



GML
HERITAGE

NLA Forecourt Lombardy Poplars

Archival Recording

Report prepared for the National Capital Authority

June 2021

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Report Register

The following report register documents the development and issue of the report NLA Forecourt, Lombardy Poplars—Archival Recording, undertaken by GML Heritage Pty Ltd in accordance with its quality management system.

Job Number	Issue Number	Notes/Description	Issue Date
21-0164	1	Draft Report	4 June 2021
21-0164	2	Final Report	18 June 2021

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The report has been reviewed and approved for issue in accordance with the GML quality assurance policy and procedures.

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Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has commissioned GML Heritage (GML) to prepare an archival recording of the four rows of Lombardy poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italica') at the National Library of Australia Forecourt (NLA Forecourt).

The requirement for an archival recording comes from the NCA's decision for the removal/replacement of the trees.

The archival recording will assist the NCA in managing its obligations under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act). The report includes a description of the study area, a photographic recording catalogue and map of the photograph's locations and directions.

1.2 Project Methodology

GML has undertaken this archival recording in accordance with the NSW Heritage Office Guidelines *How to Prepare Archival Records of Heritage Items, and Photographic Recording of Heritage Items Using Film or Digital Capture*. The fieldwork for the archival recording took place on 27 May 2021.

The purpose of an archival recording is to accurately record existing heritage items with site plans and drawings (if necessary) as well as photographs to be preserved for future use and interest. Best practice principles for heritage places encourage the recording of a heritage place if it is to be demolished or changed.

The photographic recording comprises of close-up photographs and wide shots that capture the overall views and contextualise the trees in the landscape. The project team undertook the recording using a DSLR camera.

The NLA Forecourt Lombardy poplars are individually numbered as part of the NCA estate-wide tree numbering system (trees 1000835–1000877). In the Tree Assessment report prepared by Canopy Tree Experts, as part of a Heritage Assessment in 2017, the individual poplars were numbered from 1 to 44. The 2017 style has been continued in this archival recording, refer to Figure 1.3.

1.3 Referenced Reports

This archival report references two reports:

- National Library of Australia Forecourt, Heritage Assessment, prepared for Spackman + Mossop by Godden Mackay Logan 2006 (2006 HA); and
- National Library of Australia Forecourt Lombardy poplars, Heritage Assessment, prepared for the NCA by GML Heritage 2017 (2017 HA).

1.4 Site Identification

The NLA is located within the Parliamentary Zone in central Canberra, 2.5km south of the Central Business District and 2km north of Australian Parliament House (Figure 1.1). The Library is bounded by Flynn Drive to the west, King Edward Terrace to the south, Parkes Place West to the east and the southern shore of Lake Burley Griffin to the north. The NLA is accessed via King Edward Terrace and Parkes Place West (Figure 1.2).

The Forecourt is the central space directly east of the NLA's main entrance, bordered by a one-way access road (unnamed), off Parkes Place West. The Lombardy poplars (the subject of this archival recording) are located within the Forecourt, in four rows on a northwest–southeast alignment (Figure 1.3).



Figure 1.1 Aerial view of the NLA Forecourt (red shading) location. (Source: Google Earth with GML overlay)



Figure 1.2 Aerial view of the NLA Forecourt, outlined in red. The Lombardy poplars are in four rows (two rows either side of the fountain). (Source: Google Earth with GML overlay)



Figure 1.3 Aerial view of the NLA Forecourt, identifying the location of the four rows of trees. (Source: Nearmap with GML overlay, 2021)

1.5 Site Description

The NLA Forecourt was an integral element in the Bunning and Madden design of the NLA.¹ As with classical buildings, the NLA Forecourt is an important intermediary podium to the entrance of the NLA. It allows visitors to walk around and appreciate the building and enter the Library via a stairway.² The features of the Forecourt reflect the formal architectural qualities of the building and give an appropriate entry and setting for the approach to the monumental Library.

The landscaping of the Forecourt was conceived from the outset to complement the building style, with a deliberate choice of Lombardy poplar. These tall columnar trees were sited in double rows to the north and south of the Forecourt, forming a short avenue approach to the building from the east and presenting a block of vegetation with repetitive vertical elements to extend the columnar effect of the Library building when viewed from the north or south. Lombardy poplars were chosen for their vertical and formal shape to match the building style and direct the eye towards the entrance. Also, as one of the tallest trees to grow successfully in Canberra (a mature specimen reaching up to 30 metres), they were chosen as an appropriate match to the size of the building.

