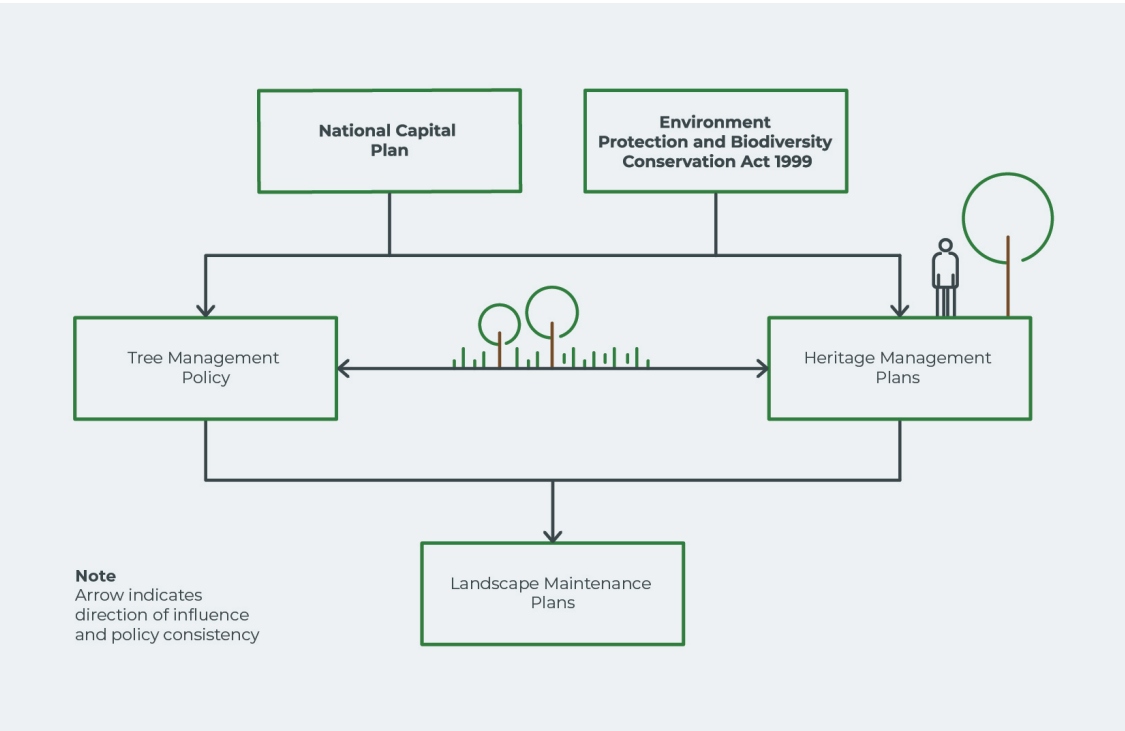
The NCA recognises that the wellbeing of the community is critical to the liveability and economic prosperity of our city and has a role in leading better quality and design of the public realm. Trees provide shade, amenity, and in well-planned places; contribute to community health and wellbeing.

This Tree Management Policy (the Policy) is a key part of the planning and management documents that detail how the National Capital Authority (NCA) will manage its open spaces into the future. The policy is supplementary to the National Capital Plan and provides guidance to heritage management plans and landscape maintenance plans. The Policy will also guide the content of other NCA planning documents.

The Policy has been developed through widespread consultation with the community, the ACT Government, industry experts and professional organisations. The NCA greatly values the input from all stakeholders, which has enhanced this policy.

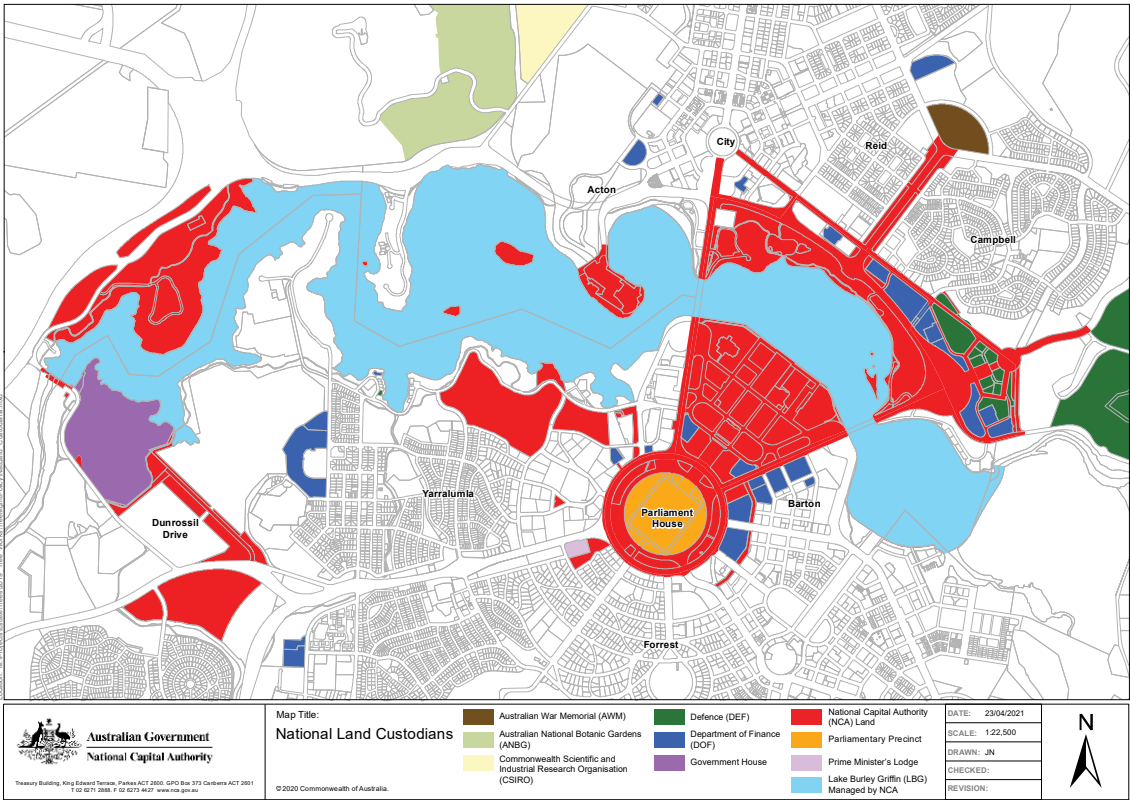


Figure 1:
Key document
hierarchy



The map below shows the custodians of National Land in central Canberra. Although the NCA has a planning role in relation to works on all National Land in Canberra, it does not directly manage a number of sites as can be seen from the map.

