

Submission time...

**Help shape the**  
***Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy 2024 - 2040***

### **WHAT'S HAPPENING?**

Nillumbik Shire Council (NSC) has drafted a new strategy, the *Urban Tree Canopy Strategy 2024 - 2040*, and is seeking community input.

THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITY.

YOUR input will help shape decisions and prioritise actions to protect and enhance Nillumbik's urban tree canopy.

### **HELP SHAPE NILLUMBIK'S URBAN TREE CANOPY STRATEGY – NOW!**

THIS PAGE: Important background, dates, links etc

NEXT PAGE: Points for your consideration

### **WHY PARTICIPATE?**

With the pressures of urbanisation and climate change, mature trees and other biodiversity are in decline and being fragmented.

Strong policy protections and actions for reinvigoration are essential if we are to achieve better outcomes.

An abundant urban tree canopy mitigates climate change and its impacts, helps reverse biodiversity decline, and strengthens ecosystem resilience. Importantly, trees also significantly reduce the ever-increasing heat-island effect of roads and urbanisation plus ease pollution.

A strong Urban Tree Canopy Strategy is essential.

There is strong community support for halting the decline of Nillumbik's urban tree canopy and ensuring its health and abundance into the future.

Your support should guide Nillumbik Shire Council in their priorities and allocation of resources.

It encourages them to take bold action. *Take part, be heard, and help create change for a healthier future.*

### **HOW?**

Nillumbik Shire Council have developed a step-by-step process to review the Draft Urban Tree Canopy Strategy.

*No matter what you think of the process, it is important to take part.*

The key points on the following pages relate to NSC's online survey. Please use these as you see fit (for the survey and/or when you participate in Council's drop-in sessions), remembering that your own words have greater value. [Active links are in blue underlined text.](#)

#### **ATTEND face-to-face or online consultations:**

Thursday 18 April 2024 10:00am to 12:00pm - Drop-in session, Hurstbridge Hub [Register here](#)

Friday 19 April 2024 1:00pm to 3:00pm - Drop-in session, Diamond Valley Library [Register here](#)

Monday 22 April 2024 2:00pm to 4:00pm - Drop-in session, Eltham Library [Register here](#)

**SUBMIT responses** [to the online feedback form - click here](#). You must do this **by 28 April 2024**

To avoid potential internet/tech glitches, we recommend you write and save your responses in a word processing document then copy and paste into the survey.

[Click here to visit](#) Nillumbik Shire Council's 'Participate' webpage. You'll find related info such as the survey, *frequently asked questions*, *a document library*.

**URBAN TREE CANOPY FEEDBACK FORM** - for your consideration:

**Nillumbik Council survey questions are in Green text (left-hand column)**

Tick-box questions can be *left blank if you wish but only IF you don't click an option/tick box*.

**OR answer by clicking Yes, I'm supportive; OR Not sure; OR No, I'm not supportive**

**Some key points for your consideration are in black text (right-hand column)**

<b>Goal 1 – That Nillumbik's urban canopy is protected and enhanced</b>	
<p>Do you support the following goal and target for Goal 1?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Goal 1: That Nillumbik's urban canopy is protected and enhanced ...</li> <li>- Target: No overall net loss of Nillumbik's urban canopy ...</li> </ul>	<p><i>Tick-box answer – select as you feel appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>See details below</i></p>
<p>Are there any changes you would like to see for the proposed goal 1 or target?</p>	<p><i>Text-based answer – you may wish to consider the following:</i></p> <p>Council's Draft <b>Goal</b> suggests: '<i>protect and enhance</i>'...</p> <p>Corresponding <b>Target</b> suggests: '<i>no overall net loss</i>'...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The <b>Goal</b> to protect and enhance Nillumbik's urban tree canopy is worthwhile, though enhancement should include an <b>increase in health and abundance of the canopy created by mature indigenous trees</b>. (Goal 2 Target addresses an increase in planting)</li> <li>It should also include an increase in overall indigenous biodiversity, as this is essential for trees' long-term health.</li> <li>- These protections should be measurable and include targets such as:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The removal of trees decreases by x % annually across private land</li> <li>b. There is an increase by x % (or area) annually of indigenous biodiversity along nature strips</li> </ol>               Other measurables could include the collection of data focused on hollow-bearing trees; increases of indigenous biodiversity in public spaces; illegal removal of trees is pursued and heavy fines applied; an increase in resourcing             </li> <li>- The Urban Tree Canopy Strategy needs to reference the Biodiversity Strategy's priorities and processes</li> <li>- Identification of existing and potential green corridor areas to inform decision making and prioritisation of resources to extend connectivity</li> <li>- The Target 'No overall net loss' does not ensure tree canopy cover is protected and increased through all areas. It allows some places to have dense tree cover while others could have none or very little. It implies that this would be a sufficient balance.</li> </ul>