Within the grassed areas are four rows of Lombardy poplars at varying stages of growth. The rows of poplars are approximately 40m in length, with three to four metres between each tree. Some trees have died and been removed, resulting in some gaps. In recent years the condition of the poplars has substantially deteriorated, most notably on the north side of the Forecourt, and their columnar form and consistent full leaf coverage is not as well expressed, as some have declined and had dead wood removed.

The Lombardy poplar is an exotic tree species introduced to the Canberra region in the early 1900s.³ It can be found in central parks such as Glebe, Bowen, Commonwealth and Kings Park and within the Parliamentary Zone such as around Lake Burley Griffin and Old Parliament House. It is considered a weed species and prohibited pest plant under the *Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005* (ACT). However, it is a common heritage species in Canberra.⁴

1.6 Summary of Significance

The NLA is included in the Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) under the title of 'National Library of Australia and Surrounds' (Place ID 105470). The CHL boundary is the building and does not include the podium or Forecourt. The Forecourt is not individually included on the CHL but is within the boundary of the 'Parliamentary House Vista' CHL listing (Place ID: 105466).

The 2017 heritage assessment against the Commonwealth Heritage criteria, prepared by GML, concluded that the NLA Forecourt and the Lombardy poplars are significant for their contribution to the heritage values of the NLA. The poplars are significant as a species planted during the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) period throughout Canberra as designed elements of the landscape. The NLA Forecourt meets criteria (a) historic, (d) principal characteristics, (f) creative/technical, and (h) associations.

The NLA Forecourt was designed as an integral part of the NLA. It was designed to complement the classical styling of the building and to reflect the designed cultural landscape of Canberra and the Parliamentary Zone.

The attributes of the NLA Forecourt which embody the Commonwealth Heritage values are:

- the horizontal platform;
- rectangular and symmetrical plan;
- the fountain and verticality of the fountain jets;
- the species of Lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra 'Italica'*) (not the individual trees);
- the vertical, columnar form, symmetrical layout of the Lombardy poplars and their seasonal colour; and
- east–west axis (perpendicular to the Land Axis) and views to and from the NLA, through the NLA Forecourt and poplars to the footbridge linking the High Court and the National Gallery.⁵

The specific heritage significance of the Lombardy poplars is:

- **Historic value**—the 'species of choice' selected by Richard Clough of the NCDC in the original design and development of the forecourt. Lombardy poplars have been planted historically throughout Canberra and are indicative of the NCDC's period of intense development and urban landscape design that is representative of the design cultural landscape.
- **Architectural characteristic**—the formal, column-like appearance and symmetry of the two double rows of Lombardy poplar plantings in front of the Library and the lawn terrace of the Forecourt reflect and complement the Late Twentieth Century Stripped Classical style of the NLA. The symmetrical planted trees frame and focus the view to and from the entrance of the Library.

- **Landscape setting characteristics**—Lombardy poplars are characteristic of Canberra's early landscape and urban design development and were deliberately selected for their symbolism, appearance, and suitability for the climate.
- **Association and contributory value**—associated with NCDC period of development in Canberra and a physical reminder of the proposed permanent parliament to be located on the southern shores of Lake Burley Griffin, defining the east end of the NLA's east–west axis.
- **Aesthetic value**—the autumnal colour of the tree's leaves, the composition off the twin rows of poplars, creating a formal, vertical/columnar symmetry complementary to the architectural characteristics of the NLA, a Late Twentieth Century Stripped Classical style building. Noting that the aesthetic value held by the community was not formally tested under the Commonwealth Heritage criteria during the 2017 assessment.

1.7 Recommendations

The purpose of this archival recording is to record the NLA Forecourt Lombardy poplars before the significant heritage place is changed. Recommendations to the NCA include:

- this report and the accompanying RAW and JPEG photographs are catalogued into the NCA archive and stored in an appropriate digital archival for future reference;
- this report and accompanying RAW and JPEG photographs should be provided to the NLA for reference as part of the NLA's requirements under the EPBC Act. The archival recording should be referenced in the updated version of the NLA's Heritage Management Plan; and
- this report and accompanying RAW and JPEG photographs should be provided to the NLA, ACT Heritage Library and the National Archives of Australia for public access.

