

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### URBAN FOREST PROJECT

In the City of Greater Dandenong, we all have a role to play in preparing for climate change and greening our city.

Having lots of shade trees – also known as canopy cover - helps cool our neighbourhoods and makes our streets, parks and local areas safer and more enjoyable places to be.

The City of Greater Dandenong has a very low canopy cover, contributing to higher temperatures than other metropolitan areas. This puts our community at risk of negative impacts from extreme heat events and our changing climate.

Council has set a target to increase tree canopy cover for the municipality from the existing 9.9% to 15% by 2028.

To support this, Council has developed the Urban Forest Strategy and the Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy, both with the shared vision for 'A healthy, green and resilient urban forest that is well managed, protected and provides benefits to the community.'

Council is seeking community feedback on the draft strategies from February 1 to February 26, 2020.

An online survey is available on our website and hard copy surveys will be available from any of our Customer Service Centres and libraries.

Visit [greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au](http://greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au) or phone 8571 1000

for more information.

**Written submissions can also be sent by:**

**Post:** Strategic Planning – Urban Forest

PO Box 200,

Dandenong VIC 3175

Email:

[council@cqd.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@cqd.vic.gov.au)



### What is an urban forest?

The City of Greater Dandenong's urban forest includes all vegetation, big and small, native and non- native growing on private and public land.

Canopy trees are defined as any tree above 3 metres. Canopy trees deliver immense economic, social and environmental benefits including shade, streetscape amenity, air pollution reduction, habitat for wildlife and help us tackle climate change.

### What is the City of Greater Dandenong doing?

In 2018, Council adopted Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28. Greening Our City considers the current status, issues and opportunities for Council managed trees, this being our street and park trees. Greening Our City also recommended the development of an Urban Forest Strategy that considers canopy trees on private property, both residential as well as non-residential.

As such, Council has now developed the draft Urban Forest Strategy 2021-28 and the draft Greening Our Neighbourhoods 2021-28.

The Urban Forest Strategy provides a framework for how Council and the community can grow the City of Greater Dandenong's urban forest. It is the overarching document to the existing Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28 (public land) and the draft Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy 2021-28 (private land).

The draft Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy considers Council's role in advocating and supporting our community to plant trees where they are most needed – on privately owned land, close to where people live and work. This strategy is especially important as 73 per cent of land in the City of Greater Dandenong is privately owned and has a very low canopy cover.

Greening Our Neighbourhoods also aims to demonstrate the value and benefits of trees in shading our homes and businesses. These benefits include reducing the impact of extreme heat and improving the amenity of our streets and the health of our community.

The shared vision of these strategies is to deliver a healthy, green and resilient urban forest that is well managed, protected and provides benefits to the community.



#### Why is it important to plant trees and increase canopy cover?

The City of Greater Dandenong community is the most disadvantaged in metropolitan Melbourne. Vulnerable people, such as the elderly, children, people living with a disability and those from low socio-economic backgrounds are at an even greater risk to extreme heat events and a changing climate.

This combined with the City of Greater Dandenong having a very low canopy cover and higher temperatures than most other metropolitan Melbourne Councils has resulted in the population in large areas of Springvale, Dandenong, Noble Park and Keysborough having been assessed as of 'High Vulnerability'.

The population in these areas of Greater Dandenong are considered 'highly vulnerable to urban heat due to high heat exposure (lack of shade), sensitivity to heat and low adaptive capability (due to their pre-existing disadvantage)'.

Shade trees, while help reduce impacts of climate change, just as importantly help cool neighbourhoods and make them nicer places to be. A shade tree can reduce daytime surface temperatures by between 5-20°C.

For the City of Greater Dandenong, growing our urban forest is as much about greening our streets, car parks and industrial precincts as it is about greening and cooling down our gardens and our homes.

It is therefore vital that we as a Council and community work to respond to the impacts of climate change, to green and cool our neighbourhoods and make our community more resilient.

### What does Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28 do?

The existing Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28 considers the current status, issues and opportunities for Council managed trees, including street and park trees (public land). Council adopted Greening Our City on 23 July 2018 and a target of 15 per cent canopy cover for the municipality by 2028.

A copy of Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28 is available on Council's website, or in person from Council's Dandenong Customer Service Centre.

Greening our City included a 'Future Consideration' to develop an Urban Forest Strategy which considered trees on private property. In response, the two new draft strategies have been developed.



### How has canopy cover been measured?

The City of Greater Dandenong has a canopy cover of 9.9 per cent. This was measured in 2017 for the Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28 using a point sampling tool called i-Tree Canopy.