	<p>For the benefit of biodiversity, human health, economy, climate mitigation and adaptation, tree canopy should be preserved, reinstated and increased, broadly through all areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the type of tree canopy and the quality of the tree canopy that will meet the objectives?</li> <li>- The Draft Strategy defines tree canopy as anything over 2metres. Preferably a <i>minimum</i> of 3 metre height should be applied. Benefits provided by mature trees include shade/mitigation of urban heat effect, water retention and cycling, animal use of canopy, spread and connectivity.</li> <li>- There needs to be differentiation between trees measuring 3 metres height, and mature trees of 15+ metres height, due to the differences in their canopy and what they offer.</li> <li>- It is also critical that canopy <i>connectivity</i> is protected and increased.</li> <li>- Design and methodology for replanting must align with sound ecological principles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional significance should be given to hollow-bearing trees.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Policy should be developed and applied to ensure responsibility is taken by relevant authorities/individuals/ companies. For example: Who pays when housing projects remove mature trees? Where are plantings located and how is their ongoing health to maturity ensured? This should be embedded in the Planning Scheme.</li> <li>- The Draft Strategy states that Nillumbik’s tree canopy cover is second highest in all of Melbourne. It also compares Nillumbik with areas such as Wyndham/Melton. These comparisons and measures are not true indicators as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. While Nillumbik’s canopy cover (and that of eastern and southern suburbs in general) is higher than the average for Melbourne, the rate of canopy <i>loss</i> is also higher than in those suburbs with lower base-line canopy cover. <sup>1</sup></li> <li>b. Wyndham/Melton are naturally grassland areas (ie they naturally do not have high occurrence of trees).</li> <li>c. Nillumbik has hard-won policy protections as a Green Wedge Shire, the ‘lungs of Melbourne’, with conservation as a strategic focus. As such, it holds an important responsibility to maintain a high level of vegetation cover.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
--	---

---

<sup>1</sup> Tree canopy cover loss is concentrated in areas where there is significant existing vegetation and urban redevelopment activity, i.e. particularly in the Eastern region. The loss is most evident on residential land and parkland, which provide the largest areas of tree cover. <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/data-and-insights/melbournes-vegetation-heat-and-land-use-data> )

## Goal 2 – Nillumbik’s community values and cares for the urban canopy

Do you support the following goal and target for Goal 2?

- Goal 2: Nillumbik’s community values and cares for the urban canopy
- Target: An increase in the planting of trees across all land tenures

*Tick-box answer – select as you feel appropriate.*

Are there any changes you would like to see for the proposed goal 2 or target?

*Text-based answer. You may wish to consider:*

- The **Target** should be to increase *indigenous* canopy and overall indigenous (site-appropriate) biodiversity.
- Measurable targets for planting indigenous canopy trees and their supportive understorey should be clearly stated with annual outcomes included.
- The target should describe x % (or area) increase per year, leading to x % increase every 5 years.
- The Target should include an increase in the *retention* of trees, not only focus on an increase in *planting*.
- Mature trees offer vastly greater benefits than recent plantings. This must be defined and utilised in policy frameworks and reflected in action across the Shire.  
Trees with hollows should be identified and preserved.
- Nillumbik Council should allocate budget to ensure Goals and Targets are met.  
<https://participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/budget-2024>
- Tree health is affected by its surroundings including the natural flow and availability of water, supportive soil microbiome, balanced faunal presence and activity (eg small birds that reduce foliage-feeding insect load).  
A target should ensure these elements are supported through all Council decision making processes and actions.
- If a tree is in poor health, alternatives to removal must be investigated and health restoration works pursued/funded.
- Given increased pressures from pests, heat stress etc., the budget must reflect the need for more tree maintenance.
- The target could include the retention of dead fallen and standing trees on private and public land wherever possible. These ‘stags’ provide important services that differ to canopy trees and are important for many species of local fauna.  
Council should lead by example and also encourage residents to take similar protective action.
- Increase the retention of trees older than 30 years. Many trees die at around 30 years of age if stressed by factors in their environment. Because large old trees deliver more benefits than younger trees, it is important to do everything possible to help these trees over that 30 year hump.