1.8 Endnotes

- ¹ Pearson, M and Marshall, D, National Library of Australia: Conservation Management Plan, prepared for the National Library of Australia, November 2012, p 38.
- ² Author interview with Noel Potter, 23 August 2006 quoted in the 2006 HA.
- ³ National Capital Authority, Anzac Parade—Canberra Heritage Management Plan, August 2013, p 37; Pryor, LD and Banks, JCG 1991, Trees and Shrubs in Canberra, Little Hills Press Pty Ltd, NSW, pp 8–9.
- ⁴ ACT Heritage Unit 2007, A Guide to Heritage Garden Plants.
- ⁵ GML Heritage 2006, National Library of Australia Forecourt Heritage Assessment, p 45.

Archival Images

2 Archival Images

This section provides selected historical images to assist with understanding the development and importance of the NLA Forecourt Lombardy poplars and the surrounds.

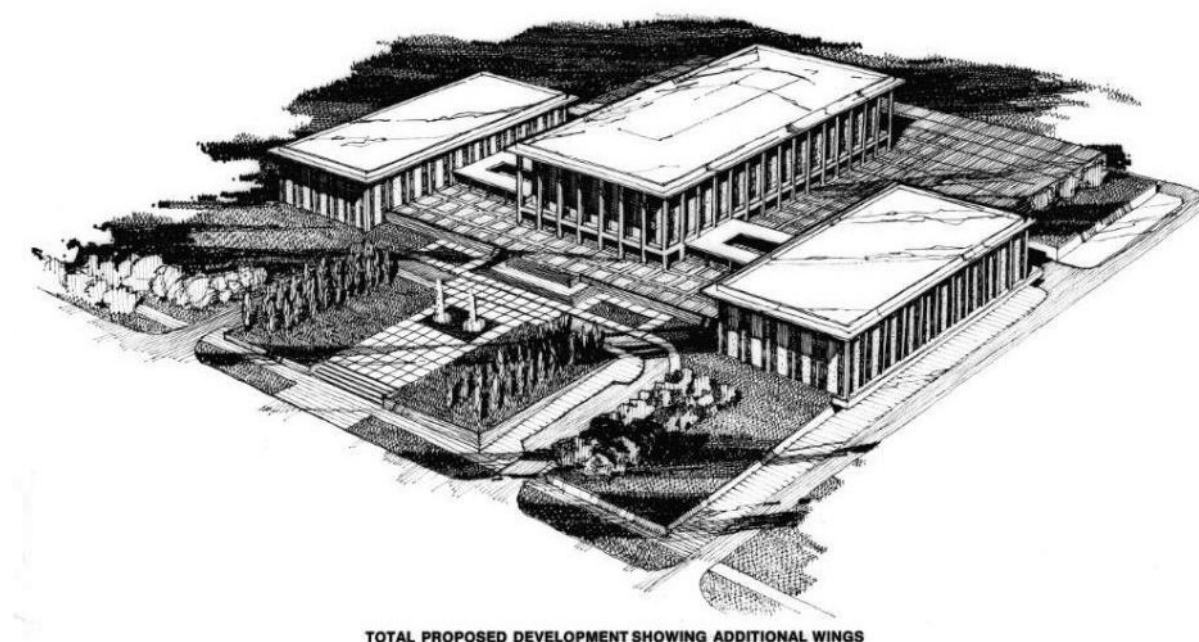


Figure 2.1 1964 perspective of the National Library of Australia, showing the original design of the Forecourt. The two additional wings were never built. (Source: National Library of Australia, Bib ID: 2517674)



Figure 2.2 Portion of a 1972 aerial photograph of the NLA, showing all 44 Lombardy poplars. (Source: ActMAPi Run 72C8)



Figure 2.3 Oblique aerial photograph of the NLA, c1970s. The poplars are juvenile at this time. (Source: ACT Heritage Library 002430)



Figure 2.4 Undated photograph of the National Library viewed from across Lake Burley Griffin. (Source: National Archives of Australia, 11466614)