Canopy cover is measured as the area of tree canopy when viewed from above. This is measured as a percentage. I-Tree Canopy measures tree canopy cover and has been used by many other Councils for the same purpose. The target of 15 per cent canopy cover, adopted in July 2018, is based on this method and for consistency the Urban Forest Strategy has also used this.

The Action Plan of the draft Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy 2021-28 includes measuring Greater Dandenong's canopy cover in 2024 and 2028 using the i-Tree Canopy software to track how our canopy is trending over time.

### How do canopy trees help cool the environment?

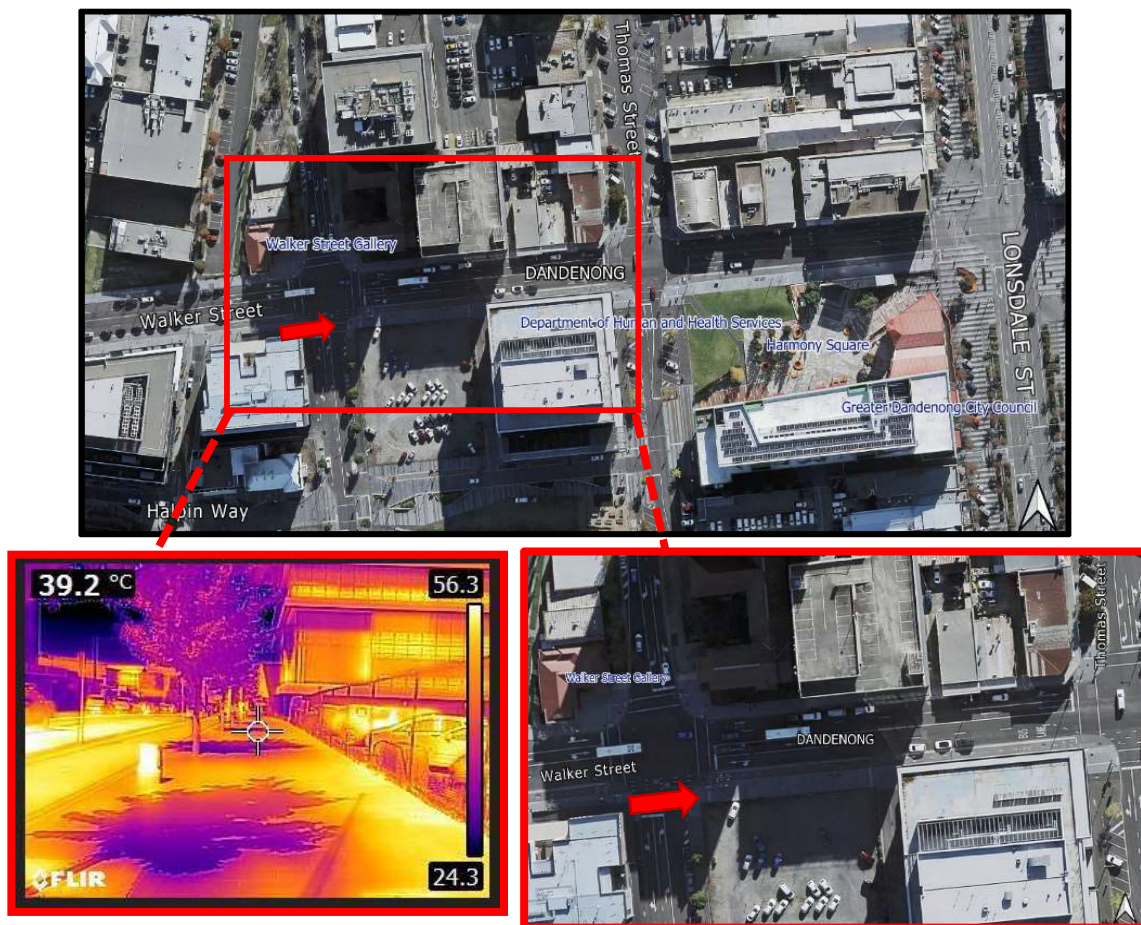
Research has shown greening backyards and gardens can significantly reduce urban heat, with canopy trees reducing daytime surface temperatures by between 5-20°C. Canopy trees provide shade and the leaves on the tree cool the air around them. This is known as evapotranspiration.

Evapotranspiration is the combination of two processes: evaporation and transpiration. These processes cause water to evaporate from plant leaves, releasing moisture into the air. This helps cool the plant and the air surrounding.

Shade provided by canopy trees reduces the amount of heat absorbed by hard and dark surfaces, such as roofs, driveways and roads. This can be seen in the image below.

The image on the left shows the footpath and road is hotter (up to 56.3°C) whilst the section below the canopy shade is much cooler (as low as 24.3°C).