	<p>- Council should encourage landowners to consider alternatives to removing trees for non-essential purposes. A measurable target could be a reduction in the number of trees removed for sheds, other infrastructure, or simply because they are deemed a ‘nuisance’.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3 – That a healthy urban canopy supports the wellbeing of Nillumbik’s community</b></p>	
<p>Do you support the following goal and target for Goal 3?          Goal 3: That a healthy urban canopy supports the wellbeing of Nillumbik’s community          Target – An overall increase in canopy in areas with higher Urban Heat Island Effect (Minimum urban canopy cover of 25 percent in every suburb and township).</p>	<p><i>Tick-box answer – select as you feel appropriate.</i></p>
<p>Are there any changes you would like to see for the proposed goal 3 or target?</p>	<p>The Goal is worthwhile but could be amended to reflect the need for an abundance of canopy created by <i>mature indigenous trees</i>.          It should also reference an increase in overall indigenous <i>biodiversity</i> as this is essential for trees' long-term health</p> <p>Re Target – minimum urban canopy cover of 25% in every suburb or township.          Research suggests such a target could be changed to ‘minimum urban canopy cover of 30-40% in every suburb or township’.          ‘To maximise the benefits that canopy can offer in terms of environmental services a canopy cover of or greater than 30% is required’ <i>The significance of urban tree canopy cover and climate change, talk given by Dr Greg Moore (arborist and urban tree canopy specialist from University of Melbourne Burnley Campus) at Nillumbik Climate Month, 16 March 2024.</i></p> <p>Develop more effective and accurate database to reflect maturity of trees and species distinction.</p>
<p>‘Focus Areas 1, 2, 3’</p>	<p><i>Tick-box answers – respond as you feel appropriate</i></p>
<p>What would help or encourage you to take more action and get involved (or more involved) in caring for or planting trees?</p>	<p><i>Personal response required - respond as you feel appropriate.</i></p>
<p>Do you have any other feedback on the draft Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy that you haven’t already told us?</p>	<p><b>Some other points to consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building resilience in our indigenous biodiversity must be prioritised.          The Draft states: ‘<i>Identify opportunities to investigate “climate-ready” revegetation options for urban Nillumbik</i>’.          This needs clarification of meaning and associated processes.          Is it the same as climate-adaptive planting where one out of countless climate prediction models are used by land managers to choose plant species? These are often from areas far from Nillumbik, where the qualities of local provenance/evolution are lost.</li> </ul>

There is extremely limited research on the implications of such decisions and their impact on the interconnections of *indigenous* (ie local to the area) plants, animals, insects, soil microbiome and fungi.

- Residential development is a key threat to the loss of urban canopy and other vegetation (70% of land within the urban boundary is private land). With the new [state housing initiatives](#) which came into effect late last year, this threat is certain to increase.
- Council needs to lobby state government for change to definition of a 'garden'. [Victorian Planning Provisions](#) (state planning laws) prescribe a minimum garden area for the Neighbourhood Residential Zone. This varies with the size of the block, between 25% and 35%. A garden is defined as including a pergola, unroofed terraces, patios and decks. (see ResCode standards A5 and B8). Outdoor paving, driveways, footpaths or building eaves are considered part of the outdoor space. There is no limit to the area of garden that these structures can occupy.
- Canopy trees need deep soil, so a 'garden' should not include pergolas, patios and decks. Council needs to lobby state government for inclusion of 'deep soil' for the planting and establishment of canopy trees. A schedule to the VPP Neighbourhood Residential Zone in these laws can change the state planning laws.
- Council should lobby state government to include a Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design trigger in the ResCode.
- Principles of good urban design for biodiversity could be incorporated into the Council's Planning Scheme. Planning applications should meet minimum biodiversity requirements, e.g. a contiguous area on any lot of sufficient 'deep soil' to support canopy trees and understorey.
- Council should develop templates to assist planners in ensuring applications meet minimum biodiversity requirements. (e.g. for different sized lots). These would include a minimum percentage of indigenous species, with a spread of plant types ranging from indigenous grasses and groundcovers to canopy trees
- This could be extended to landscape-scale considerations. New developments could be required to make provisions for wildlife corridors across developments, and be sensitive to landscape/topographical features such as creeklines, wetlands and riparian corridors. Groups of houses could be designed to maximise the amount of land available for canopy planting/retention by ensuring that the garden areas of these plots were abutting each other.
- Council mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure the protection of tree canopy. The Council currently has two mechanisms for protecting canopy trees in urban areas. The Significant Landscape Overlay and the Amenity Trees local law. The application of these mechanisms is variable. Adequate funding should be provided for all council staff and their training, to enable these mechanisms to be applied rigorously and consistently.

