

Item 3.

Post Exhibition – Register of Significant Trees

File No: X117628.003

Summary

This report recommends that Council endorse the Register of Significant Trees 2025 (the Register).

The Register identifies and celebrates the importance of significant trees in the City's evolving landscape. It provides a strategic framework for their management and protection, ensuring these important natural assets are protected and appreciated by current and future generations.

This is an update of the Register of Significant Trees 2013 that was unanimously adopted by Council in June 2013. The Council resolved that a comprehensive review be undertaken in 10 years to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with the City's policies and strategic direction.

A comprehensive review of the current Register has been completed. A new dynamic, user friendly online platform has been developed to show individual tree listings while enhancing accessibility and user experience.

This revised Register includes 2,503 trees, located across 154 sites, consisting of 88 different species. The majority of trees are situated on council managed parks and streets, accounting for 54% of the total. A further 39% are located on other government owned properties or institutional land, such as the University of Sydney. Only 7% of the trees are found on privately owned land.

In April 2025, early community engagement was undertaken with a total of 73 submissions received. All nominations were assessed and the draft Register updated, where required.

Following Council endorsement, the draft Register was placed on public exhibition between 1 to 29 September 2025. Public exhibition activities included a Sydney Your Say page and an online survey. A total of 20 submissions were received. All submissions have been reviewed and, where appropriate, the draft Register has been updated in response to the submissions received, including an additional 61 trees being included on the Register.

Minor changes have been made post exhibition to update any listings where a tree has since been removed, to include additional photographs, or to correct minor wording or data issues.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council adopt the Register of Significant Trees 2025 as shown in Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council note the engagement report summarising consultation for the development of the Register of Significant Trees 2025, as shown at Attachment B to the subject report; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make amendments to the Register of Significant Trees 2025 to correct minor drafting errors, update tree photographs, and to update a tree's status following its physical removal to ensure Register remains accurate.

Attachments

Attachment A. Register of Significant Trees 2025

Attachment B. Engagement Report

Background

1. Trees play a vital role in the future of Sydney. They are the largest living things in the urban environment and their environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits are well established and beyond doubt.
2. Community health, climate change, urban heat and biodiversity loss have been identified as the key risks to our city. Green infrastructure, which includes significant trees, mitigates these risks. Whether it is for managing heat or mental health issues, happiness, physical activity or reduced incidence of disease and illness, an increase in our canopy cover provides multiple benefits to the community.
3. There are approximately 90,000 trees currently located within the City of Sydney local area. This includes the City's 35,000 street, 14,000 park and 1,000 council property trees, as well as an estimated 40,000 trees located on private property. Collectively, these tree canopies cover 20.9% of the local area.
4. Significant trees are an integral part of the City's historic, cultural, social, aesthetic and botanical heritage. Many of these trees have strong associations with past events and people. They also play an important role in the City's urban forests and ecosystems.

Register Significant Trees 2025

5. The Register identifies and celebrates the importance of significant trees in the City's evolving landscape. It provides a strategic framework for their management and protection, ensuring these important natural assets are protected and appreciated by current and future generations.
6. The Register consists of 2 key components:
 - (a) an interactive online map which lists each tree, explains its significance and other core attributes, allowing users to view and filter the information for a variety of uses, and download a report that includes the attributes and significance for any tree, and
 - (b) supporting information relating to Sydney's landscape history, objectives and use of the Register, and the criteria used to assess significance.
7. Trees listed on the Register meet our tree-focused assessment criteria. Our approach is based on established heritage practices, including the Burra Charter and the NSW Heritage Council's Assessing Heritage Significance manual (2023).
8. Significance was assessed across 6 categories, noting each category includes detailed criteria to guide consistent and thorough evaluation:
 - (a) visual
 - (b) botanical
 - (c) ecological
 - (d) historical
 - (e) social/cultural

- (f) commemorative.
9. This revised Register includes 2,503 trees, located across 154 sites, consisting of 88 different species. The majority of trees are situated on council-managed parks and streets, accounting for 54% of the total. A further 39% are located on other government-owned properties or institutional land, such as the University of Sydney. Only 7% of the trees are found on privately-owned land.
 10. The most common species listed includes Moreton Bay Figs (514), Hills Figs (408) and Port Jackson Figs (329). There are also several rare species listed, including the Little Mountain Palm (*Lepidorrhachis mooreanum*) and Denham's Meryta (*Meryta denhamii*).
 11. Trees not included in the Register are still recognised as valuable and remain protected under various planning controls. These include the State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021, as well as the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 and Sydney Development Control Plan 2012, which together establish comprehensive requirements for tree protection throughout our area.
 12. A tree listed on the Register also does not mean it can never be removed, however it does ensure any proposals affecting it receive careful, case-by-case review, considering the long-term health, public benefit and significance.

Post Exhibition Edits

13. The draft Register was placed on exhibition from 1 to 29 September 2025. A Sydney Your Say webpage was visited 45 times during the exhibition period.
14. There were 20 submissions received, which resulted in a total of 61 new trees added to the Register, as follows:
 - (a) Sterling Circuit, Camperdown - 25 trees, consisting of 23 Hill's Weeping Figs, one Port Jackson Fig and one Hoop Pine on private property
 - (b) Stanley Street, Darlinghurst - one Sydney Blue Gum street tree
 - (c) Ashmore Street, Erskineville - 8 Jacaranda street trees
 - (d) 61 - 62 Ashmore Street, Erskineville - 2 Hill's Weeping Figs on private property
 - (e) Green Ban Park, Erskineville - one India Rubber Fig park tree
 - (f) Maureen Oliver Reserve, Erskineville - one Sydney Blue Gum park tree
 - (g) Sydney Street, Erskineville - one Sydney Blue Gum street tree
 - (h) Goods Line, Ultimo - 22 Hill's Weeping Fig trees on NSW Government property.
15. Minor changes have been made post-exhibition to update any listings where a tree has since been removed, to include additional photographs, or to correct minor inaccuracies.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

16. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This Register of Significant Trees is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 2 - A leading environmental performer - recognising and protecting significant trees helps to maintain canopy cover and supports best practice tree management. This is essential to achieve the City's targets to increase green cover to 40% across the local area, including a minimum of 27% tree canopy by 2050.
 - (b) Direction 3 - Public places for all - the Register will support improved and healthier public spaces, increasing amenity, thermal comfort and providing more opportunities for social interaction and inclusion.
 - (c) Direction 4 - Design excellence and sustainable development - the Register promotes significant trees as essential infrastructure and important cultural assets. Significant trees provide a sense of place and contribute greatly towards sustainability and design excellence.
 - (d) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - The Register identifies significant trees using a range of criteria, recognising how these trees add meaning and character to public and private spaces and heritage sites, with many holding deep cultural significance.

Organisational Impact

17. During the development of the Register, relevant City staff were consulted to ensure a comprehensive review. No material changes were made.
18. This Register will be updated as significant trees are physically removed, with a comprehensive review to add any new trees scheduled in 10 years' time.

Risks

19. The draft Register of Significant Trees is within the City of Sydney's risk appetite and tolerance as per the Environmental and Sustainability risk category in the City of Sydney Risk Appetite Statement which states:
 - (a) We prioritise prevention and proactive measures to minimise our ecological footprint, conserve resources and protect ecosystems.
 - (b) We have no appetite for decisions, activities and practices that result in long term or irrevocable environmental damage.
 - (c) We have minimal appetite for non-compliance with environmental laws, regulations and industry standards. In many cases we strive to exceed base level legal requirements and engage in sustainable practices that align with the best interests of the environment and the priorities of our community.

- (d) We have an open appetite for changes to procedures and practices to accommodate improved environmental outcomes.

Social / Cultural / Community

20. The Register recognises the importance of significant trees and the numerous physical and mental health benefits they provide the community, with the compelling research outlined in detail within the Greening Sydney Strategy.
21. The Register serves as a meaningful tool to help people connect with the living landscape, fostering a deeper appreciation for the cultural and environmental significance of trees. It encourages individuals to form lasting bonds with their natural surroundings.

Environmental

22. The Register supports the City's actions to accelerate an increase in canopy cover, greening and biodiversity. The focus on recognising our most important trees and achieving the most from each tree, through best practice tree management and considering trees as essential infrastructure, will help us in cooling local streets, reducing heat absorption, reducing energy needs, improving storm water quality, reducing storm water runoff, reducing dust and air pollution, sequestering carbon, and improving the diversity of the City's urban ecology.

Economic

23. The Register will deliver economic benefits to the city. Research in other cities has shown that green urban environments increase property values, improve commercial activity in retail centres and are an attraction for employers to recruit and retain quality staff.
24. Tree canopy cover is the most cost-efficient method of addressing urban heat. As greening also provides a multitude of environmental, social and economic benefits, every dollar invested provides a higher return.

Financial Implications

25. Sufficient funds are allocated within the City's 2025/26 Operational budget and future year's forward estimates for the implementation of the Register.

Relevant Legislation

26. Local Government Act 1993.
27. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
28. State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) Biodiversity and Conservation 2021.
29. Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012.
30. Sydney Development Control Plan 2012.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

31. A full review of the Register of Significant Trees will be undertaken in 10 years, including a call for new community nominations and updates to existing entries. This timeframe reflects the limited number of trees likely to reach significance within a shorter period and the detailed nature of the review process.

Public Consultation

32. The Register has had 2 periods of consultation. Early engagement occurred from 10 March to 7 April 2025, with a total of 73 submissions received. Following Council endorsement, the Register was subject to a public exhibition period from 1 to 29 September 2025.
33. Consultation provided an opportunity for the community to nominate new trees and to provide feedback on any existing trees on the current Register. An Engagement Report is provided in Attachment B.
34. A strategic approach to public exhibition ensured that a range of methods and activities were used to invite feedback from stakeholders. The consultation included online engagement, e-newsletters, and direct letters to stakeholders.
35. A project page was available at sydneyyoursay.com.au and was visited 45 times during the consultation period. The community and stakeholders were able to give feedback using an interactive map. A link to the map was provided on the Sydney Your Say website.
36. An electronic direct message was sent to subscribers of the Sydney Your Say Newsletter on 15 September 2025 to 6,643 recipients.
37. The City of Sydney news story and consultation page was shared organically on LinkedIn and Instagram.
38. A notification letter was issued to 633 properties, and an email was sent to 24 organisations, advising recipients of the consultation and informing them that one or more trees located on their property are currently included on the register.
39. A notification letter was sent to 4 property owners where new nominations to list tree/s on their property were received during the exhibition period, from September 2025.

40. A total of 20 submissions were received, consisting of 14 online nominations and 6 emails. All submissions have been reviewed, with responses outlined for each tree or site in the Engagement Report. From the 20 submissions:
 - (a) 61 new trees are supported for inclusion in the final Register
 - (b) 29 trees are not supported for inclusion in the final Register
 - (c) 4 trees are already listed on the current Register
 - (d) 9 trees and 2 streets are recommended to remain on the current Register.
41. All submissions have been reviewed and, where appropriate, the Register has been updated in response to the submissions received.
42. Details on each submission's outcome is outlined in the Engagement Report (Attachment B).

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