Figure 2:
National Land
Custodians





PURPOSE

This policy is our approach to the management of NCA urban trees and treescape, and the Lindsay Pryor National Arboretum, to enable readiness for current and future challenges associated with the ageing tree population, climate change, tree removal and replacement, water management, heritage conservation, and the development and utilisation of open space.

VISION

The NCA treescape is diverse, resilient and sustainable, enhancing the richness of the landscape character envisaged by the Griffins' plan for Canberra, for the benefit of all Australians.





The statistics on page 12 show that NCA trees are healthy, well managed and cared for.



POLICY OBJECTIVES

- ① **Building resilient landscapes** so that the current and future benefits of NCA's trees are maximised for the community and the environment.
- ② **Protecting and managing** the existing treescape for the diversity of benefits it offers for shade, amenity, heritage or biodiversity.
- ③ **Growing the future treescape** through proactive planning, replacing removed trees and planting additional trees where appropriate.
- ④ **Demonstrating leading urban tree management practice** and embed it into daily decision-making and providing leadership for other land managers.
- ⑤ **Monitoring and evaluating** the status of the treescape and the tree management program to continually improve decision making.
- ⑥ **Proactively planning** the continuing treescape through learning from the past and engaging the community in designing future plantings and landscapes.

POLICY TARGETS

- ① Tree canopy cover will increase from 33% to 40% by 2030.
- ② Improve the age diversity of the treescape by ensuring at least 10% of the population are juvenile.
- ③ Improve the existing diversity of species so that no one species represents more than 10% of the tree population.





SCOPE

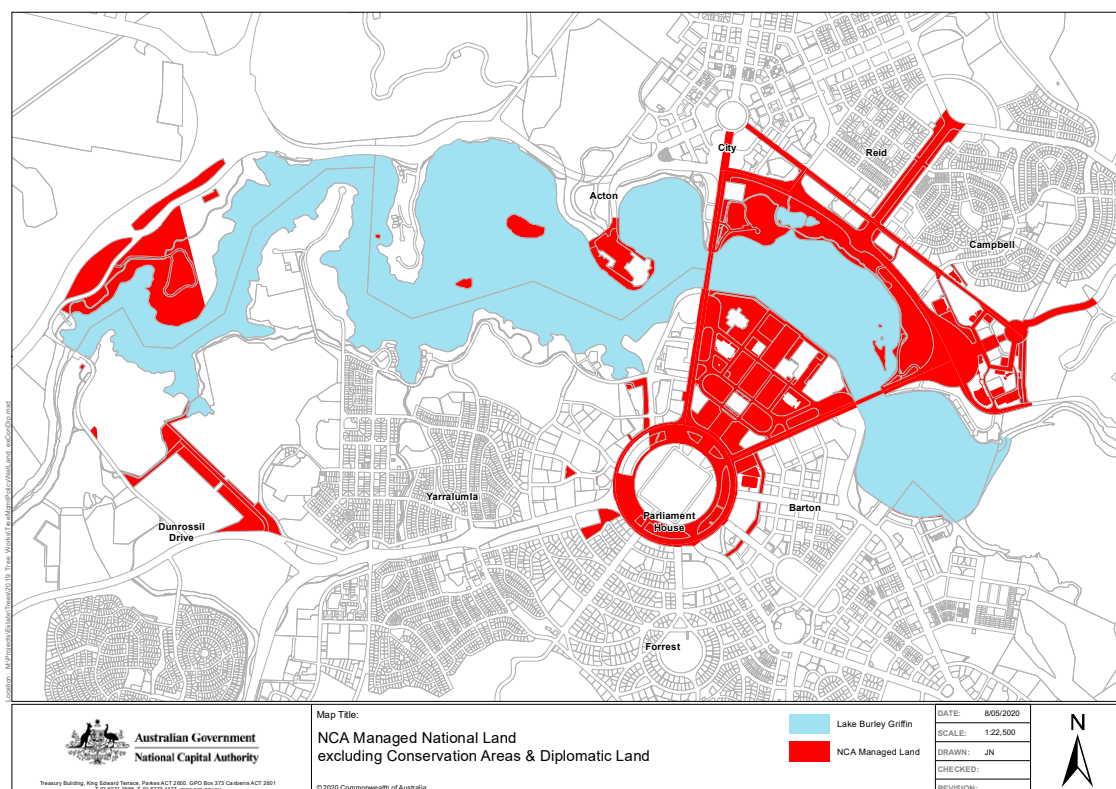
This policy applies to trees on NCA managed land, see Figure 3 below, and excludes biodiversity conservation areas which have their own conservation management plans.

Trees excluded from the policy include:

- ACT Government owned and managed trees
- Trees in conservation reserves
- Trees managed by Parliament House and the Australian War Memorial
- Trees managed by other Australian Government agencies
- Trees on private land within the Central National Area
- National land reserved for diplomatic use

This policy is applicable to the work of developers, builders, contractors, event organisers, service providers and NCA staff who arrange or undertake activities in proximity to NCA managed trees.

Figure 3:
Central National
Area—NCA
managed National
Land where the
Tree Management
Policy applies





CONTEXT

The urban tree legacy of central Canberra has been guided by the vision of the Griffins' design and the pioneering work of Charles Weston, Lindsay Pryor and the development work undertaken by the National Capital Development Commission, the NCA and others.

Trees in the Central National Area of Canberra today are fundamental in strengthening the geometry and intent of the Griffins' formally adopted plan for Canberra. Trees provide visual strength to the Land Axis from Parliament House through to the Australian War Memorial; they help form and define the main avenues of the National Triangle; as well as establishing other formal spaces.

