

Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy

Summary of Community Feedback

Council is developing a new Urban Forest Strategy for Whitehorse to better manage trees and vegetation across both private and public land.

From November 14th 2020 to 14th February 2021 we asked the community for their insights to help develop and prioritise the new strategy.

It's important to acknowledge that COVID-19 restrictions limited our reach for this consultation. While we would have liked to hear from more people in our community, the feedback we did hear was rich and very detailed. The community have another opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Urban Forest Strategy in April 2021.

The feedback will inform the Draft Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy. Below is a summary of what you said.

How you shared your feedback

Due to COVID-19 isolation restrictions and the impact on conducting face to face engagement, feedback was sought mostly online via Council's "Your Say Whitehorse" engagement platform and promoted through the Whitehorse News, social media and emails to community networks. Specialist community groups were invited to join a small group discussion online with Council staff.



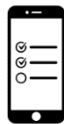
596

people visited the Whitehorse Urban Forest and My Favourite Tree online platforms hosted by Oursay.



270

Community members provided feedback in some form.



222

online surveys were completed.



37

people attended an online/in person environmental community group meeting.



11

residents sent open ended Email responses.



95

Images were submitted into the "My Favourite Tree" photo competition.

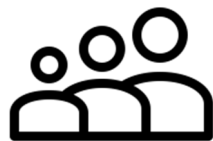
Who we heard from

We heard from people in every suburb of Whitehorse who completed a survey.



63% female

35% male; and some people who prefer not to say.



66% are aged 40-69 years

22% aged over 60 years
12% aged under 39 years



59% have lived in Whitehorse for over 10 years

22% have lived in Whitehorse between 5 and 10 years.

19% have lived in Whitehorse under 5 years.



21% were born overseas

79% were born in Australia

What you told us

The top 3 most important reasons to have trees and vegetation in your local area are to:

1. Provide habitat for local wildlife such as birds, butterflies and other animals.
2. Cool local areas, provide shade and reduce urban heat
3. Improve the look and feel of the local area

The most important priorities for a new Urban Forest Strategy should be:

1. Growing more trees and improving the quality of vegetation in our parks, reserves and on Council owned land.
2. Requiring more vegetation to be included in new development.
3. Find new ways to include more vegetation in built up areas.

More trees please

90% of respondents said that their local parks and reserves could do with more vegetation.

- Most people wanted to see more wild and native vegetation rather than formal gardens. Whilst some wanted to see a mix of both formal and wild types of vegetation.

95% said that it was important to make room for trees and vegetation even at the expense of infrastructure such as car parks.

Tree removal

Out of the 105 people who had removed trees and vegetation from their own properties, over 50% said that the main reason was because the trees were causing damage to infrastructure such as fences, building or pavement.

Growing trees and vegetation on private property

75 % said that nothing was stopping them from growing trees and vegetation within their own properties.

Out of those who weren't able to grow more trees and vegetation on their property, 40% said there was not enough space.

Key themes in open ended questions and discussion groups

- Tension between development and tree preservation
- Opportunities for more nature strip planting
- Importance of soil and water for healthy vegetation
- Risk management of trees
- Private land restrictions on tree removal and cost of permit for removing dead/dying and weedy species
- Trees and conflict with powerlines and other infrastructure
- Native and indigenous species versus exotic species
- Impacts of climate change
- Importance of other vegetation not just trees
- Urgency of immediate actions to halt the decline of canopy and start making canopy cover gains
- Weed species management
- Expense for landowners to maintain large old trees
- Importance of species selection for the location and purpose
- Educational support and incentives for landowners to grow healthy trees and vegetation
- Education of Council Staff
- Concern that the strategy won't be adequately funded
- Transparency of tree removal and replacement planting on new development sites.
- Cost to maintain large old trees in home gardens
- The need for better enforcement of Planning Permit conditions

How we have used your feedback

This community feedback has been reviewed and is being used to develop Council's Draft Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy. The vision, objectives and many of the key actions have been developed from responses submitted via survey and discussed in small group meetings. The Draft Strategy will be informed by staff and Councillor feedback, as well as relevant legislation and policy.

How you can stay involved

To stay informed of this process and find out about other projects that Council is seeking feedback on, visit the "Your Say Whitehorse" online platform. This is where Council promotes all engagement opportunities. You can also subscribe to stay up to date on current and upcoming projects.

Visit www.oursay.org/whitehorsecitycouncil or type 'Our Say Whitehorse' on your internet search browser.