Figure 2.5 1974 photograph of the NLA and poplars. (Source: National Archives of Australia, ID: 11842353)



Figure 2.6 1991 photograph from Commonwealth Park towards the NLA. The poplars are visible on the left side. (Source: National Archives of Australia, ID 11721910)

Photographic Images

3 Photographic Images

Site Name—National Library of Australia Forecourt Lombardy poplars, Parkes, ACT, 2600

Camera—Canon EOS 1300D

Outputs—RAW + JPEG

GML Job Number—21-0164

Client—National Capital Authority

Date—27 May 2021

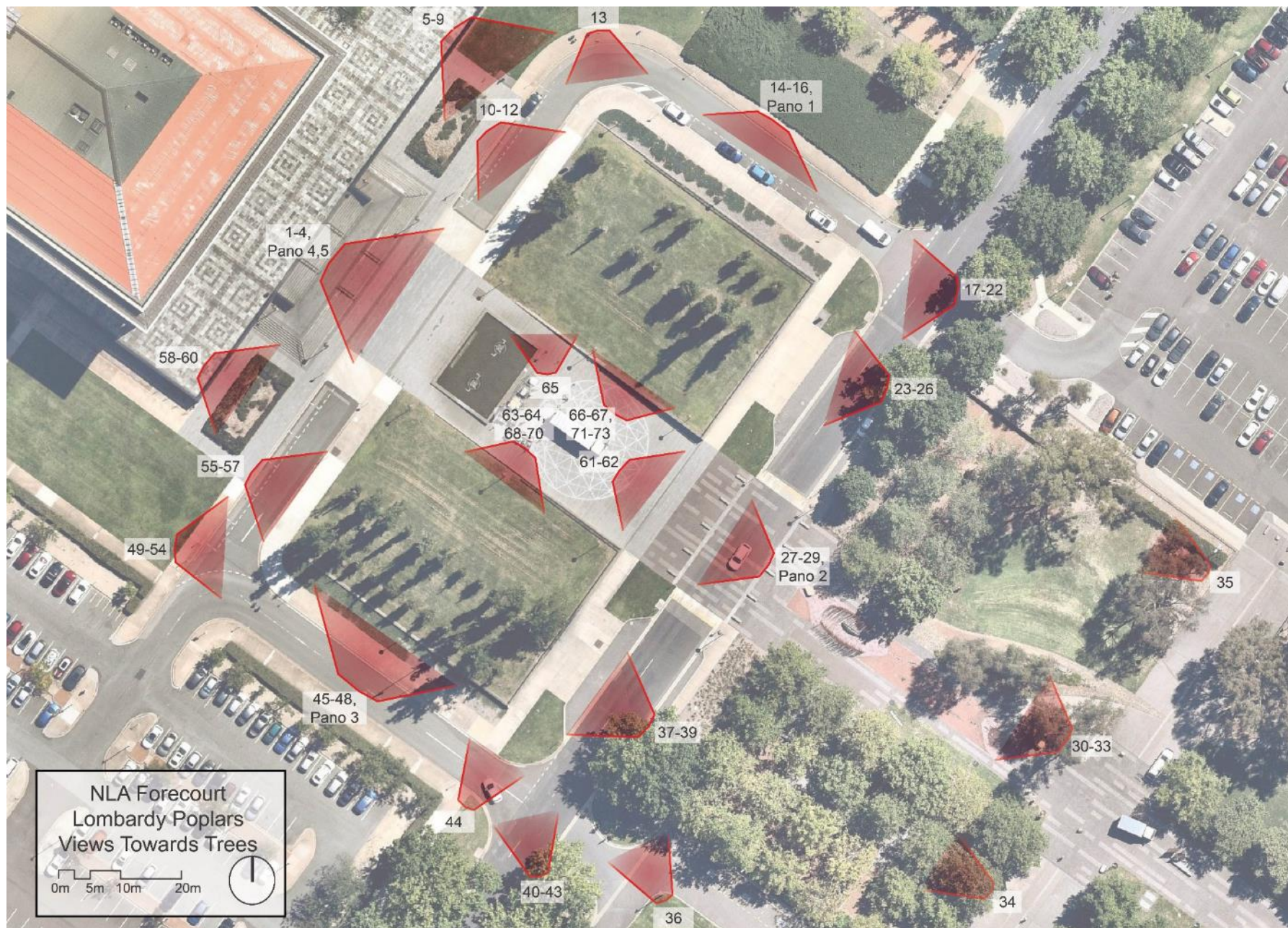


Figure 3.1 Location of catalogue of photos, showing the the approximate locations and directions of photographs (red shading) and the photograph identification numbers. (Source: Nearmap with GML overlay)