Trees are also essential to the creation of the attractive parklands, streetscapes, and other spaces and for the provision of shade. They both complement and soften the built setting of Central Canberra. Canberra has been renowned as a Garden City and the 'bush capital', which demonstrates the important status trees have in the Canberra landscape. The significance of this treed landscape is also recognised in a number of heritage listings.

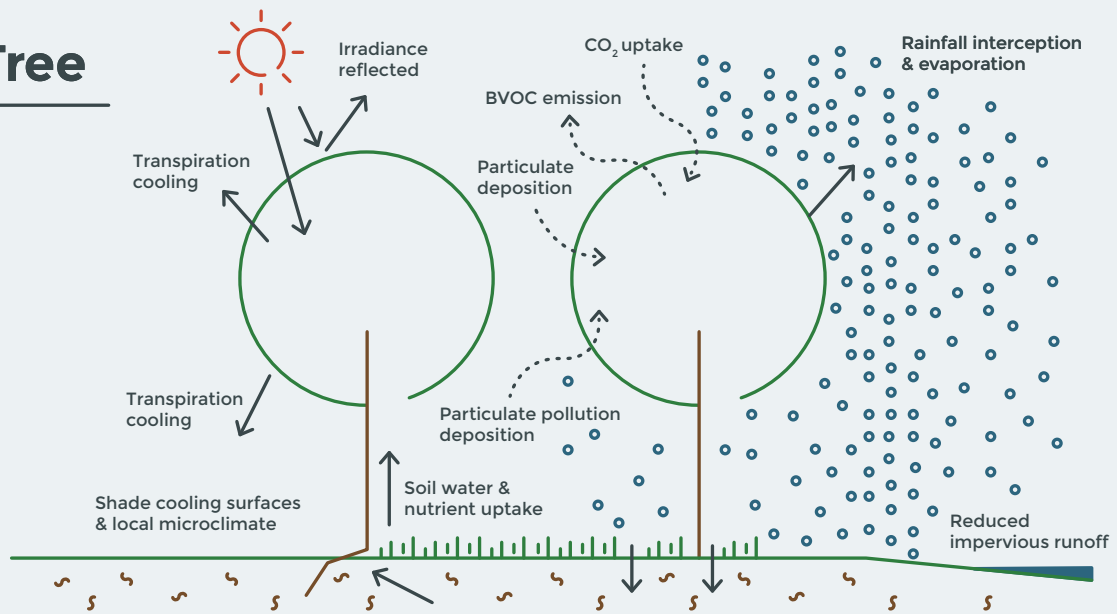
Through their broad range of environmental, social and economic benefits, trees are one of the most efficient and cost-effective mechanisms for helping Canberra adapt to climate change through micro-climatic moderation and absorption of stormwater. They also provide habitat and food for wildlife, reduce energy consumption in buildings and well managed, safe, green areas can encourage people to walk or ride rather than drive.

The NCA considers its trees an important asset, therefore all management options will be explored before tree removal is recommended. While tree removal is a last resort management option, public safety always takes priority.

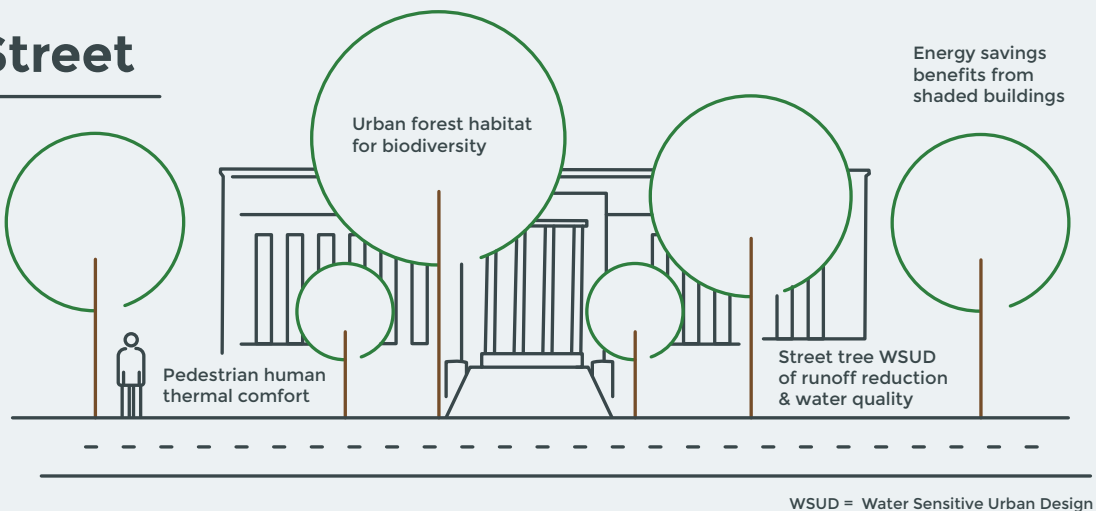
More information about the benefits of trees in urban environments can be found at the City Melbourne website <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/greening-the-city/tree-protection-management/Pages/tree-protection-and-management.aspx#benefits>



Tree



Street



City

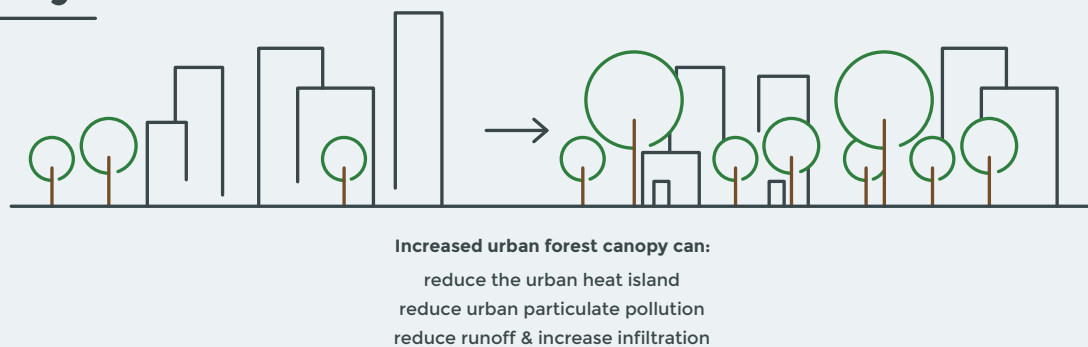


Figure 4: The broad benefits provided by urban trees at various scales (Adapted from Livesley et al, 2018. Livesley, S.J., McPherson, E.G., Calafapietra, C. 2018. "The Urban Forest and Ecosystem Services: Impacts on Urban Water, Heat, and Pollution Cycles at the Tree, Street, and City Scale". Journal of Environmental Quality, 45:119–124)

