

10.2. Jacaranda Tree Baby Gift Program - Response to Council Resolution

AUTHOR	Jessica Karam, Urban Forest Officer
ENDORSED BY	Peter Massey, Acting Director Open Space and Environmental Services
ATTACHMENTS	Nil
CSP LINK	1. Our Living Environment 1.1 Protected, enhanced and biodiverse natural environment 1.2 Environmentally sustainable community

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to detail the work involved in implementation of the 'Trees for Newborns' Program, and the most appropriate tree species to propagate within the program, including Jacarandas. This report also advises on the capacity of the Coal Loader nursery regarding this subject.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A 'Trees for Newborns' Program would fall under the urban forest incentives program detailed in the Urban Forest Strategy (2019). The Strategy specifies the need to create incentives for residents to motivate them to plant tree within their property, to expand the canopy cover.
- The Program would have on offer a range of native species provided by the Coal Loader Nursery, with Jacarandas procured from an allied private nursery.
- Council would create a specific page on its website for local new parents to submit their requests to be provided with a tree through the program, which would be delivered free of charge.
- The program would be undertaken through an initial 12-month trial period. Following the trial, the program would be assessed to determine its overall success and feasibility.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. THAT** Council adopts a 12-month trial period of the 'Trees for Newborns' Gift Program'.
- 2. THAT** the program be launched as soon as the webpage is operational and ready to accept requests.
- 3. THAT** a report on the success of the program be presented to Council after the 12-month trial period.

Background

At its meeting of 12 December 2022, Council resolved:

THAT a report be prepared on creating a Council run/funded Jacaranda Tree Baby Gift program in creating more incentive for tree growth on private property; and THAT this report look into the best species of trees to provide for said programs, and if the Coal Loader Nursery has funds/resources to grow said trees into saplings.

The Urban Forest Strategy (2019) of North Sydney Council aims to preserve and expand the existing Urban Forest of the Local Government Area (LGA) to meet the internationally accepted target canopy-cover percentage of 34.4% by 2036.

To value our Urban Forest means to consider it as an integral element of the Urban Infrastructure, and doing so requires engaging all stakeholders by maximising community awareness, understanding, and appreciating the benefits of Urban Forest management.

The percentage of the LGA's overall tree canopy has declined by 11.7% since 2008. The rate of decline and data trend over time is of significant concern to the community's amenity. The loss is mainly on private property and over roads for a range of reasons, including the impacts of state-significant infrastructure projects, and the pace of increasing urban intensification.

Incentivising private landowners to plant on their properties is crucial to achieve the LGA's goal for canopy-cover percentage. Private land makes up 58% of the Council's area, and it is also the category that has lost the most canopy cover since 2008.

It must be noted, however, that 85% of the residential dwelling types in the North Sydney LGA are multi-unit dwellings, and any tree planting program that are proposed to be positioned on Strata/Company title properties might be constrained by obtaining the necessary consent from those bodies.

The 'Trees for Newborns' Program

The Trees for Newborns Program can be a great motivation for people to contribute to the sustainability of their ecosystem. Residents welcoming their newborns can commemorate their births by planting a tree on their property while also contributing to Council's goal in increasing tree canopy-cover on private land.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the latest census for live births showed that North Sydney Local Government Area had 969 registered newborns in 2021.

Promotion and advertising this program would be undertaken via the following:

- Council's website;
- Social Media accounts;
- Precinct Committees; and
- North Sydney news.

A link could be created on Council's website to allow eligible residents to submit requests for tree saplings. The webpage would also provide links to specific Council guides on the best practice tree planting, including:

1. "Live Local Plant Local, a guide to native plants in North Sydney"; and
2. "Planting Trees in North Sydney".

These guides aid residents in:

- determining the tree species (native or exotic) best suited to their garden;
- considering desired objective(s) from planting a tree (e.g., frame desirable views or block unpleasant ones); and
- following instructions on how to plant a sapling correctly in the soil to allow it to establish and grow successfully.

Residents participating in the program would have a choice of the following:

- Jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*);
- native species with big canopies (*Eucalypt* species); or
- native species with smaller canopies (i.e., *Banksia integrifolia*).