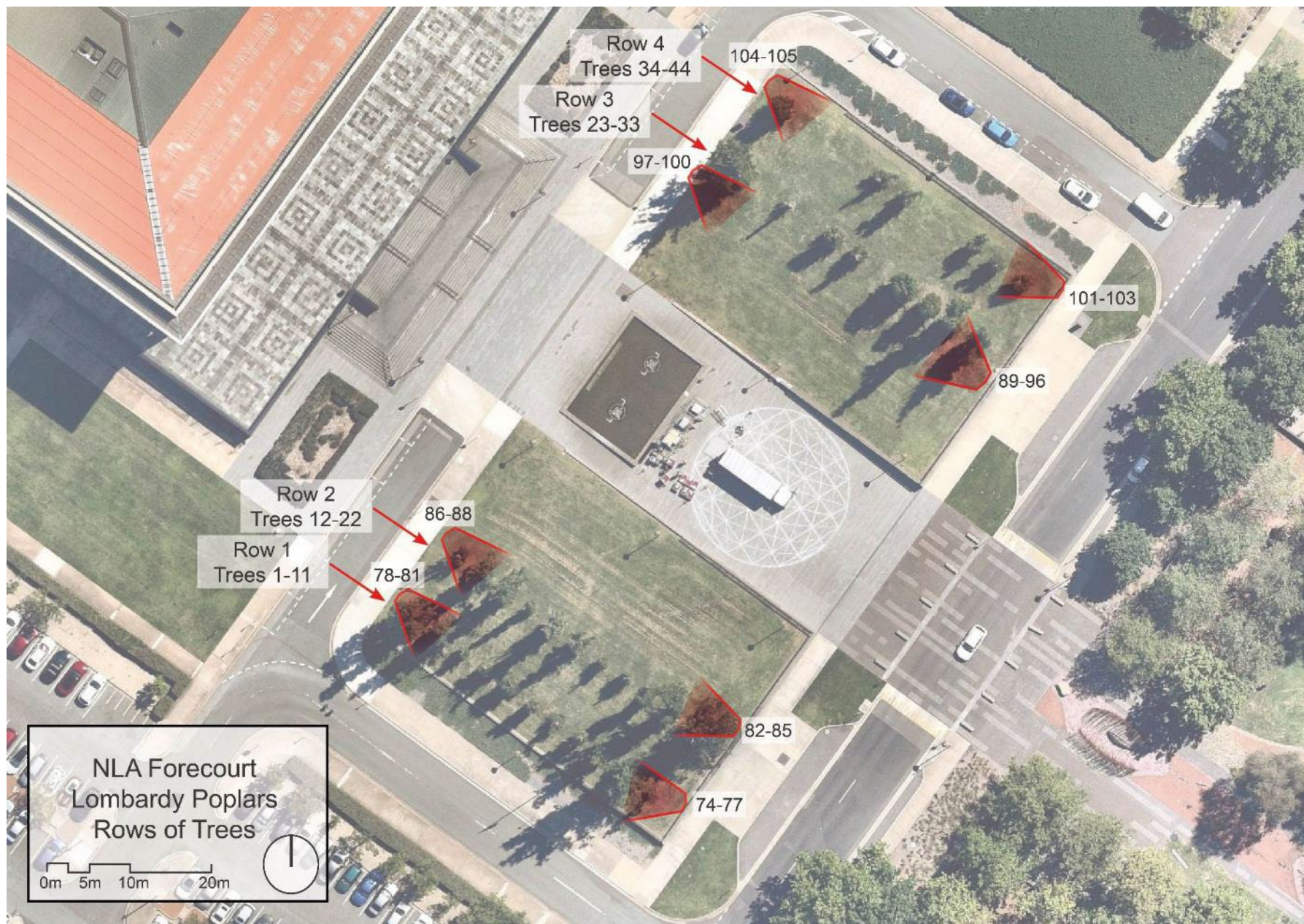


Figure 3.2 Location of catalogue of photos of each of the four rows of trees, showing the approximate locations photographs (red shading) and the photograph identification numbers. (Source: Nearmap with GML overlay)