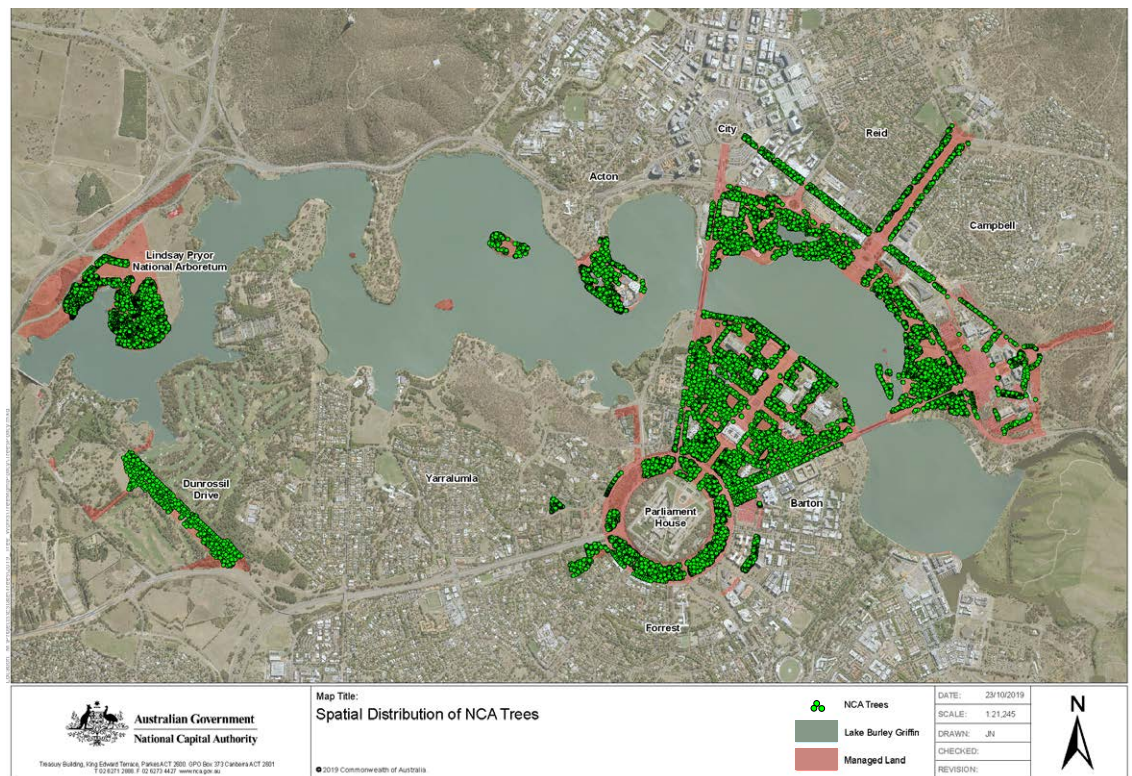
CONTEXT CONTINUED

The NCA is the custodian of Canberra's Central National Area. The 18,000 trees that the NCA manages in this prominent location provide a stunning setting for the national institutions, memorials and ceremonial areas. They create excellent shade and cooling; providing tree canopy cover of approximately 33% over NCA land, which in comparison to many urban areas across Australia is considered high.

Approximately half of these 18,000 trees are street trees and half are park trees. A detailed inventory of the trees in 2019 in the Central National Area reveals the following:

- 93% of trees have a useful life expectancy over 20 years.
- 23% of trees have a useful life expectancy over 40 years.
- The most common species is *Eucalyptus mannifera* at 12% of the population.
- The second most common tree species is *Eucalyptus bicostata* at 11.5 %.
- Together these two species represent almost a quarter of NCA's tree population.
- Most of NCA's trees are mature and 8% are juvenile.
- 91% of trees are in fair to good health with 9% assessed as being in less than fair health.

Figure 5:
Spatial distribution
of NCA's trees in
2019



The 2019 inventory shows that NCA trees are relatively healthy, well managed and cared for. There is a wide range of species across NCA land with more than 70 species represented. This data indicates the age diversity needs be improved by increasing the number of juvenile trees through a wide-ranging tree planting program.

Climate change, urban development and the need for open space to be multi-functional all place various stresses on our trees and in some cases could cause an increase in the number of trees that decline and die. The data shows that 70% of the trees will need to be replaced within the next 40 years.