- While mature trees are wonderful in their beauty and presence, lighting them at night as ‘features’ is disruptive to many native animals. An Urban Tree Canopy Strategy should enable education of the community about these issues and encourage less impactful behaviour.
- Connected tree canopy contributes to the survival of diverse wildlife including gliders, phascogales and bats
- The true value of trees needs to be factored into all council considerations. These include wildlife habitat, carbon storage, ability to mitigate urban heat island effect, erosion reduction, moisture retention in the soil, salinity reduction, increase in property values, reduction of emissions due to reduced need for air-conditioning, physical and mental health benefits and much more. When decisions are made around whether to remove a tree for utilities or infrastructure, a monetary value should be placed on the services that the tree provides and factored into any calculations.
- Council is urged to develop and maintain a data base of all significant trees in the shire, including dead trees. This will provide a baseline from which certain retention rates can be measured.
- In urban areas that are subject to a Bushfire Management Overlay, where the 10/30 rule applies, Council is urged to lobby state government for an amendment to this overlay which would remove the as-of-right permission for landowners to remove any canopy trees within ten metres of a dwelling without a permit. In urban areas, this severely impacts local neighbourhood character, and restricts the council’s ability to protect residents from health impacts of a lack of tree canopy. It also compromises Council and community emissions reduction targets. As an alternative to removing all canopy trees within ten metres of a dwelling, residents can be encouraged to plant locally appropriate bushfire-resilient species around their house (for an example with some cross-over of species, see: <https://lakesentrancelandcare.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SHELTERBELT-design-Green-Fire-Walls.pdf> )
- Ensure that recurrent expenses needed to maintain tree canopy (watering for several years after planting, and monitoring of tree health) are adequately funded to ensure tree growth and ongoing health.
- Ensure that urban tree canopy strategy provisions (as well as neighbourhood character strategy and biodiversity strategy provisions) are embedded in the Planning Scheme by adding schedules to amend the Scheme accordingly.
- Ensure that penalties for illegal tree removal are commensurate with the full value of the tree/s that have been removed. Develop a robust tree valuing system that considers all that trees offer – economic benefit, social, mental health, environmental etc.
- Ensure that sufficient funds and staff are available to enforce and follow-up non-compliance with tree laws.
- Develop and apply strategies to enable residents to plant indigenous trees on nature strips and road verges.



- Different tree canopy targets and strategies need to be developed for different land uses, e.g. public and private land, commercial and industrial zones. For example, a higher target for roadsides (e.g. 45% canopy target, as in the [Banyule Urban Forest Strategy](#)) would ease urban heat and support pedestrians. Commercial precincts are particularly vulnerable to heat island impacts and should have a higher target as well.
- Limit development if trees/vegetation need to be cleared in order to be deemed 'safe' for human inhabitation
- Nillumbik Youth Council's Vision for Nillumbik's urban tree canopy should be acknowledged and supported as it demonstrates a good understanding of the significance, values, and functions of Nillumbik's urban tree canopy. It demonstrates an understanding of the pressures applied to urban trees and broader biodiversity, and the urgent need to address and reduce these pressures.
- Council must develop procedures to ensure communications and learning across planning/environment to ensure best-practice outcomes for biodiversity, tree canopy, climate, human health and the economy. As stated by the Planning Institute Australia, 'Councils should encourage and increase the participation and input of planners in the development of strategies to combat urban heat. Climate resilience interventions should not be left alone in the care of planning-aligned professionals <https://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/11820> *Planning Institute Australia, Resource Toolkit, Planning for urban vegetation in adapting to a changing climate and urban heat*

If you have read this far you are tremendous and an inspiration.

Here's a small selection of light bedtime reading 😊 ....

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/data-and-insights/melbournes-vegetation-heat-and-land-use-data>

<https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/urban-forest-strategy.pdf> and <http://melbourneurbanforestvisual.com.au/#issues>

<https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/citizenforester/itree-eco-urban-forest-assessment> and <https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/citizenforester/habitat-tree-inventory>

[https://www.vincent.wa.gov.au/Profiles/vincent/Assets/ClientData/Planning\\_Information\\_Sheets/Deep\\_Soil\\_and\\_Canopy\\_Cover\\_Information\\_Sheet\\_-\\_Final\\_for\\_use\\_-\\_July\\_2020.pdf](https://www.vincent.wa.gov.au/Profiles/vincent/Assets/ClientData/Planning_Information_Sheets/Deep_Soil_and_Canopy_Cover_Information_Sheet_-_Final_for_use_-_July_2020.pdf)

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10980-019-00923-7#:~:text=Urban%20land%20management%20and%20planning,connectivity%20is%20maintained%20and%20increased.>

<https://www.dccew.gov.au/campaign/light-pollution/mammals>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263762788\\_Permeability\\_of\\_the\\_urban\\_matrix\\_to\\_arboreal\\_gliding\\_mammals\\_Sugar\\_glidors\\_in\\_Melbourne\\_Australia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263762788_Permeability_of_the_urban_matrix_to_arboreal_gliding_mammals_Sugar_glidors_in_Melbourne_Australia)

<https://frontiergroup.org/resources/good-intentions-bad-outcomes-six-ways-impervious-surfaces-harm-our-cities-and-the-environment/>

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Nillumbik Shire Council.

Although the information contained herein was provided with good intent, the author does not accept any liability for any loss or damage that may arise as a result of a person or persons applying or making use of the information that this document contains.