3.1 Photographs—Views Towards Trees

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_1		View looking southeast from the NLA entrance steps.
NLALP_2		View looking northeast from the NLA entrance steps.
NLALP_3		View looking southeast from the NLA entrance steps.
NLALP_4		View looking south from the NLA entrance steps.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_5		View looking south from the NLA entrance steps.
NLALP_6		View looking southeast between rows 3 and 4 from the NLA podium.
NLALP_7		Detailed view looking southeast between rows 3 and 4 from the NLA podium.
NLALP_8		View looking southeast between rows 3 and 4 from the NLA podium.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_9		View looking south towards rows 3 and 4 from the NLA podium.
NLALP_10		View looking southwest from the loop road around the Forecourt.
NLALP_11		View looking south capturing tree rows 2–4 from the corner of the loop road around Forecourt.
NLALP_12		View looking southeast capturing some of the tree rows 3 and 4.





Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_13		View looking southwest from path before the NLA entrance steps.
NLALP_14		View looking northwest towards the NLA with northern portion of rows 3 and 4 in view.
NLALP_15		View looking west towards the Forecourt.
NLALP_16		View looking southwest towards Questacon and the Forecourt towards row 3 and 4.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_17		View looking west from Parkes Place West.
NLALP_18		View looking northwest from Parkes Place West towards rows 3 and 4.
NLALP_19		View looking west from Parkes Place West.
NLALP_20		View looking southwest from Parkes Place West.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_21		View looking west from Parkes Place west towards rows 3 and 4.
NLALP_22		View looking northwest from Parkes Place West at row 4.
NLALP_23		View looking northwest from Parkes Place West towards rows 3 and 4.
NLALP_24		View looking northwest from Parkes Place West towards rows 3 and 4.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_25		View looking northwest from Parkes Place West towards rows 3 and 4.
NLALP_26		View looking west from Parkes Place West towards rows 1 and 2.
NLALP_27		View looking west from Parkes Place West towards rows 1 and 2.
NLALP_28		View looking northwest from Questacon Science Garden to NLA.





Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_29		View looking north from Questacon Science Garden to rows 3 and 4.
NLALP_30		View looking northwest from Questacon Science Garden to NLA.
NLALP_31		View looking west from Questacon Science Garden towards rows 1 and 2.
NLALP_32		View looking northwest from Questacon Science Garden to NLA.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_33		View looking north from Questacon Science Garden towards rows 3 and 4.
NLALP_34		View looking northwest from Questacon Science Garden towards the centre of rows 1 and 2 in distance.
NLALP_35		View looking northwest from Questacon Science Garden towards the centre of rows 3 and 4 in distance.
NLALP_36		View looking north from Questacon carpark towards rows 3 and 4, with NLA beyond.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_37		View looking northwest to rows 1 and 2 from Parkes Place West.
NLALP_38		View looking northwest to rows 1 and 2 from Parkes Place West.
NLALP_39		View looking north towards rows 3 and 4 from Parkes Place West.
NLALP_40		View looking north from the corner of Questacon Carpark and Parkes Place West towards row 1 and 2.





Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_41		View looking north from the corner of Questacon Carpark and Parkes Place West towards rows 1 and 2.
NLALP_42		View looking north from the corner of Questacon Carpark and Parkes Place West towards rows 1 and 2.
NLALP_43		View looking northwest from the corner of Questacon Carpark and Parkes Place West towards rows 1 and 2.
NLALP_44		View looking northeast towards NLA signage and rows 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_45		View looking east towards NLA flag display and rows 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.
NLALP_46		View looking northeast towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.
NLALP_47		View looking north towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.
NLALP_48		View looking east towards NLA flag display and rows 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_49		View looking east towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA carpark entrance.
NLALP_50		View looking east towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA carpark entrance.
NLALP_51		View looking northeast towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA carpark entrance.
NLALP_52		View looking east towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA carpark entrance.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_53		View looking northeast towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA carpark entrance.
NLALP_54		View looking north along NLA loop road.
NLALP_55		View looking southeast towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.
NLALP_56		View looking east towards rows 2–4 in distance from the NLA loop road.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_57		View looking southeast towards row 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.
NLALP_58		View looking southeast towards row 1 and 2 from the NLA podium.
NLALP_59		View looking east towards row 3 and 4 in distance from the NLA podium.
NLALP_60		View looking south-southeast towards row 1 and 2 from the NLA podium.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_61		View looking southeast towards Reconciliation Place from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_62		View looking south towards row 2 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_63		View looking southwest towards rows 1 and 2 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_64		View looking southwest towards rows 1 and 2 from the centre of the Forecourt.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_65		View looking north towards rows 3 and 4 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_66		View looking northeast towards rows 3 and 4 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_67		View looking east towards rows 3 and 4 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_68		View looking south towards rows 1 and 2 from the centre of the Forecourt.





Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_69		View looking southwest towards rows 1 and 2 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_70		View looking southwest towards rows 1 and 2 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_71		View looking northeast towards rows 3 and 4 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_72		View looking northeast towards rows 3 and 4 from the centre of the Forecourt.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Views Towards Trees	Description
NLALP_73		View looking east towards rows 3 and 4 from the centre of the Forecourt.
NLALP_PANO_1		Panorama photograph looking towards rows 3 and 4 from the NLA loop road.
NLALP_PANO_2		Panorama photograph looking northwest from Questacon Science Garden towards the Forecourt.
NLALP_PANO_3		Panorama photograph looking northeast towards rows 1 and 2 from the NLA loop road.
NLALP_PANO_4		Panorama photograph looking southeast towards the Forecourt, all rows from the NLA podium steps.
NLALP_PANO_5		Panorama photograph looking southeast towards the Forecourt, all rows from the NLA podium steps.

3.2 Photographs—Row 1 Trees




Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 1	Description
NLALP_74		View looking northwest along row 1.
NLALP_75		View looking northwest along row 1.
NLALP_76		View looking northwest along row 1.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 1	Description
NLALP_77		View looking northwest along row 1.
NLALP_78		View looking southeast along row 1.
NLALP_79		View looking southeast along row 1.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 1	Description
NLALP_80		View looking southeast along row 1.
NLALP_81		View looking southeast along row 1 and row 2.

3.3 Photographs—Row 2 Trees





Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 2	Description
NLALP_82		View looking northwest along row 2.
NLALP_83		View looking northwest along row 2.
NLALP_84		View looking northwest along row 2.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 2	Description
NLALP_85		View looking northwest along tops of row 2.
NLALP_86		View looking southeast along row 2.
NLALP_87		View looking southeast along row 2.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 2	Description
NLALP_88		View looking southeast along row 2.

3.4 Photographs—Row 3 Trees

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 3	Description
NLALP_89	 A photograph showing a row of tall, slender Lombardy poplars in a grassy area. The trees are bare, suggesting late autumn or winter. The sun is visible in the sky, creating a lens flare effect.	View looking northwest along row 3.
NLALP_90	 A photograph showing the upper portions of the Lombardy poplars in Row 3, looking northwest. The sky is clear blue, and the sun is visible on the right side, creating a lens flare.	View looking northwest along tops of row 3.
NLALP_91	 A photograph showing a row of Lombardy poplars in a grassy area, looking northwest. The trees are bare, and the sun is visible in the sky, creating a lens flare.	View looking northwest along row 3.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 3	Description
NLALP_92		View looking northwest along row 3.
NLALP_93		View looking northwest along row 3.
NLALP_94		View looking northwest along row 3.
NLALP_95		View looking northwest along row 3.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 3	Description
NLALP_96		View looking northwest along row 3.
NLALP_97		View looking southeast along row 3.
NLALP_98		View looking southeast along row 3.
NLALP_99		View looking southeast along row 3.

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 3	Description
NLALP_100		View looking southeast along row 3.

3.5 Photographs—Row 4 Trees

Image File Number	NLA LP—Row 4	Description
NLALP_101		View looking northwest along row 4.
NLALP_102		View looking northwest along row 4.
NLALP_103		View looking northwest along row 4.

NLAP_104



View looking southeast along row 4.

NLALP_105



View looking southeast along row 4.