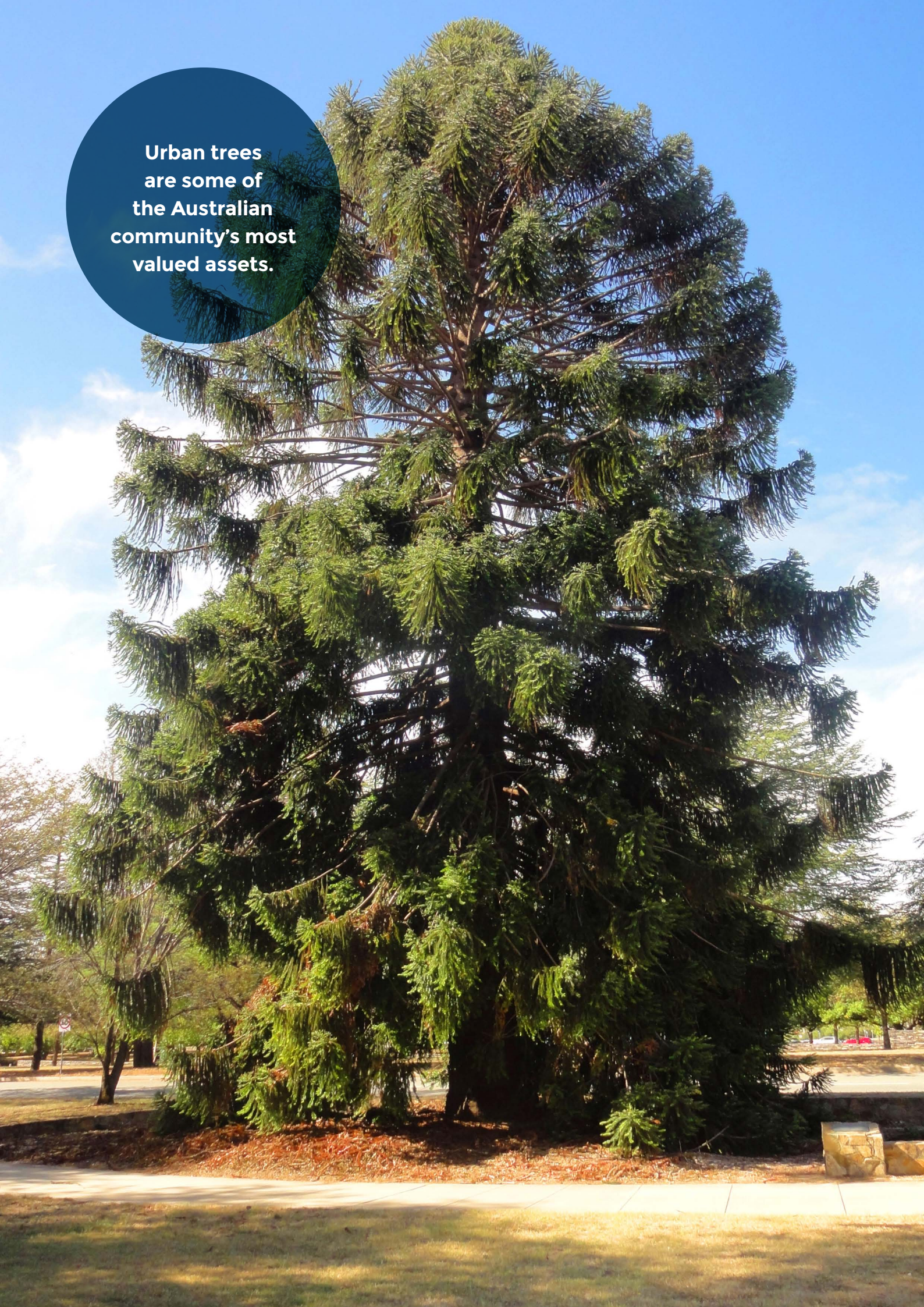
The Tree Management Policy outlines the NCA's approach to maintain a diverse and resilient treescape that supports the richness of landscape character and provides a balanced response to the issues raised during the public consultation on the NCA Tree Policy Issues Paper.

The Policy also reflects the NCA's desire to align itself with the Tree Cities of the World standards¹.

¹ Tree Cities of the World standards: <https://treecitiesoftheworld.org>



**Urban trees
are some of
the Australian
community's most
valued assets.**





POLICY STATEMENT

The NCA recognises the immense contribution that the treescape makes to the character and resilience of our urban landscape.

Urban trees are some of Canberra's most valuable assets and must therefore be protected, maintained and replaced to enhance their collective heritage, environmental, social and economic values.

KEY POLICY AREAS

- ① Managing resilience and vulnerability of the NCA treescape
- ② Design, development and land use planning
- ③ Community participation and knowledge
- ④ Maintenance, data, monitoring and evaluation
- ⑤ Heritage
- ⑥ Governance and management arrangements



MANAGING RESILIENCE AND VULNERABILITY OF NCA'S TREESCAPE

NCA's urban trees do and will face a range of challenges, which if not well managed, could lead to vulnerability amongst the tree population. There is a need to build resilience by improving the age profile of the trees, developing strategies to address climate change, urban development and increased use of public spaces.

The NCA commits to the following:

Policy 1.1

A climate adapted suite of species suitable for NCA landscapes will be developed and updated every five years.

Policy 1.2

New tree species, that are not invasive, will be trialled within the Lindsay Pryor National Arboretum and other areas for suitability to plant in Canberra's conditions.

Policy 1.3

An annual tree planting program will be delivered to achieve the NCA canopy cover target of 40% by 2030 and to ensure a balanced and diverse age profile. This will also include funding for planning and maintenance activities.

Policy 1.4

Where appropriate and feasible, water sensitive urban design will be implemented.

Policy 1.5

Integrated pest and disease management plans will be developed where required.



There are opportunities to improve and extend the treescape and increase canopy cover. Any loss of canopy from tree removals or decline in tree health will jeopardise the much-needed contribution that trees make to the designed landscape character, including vital environmental services and public amenity. Balancing the value of the treed landscape with development and public use of areas must be considered from a range of perspectives, including the need to protect the treescape.

The NCA commits to the following:

Policy 2.1

Growing the future treescape through a proactive tree planting program in accordance with applicable plans.

Policy 2.2

Preparation of Landscape Guidelines to apply to all works in Designated Areas, including NCA managed land.

Policy 2.3

All relevant NCA strategic planning and management documents will reflect the Tree Management Policy.

Policy 2.4

Locations for events, activities and other uses on National Land will be selected to ensure they are of an appropriate scale and nature so as to protect trees within the landscape.

Policy 2.5

For every tree that is removed on NCA managed land, at least one will be planted.