All native species will be provided through the Coal Loader Nursery. The range would differ on a seasonal basis depending on what is available at the time of request. A list of available species will be provided on the program's webpage.

If a request for a Jacaranda is submitted, the Council would order the tree from a reputable commercial nursery and deliver it to their place of residence.

The Coal Loader/Bushcare Nursery and saplings procurement

The Coal Loader Nursery (also known as the Bushcare Community Nursery) is small and only set up for tube-stock production. The Nursery's main objective is to promote the use of local native species in residential properties and Council Open Space. The Nursery grows native trees in either 50 mm standard forestry tubes or in 70mm super tubes.

Through the nursery's existing programs (i.e., Native Havens Program), Council's Bushcare team advises that the best sizes to give away to residents in terms of:

- being the easiest and most successful to handle;
- quick turn over; and
- being economical to produce, transport and store;

are the 50mm and 70 mm tube sizes.

Tree species on offer and recommendations

A family welcoming a newborn(s) would need a tree species that does not require intensive or extensive care after planting. Jacarandas require moderate establishment since they are an exotic species, however they are showing good adaptation to the North Sydney environment.

According to the Urban Forest Strategy (2019), there should be a good balance between native and exotic trees planted in North Sydney. Furthermore, Council strives to having no one genus exceeding 10% of the population of trees in the LGA, with Jacarandas being at 5.73% of street trees in 2022.

Options

Council has the following options in relation to this matter:

1. Do nothing/take no action
2. Have only Jacaranda saplings on offer for eligible residents; or
3. Have a mix of native species as well as Jacarandas on offer for eligible residents.

These options are assessed in the table below.

Option	Finance/Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
1.	No implications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous decline of canopy cover on private land. - Failure to reach the international target for overall canopy cover set for the LGA by 2036. 	Not required.
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jacaranda saplings cost \$20 approx. - Saplings would be ordered from a commercial nursery and delivered to residents by the Urban Forest Team. - \$10K allocated in existing Environmental Levy funding for tree canopy enhancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivating locals to plant trees on their properties, increasing the canopy cover on private land. - Increasing the percentage of exotic trees in North Sydney LGA compared to native species. - Increase the percentage of planted Jacarandas in the LGA, potentially eventually surpassing the recommended percentage of any one species. - Creating a monoculture and increasing risk of death due to the spread of pests and diseases. - Jacarandas need moderate establishment and maintenance, which may not be suitable for all interested locals. - Limitations on planting saplings on common property of Strata/Company title property might have to addressed. 	Not required.
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each native tree costs \$10 and are grown in the Coal Loader Nursery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivating locals to plant trees on their properties and increasing the canopy cover on private land. 	Not required.

Option	Finance/Resourcing	Risk/Opportunity	Consultation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jacaranda saplings cost \$20 approx. - Saplings are ordered from an external nursery and delivered to residents by the Urban Forest Team. - \$10K allocated in existing Environmental Levy funding for tree canopy enhancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Native saplings are already being planted and propagated in the Coal Loader Nursery. - Native species need to be heavily reintroduced to the area to preserve them. - Native species are less demanding/forgiving in terms of care for establishment and ongoing maintenance. - Allowing eligible residents to choose between native species and Jacarandas according to their needs and capacity. - Limitations on planting saplings on the common property of Strata/Company title property might have to be addressed. 	

Option 3, is recommended for the following reasons:

- native species are already being planted and grown in the Coal Loader Nursery for distribution under other programs, therefore presenting a mix of native and Jacaranda trees is less costly and more manageable in terms of tree orders and procurement;
- ensuring a well-balanced species diversity in the LGA. Avoiding the dominance of one culture over another limits the risk of collective infections by pests and diseases, which lead to the death of many trees and the loss of the LGA Urban Forest cover; and
- the 'Trees for Newborns' Program does not require any community consultation.

Consultation Requirements

Community engagement is not required.

Financial/Resource Implications

It is expected that a maximum sum of \$10,000 would be required to fund this program in the first year. Funding can be sourced from the Environmental Levy under the existing Tree Canopy Enhancement Program.