



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

National Library of Australia

Replacement of Lombardy Poplars

WORKS APPROVAL APPLICATION: Project Description

Location of proposed works: PARKES: Block 5, Section 27

Works

Background

The National Capital Authority (NCA) seeks to remove 38 Lombardy Poplars (the Poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italica')) from the National Library of Australia (NLA) Forecourt during 2021. This work is required due to the very poor condition of most of these trees and the arborist's assessment that their condition is not recoverable. The original design made provision for four rows of 11 trees however several have been removed in recent years because they have died or became unsafe.

In late 2016, the NCA commissioned an independent heritage consultant to assess the heritage value of the Poplars and make recommendations in relation to the heritage values of the site, the condition of the trees and how the planting could be improved. The key findings of the assessment noted the tree species and layout had heritage significance but did not prescribe the number of trees that are necessary to protect that significance. As the Poplars are in competition with each other and their close spacing has contributed to damage by maintenance equipment and their decline, the NCA proposes to reduce the number of trees in each of the four rows in the forecourt from 11 to seven. The location of the rows of trees will remain as they are to complement to NLA and maintain the same symmetry as the existing rows of trees.

The NCA originally planned to replace the Lombardy Poplars with the same species however this plant is prohibited by law in the ACT and the NCA is not permitted to bring these trees into the ACT.

The proposed replacement trees are *Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata' (Fastigate English Oak). These trees are most like the Poplar in character including shape, size and leaf colour and are proven to grow well in the Canberra climate. A reduced number of trees in each of the four rows will ensure they grow to maturity quicker and will compete with each other less while retaining the strong symmetrical lines of trees either side of the NLA Forecourt. A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared for this proposal.

The removal and replacement of all the trees at the same time allows the NCA to replace the topsoil and irrigation system as well as install a drainage system for the new trees. A soil assessment in 2018 found the topsoil to be very thin and not suitable for the growing of high quality trees and turf. These actions will result in the improved presentation of the site for many decades. The turf will also be replaced as part of this project.