Policy 2.6

All management options will be explored before tree removal is recommended. While tree removal is a last resort management option, public safety always takes priority. A tree will be removed if:

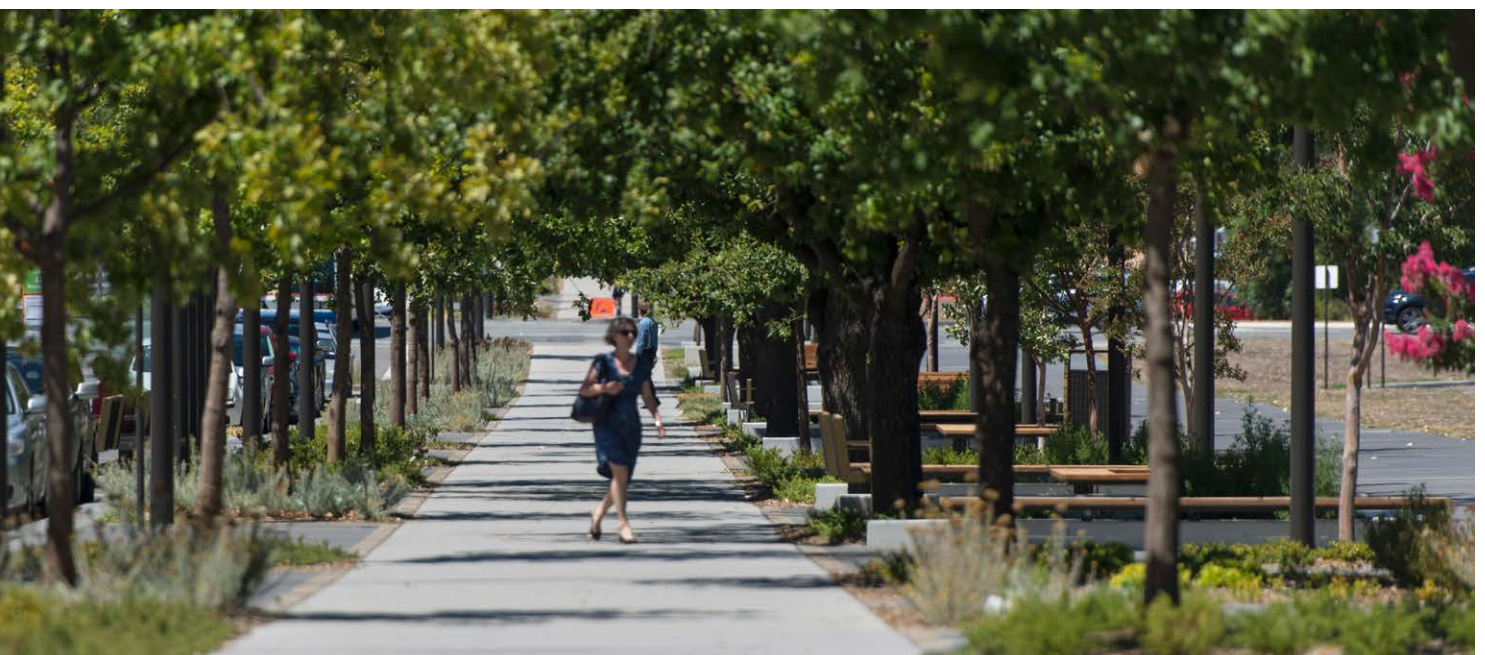
- It is dangerous or dead
- It is in such poor health that it no longer provides any value to the landscape
- It presents a significant weed risk
- It has failed to establish and is of very poor structure or health

Policy 2.7

Where trees cannot be managed individually, the NCA will develop a strategy for the removal and replacement of groups of trees.

Policy 2.8

Landscapes will be managed and enhanced to support native wildlife and ecological diversity wherever possible.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND KNOWLEDGE

The broad range of community expectations, values and needs of the NCA treescape defines the need for transparency of information, clear and agreed pathways of decision-making and the opportunity to involve the community in helping the NCA to monitor the performance of the treescape.

The NCA commits to the following:

Policy 3.1

Continued engagement with the community, particularly with the Ngunnawal Traditional Owners, regarding key tree management issues and identification of opportunities to enable input.

Policy 3.2

Citizen science opportunities will be developed to help monitor and evaluate the performance of the NCA treescape and assist in ongoing management where applicable.

Policy 3.3

The NCA website will enable an open data approach to share information about trees on NCA land.

Policy 3.4

Opportunities for consultation with the community will be made available for key planning documents such as heritage management plans and Landscape Guidelines, as well as for the planning of major projects affecting the treed landscape.



MAINTENANCE, DATA, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to effect evidence-based decisions about the maintenance of its trees, the NCA will require robust data and information that is regularly monitored and evaluated. This process will inform the development of best practice methods needed to achieve the future landscape vision, canopy cover targets and standard of landscape excellence.

The NCA commits to the following:

Policy 4.1

A clear and effective monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed and implemented to inform tree management decisions into the future.

Policy 4.2

A central tree database will be maintained to include records of maintenance history, annual condition assessments, required works and heritage and ecological values.

Policy 4.3

Canopy cover will be measured and modelled at regular intervals to evaluate progress towards the policy target.

Policy 4.4

Species performance will be reviewed every five years to inform the preferred list of climate adapted species.

Policy 4.5

Staff and contractors who are responsible for the management of trees will be appropriately experienced and qualified.

Policy 4.6

Trees will be protected in accordance with accepted best practice standards².

Policy 4.7

A soil improvement program will be developed and implemented.