Walker Street, Dandenong Activity



### What is privately owned land or private property?

Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy 2021-28 considers private property, and the role the Greater Dandenong community plays in protecting and enhancing canopy cover to deliver the immense social, economic and environmental benefits greening our neighbourhoods can bring.

Private land is property owned by a private business or individual(s) such as the homes and businesses in the City of Greater Dandenong. It also includes land owned by private and government agencies e.g. Melbourne Water, Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, Department of Education or Department of Human and Health Services.

Private land does not include Crown land or land owned by Council. Increasing the number of trees on Council owned and managed land (including street and park trees) is considered by Greening Our City: Urban Tree Strategy 2018-28.

The Greening Our Neighbourhoods Strategy focuses on advocating and expanding Council's educational tools to advise and support the planting of trees and vegetation by the community. The strategy aims to demonstrate the benefits of canopy trees in shading our homes, reducing the impact of extreme heat and improving the amenity of our streets and the health of our community.

### What is an urban heat island?

An urban heat island is when urban areas are warmer than surrounding rural areas. Urban heat islands occur due to:

- limited canopy trees to shade and cool
- increased hard and dark surfaces that absorb and radiate heat
- heat production from machines
- air pollution creating local greenhouse effects.

The analysis presented in the two draft strategies demonstrates the City of Greater Dandenong is already experiencing higher than average temperatures.

Greater Dandenong has an overall canopy cover of 9.9 per cent which is the lowest canopy cover on the eastern side of Melbourne.

This is a significant contributor to Greater Dandenong being the 7<sup>th</sup> hottest municipality in metropolitan Melbourne.

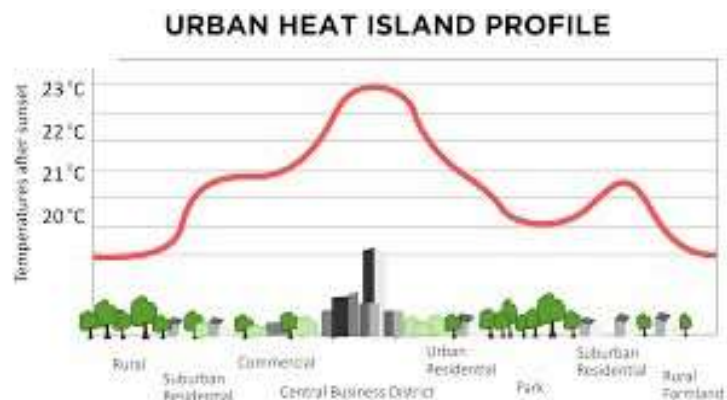


Figure1 Urban Heat Island Profile

Urban heat islands intensify extreme heat events and have detrimental

impacts on the health and wellbeing of communities. The most cost effective and efficient mitigation tool is to increase tree canopy cover.

### What is a local law and why is Council seeking the community's views on a this?

Local laws govern certain activities conducted on private land within the City of Greater Dandenong and are enforced by authorised officers from Council.

Council is seeking the community's feedback on whether it should develop a local law to protect large canopy trees on residential and non-residential private property.

On 24 August 2020 Council passed Notice of Motion No.85 that stated: 'That in recognition of the essential role of protecting large trees on private land in tackling climate change and protecting the health and wellbeing of residents, that the public consultation on the draft Urban Forest Strategy includes seeking public views on developing a municipal wide Local Law regarding the protection of large canopy trees with a diameter of 40cm to 50cm or more at base height (approx. height of 7m to 10m).'

If a local law were implemented to protect large canopy trees on private property it would mean landowners would need to obtain a permit to prune, lop, remove or destroy canopy trees above a certain size on their property. The permit process would provide protection to large canopy trees and permits may or may not be granted.

Council has not drafted a local law or determined the exact details on what size tree would be protected. At this stage, Council is only asking whether the community would, in principle, support developing a municipal wide local law to protect larger canopy trees on private land. Should there be support to develop a local law, officers will then then draft a detailed document for the purpose of further consultation with the community and councillors.

### What happens next?

Council is seeking feedback on the draft strategies from 1 February until 26 February 2021.

An online survey is available on Council's website and hard copy surveys will be available from any of Council's Customer Service Centres and libraries.

Following public consultation of the two draft strategies, a report summarising all submissions received and the officer recommendations will be provided for Council to consider at a Council meeting. This is expected to occur by mid-2021.

At this meeting, Council will consider the submissions received and decide whether to adopt both draft strategies.

### Where can I get further information?

To get more information on the draft strategies, please:

- Visit [greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au](http://greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au)
- Contact Council's Strategic Planning Team on 8571 1000 or by email at [council@cgd.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@cgd.vic.gov.au)