Policy 4.8

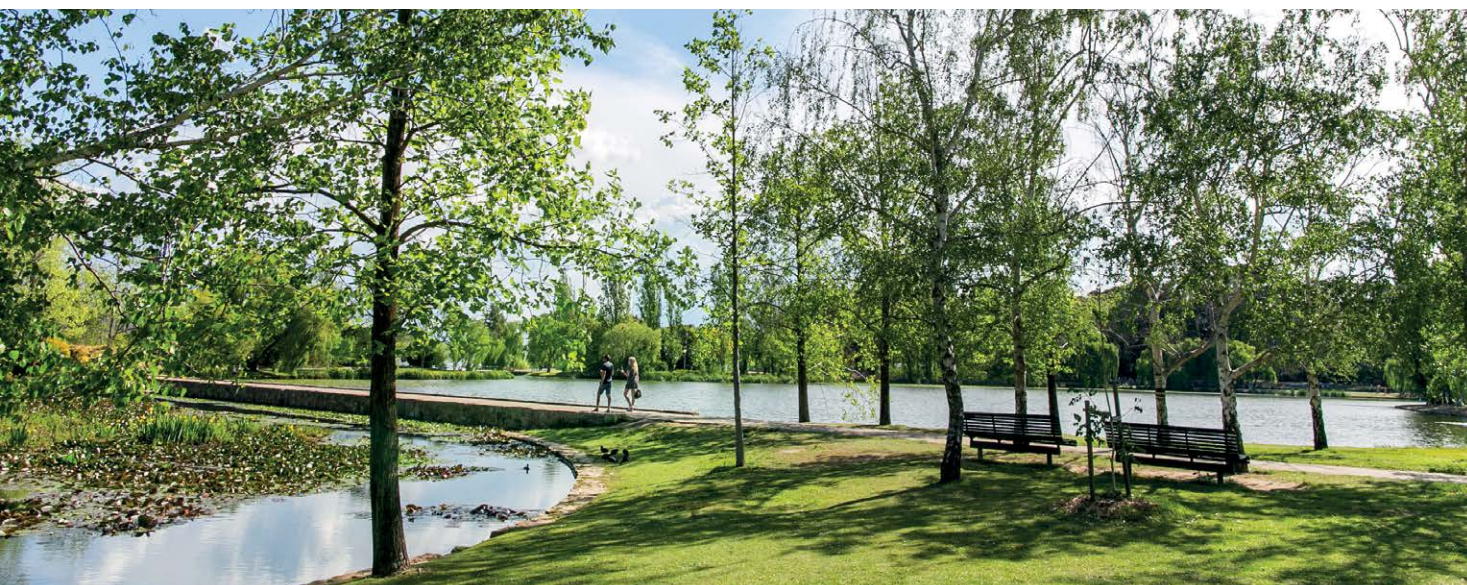
Leading practice urban tree management techniques will be adopted.

Policy 4.9

Maintenance plans, including irrigation regimes that are appropriate to the landscape will be developed.

Policy 4.10

Veteran trees³ will be identified and managed to extend their landscape value for as long as possible while maintaining safety.



² Australian Standard 4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites
Australian Standard 4373-2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees

³ A veteran tree is a tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition (Veteran Trees: A Guide to Good Management, Natural England, 2000).



The trees under the care of the NCA are part of an evolving landscape that has slowly developed since 1911. This landscape carries stories and shared values, many of which are recognised as heritage values that the NCA is obliged to protect and manage under the provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth). The NCA is also guided by the best practice approach to heritage conservation and management set out in the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013⁴.

As custodians of this living place there is a need to ensure a dynamic and healthy urban forest while acknowledging and respecting the heritage values of the landscape. It will be most important in managing the treescape in changing environmental conditions to consider different tree species that will thrive in order to safeguard the urban forest for future generations.

The NCA commits to the following:

Policy 5.1

Heritage management plans will be complementary to the Tree Management Policy.

Policy 5.2

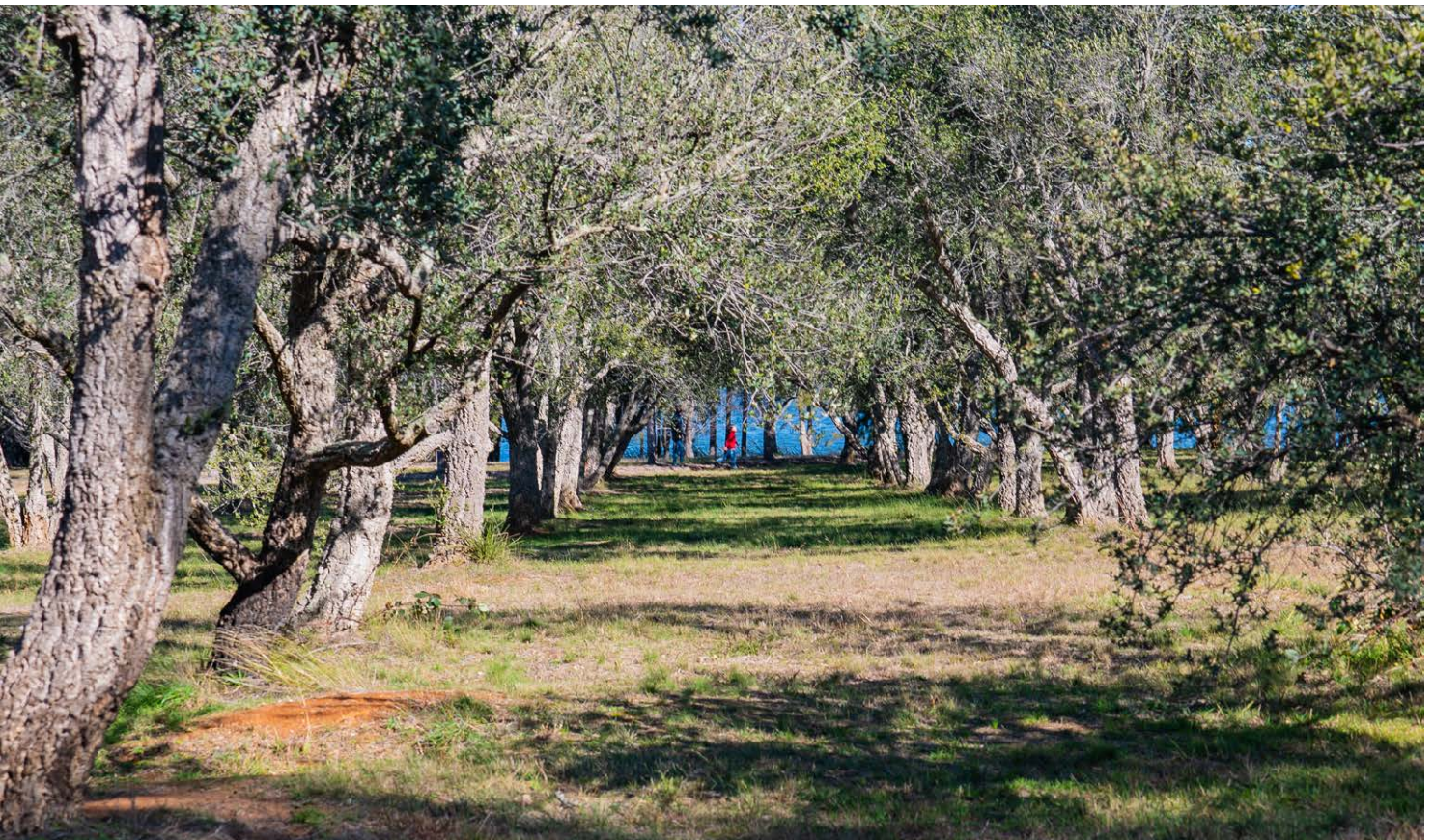
Landscape maintenance plans will be prepared to provide more detailed guidance for areas within a HMP.

Policy 5.3

A mix of trees in keeping with a place's identified heritage values will be maintained on National Land.

Policy 5.4

In most instances trees that are removed will be replaced with the same species. Where a species fails to thrive or has otherwise become unviable, trees may be replaced with a different species that contributes to the same heritage value as the original tree.



⁴ The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013, (<https://australia.icomos.org/publications/charters/>)

The NCA commits resources through its Corporate Plan and budget processes to protect and manage the treescape. Strategic planning and management documents provide a framework for operational and maintenance procedures.

Most trees on NCA managed land are located within places subject to heritage listings under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Heritage management plans describe the heritage values that trees contribute to the 20 heritage listed places and the NCA manages these places to protect their values.

Developing partnerships and articulating roles and responsibilities for both NCA's trees and the broader Canberra urban forest will ensure that Canberra continues to exhibit garden city characteristics. Where there are shared boundaries with other land management agencies it is desirable to have complementary management practices.

The NCA commits to the following:

Policy 6.1

This policy will be reviewed and updated every 10 years.

Policy 6.2

A report to the NCA Board and the community will be provided annually on progress towards tree canopy and diversity targets.

Policy 6.3

Appropriate resources will be provided to ensure tree management meets the Policy objectives.

Policy 6.4

The NCA Corporate Plan and annual business plans will reflect the objectives of the Policy.

Policy 6.5

Individual trees will be valued and included within the organisational financial statements and asset management system.

Policy 6.6

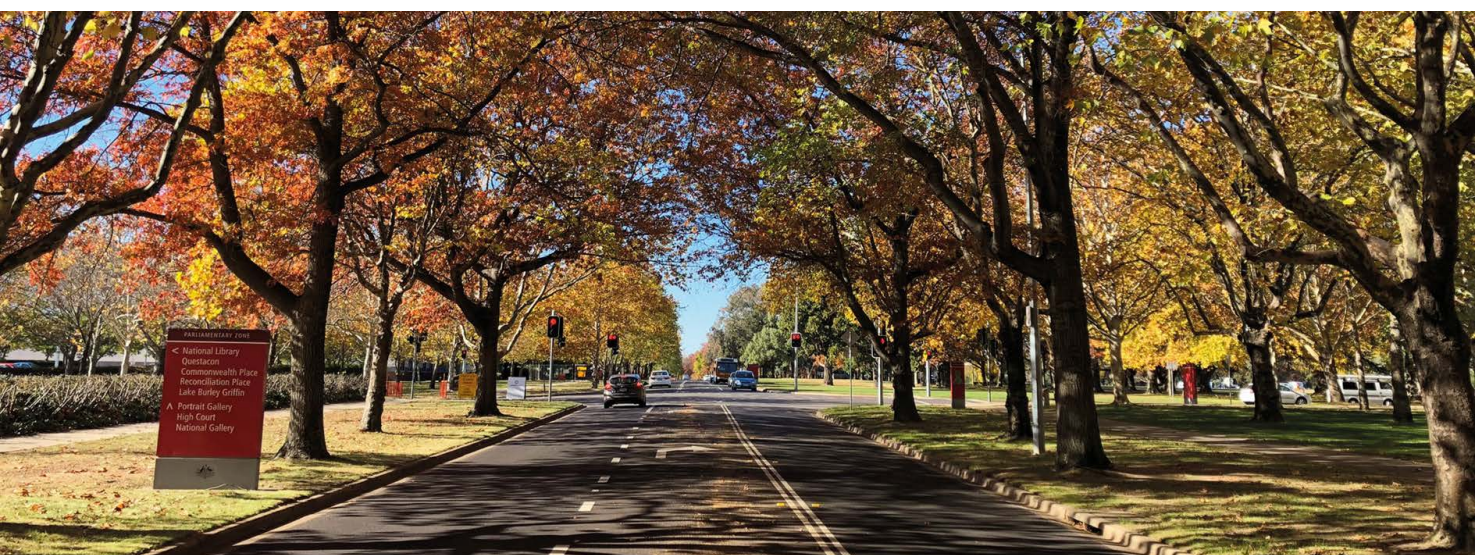
Training will be provided to staff and contractors to protect and care for trees in accordance with best practice.

Policy 6.7

Engagement with Indigenous custodians and other ACT land managers will be encouraged and organised to share and reflect on learnings in urban tree management.

Policy 6.8

Measures to align governance and management arrangements with the Tree Cities of the World standards will be implemented.





NEXT STEPS

Within the term of the NCA Corporate Plan 2020–21 to 2023–24, the NCA will implement the following initiatives.

- ① Develop and implement a Tree Management Policy, Implementation Plan. Specific initiatives to progress include:
 - A program for community involvement
 - Continued development of strategies for monitoring and evaluation of tree management information to improve management and practices
 - A tree planting program that will achieve 40% canopy cover by 2030
 - A climate adapted suite of species for application where appropriate
 - A training program for staff and contractors
 - Explore opportunities with other land management agencies where there are shared boundaries to develop complementary management practices.
- ② Review the National Capital Plan to reflect the objectives of the Policy, including preparation of Landscape Guidelines to apply to all works in Designated Areas.
- ③ This Policy will guide heritage management plans as they are reviewed and updated.
- ④ Landscape maintenance plans will be developed for prioritised locations.
- ⑤ A program for the care of veteran trees will be developed.



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