

[REDACTED]

28 March 2025

[REDACTED]

RE: Review of Roads Act 1993
Attention: Roads Act Review Project Team

roadsactreview@transport.nsw.gov.au

INTRODUCTION

The [REDACTED] for the Landscape Architecture. [REDACTED] champions quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities, and greater environmental stewardship. We provide our members with training, recognition, and a community of practice, to share knowledge, ideas and action. With our members, we anticipate and develop a leading position on issues of concern in landscape architecture. Alongside government and allied professions, we work to improve the design and planning of the natural and built environment.

In operation since 1966, [REDACTED] represents over 3,500 landscape architects and promotes excellence in planning, design and management for life outdoors. Committed to designing and creating better spaces in Australia, landscape architects have the skills and expertise to improve the nation's liveability through a unique approach to planning issues via innovative integrated solutions. In doing so, landscape architects contribute towards better environmental, social and economic outcomes for all Australians.


The work of landscape architects is recognised for creating liveable cities and sustainable design outcomes for everyone, our members help shape many projects across Australia, creating the vibrant community spaces for all.

We believe that [REDACTED] through its advocacy, will significantly contribute to a better-informed urban development decision-making process, the enhancement of our urban greenspaces, and long-term community wellbeing.

BACKGROUND

The Roads Act establishes the legal frameworks governing the management, construction, maintenance and use of public roads. The [REDACTED] supports the review of the Roads Act 1993 to support the designing of roads and streets to meet our climate challenges, evolving transport networks and their integration with the environment and the community.

[REDACTED]



█ sees the design of green infrastructure (open space, urban tree canopy and blue and green grid elements) as fundamental to the definition of place. Recognising the significance, complexity and long-term timeframe of road infrastructure, the public realm needs to be designed and implemented in a coherent and effective manner that is integrated as part of precinct wide green initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- █ believes it is important to have a robust Act that supports freight, the economy, defence, medical and emergency support for all, social connections recreational access to National Parks and provision of vital fire and flood resilient roads, particularly in regional areas where populations are widely spread unlike the major cities.

Our members provide consultancy services or are engaged in decision making processes at State and Local Government level with road infrastructure and the public realm across all stages of planning and implementation.

- The Act should be updated to reflect and support the growing needs of Public Transport, Active Transport and community activation on our urban transit roads and streets and also the provision of cycle corridors, regional scale public space, landscaped corridors and a connection to Country on our more major roads and highways serving Australia as a whole.

The importance of understanding the role and context as local spaces

The NSW Government's densification of Sydney with Transit Oriented development (TOD) and Low and Mid-Rise Housing (LMR) Policies requires a corresponding approach to our roads network to cater for the increase in population.

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) *Beyond the Pavement 2023 Urban design policy, procedures and principles for roads and waterways projects* and its principles and case studies should be a guide to this revision of the Act and it forms the contextual basis for the design of roads. In addition. The *Movement and Place Framework* which outlines the principles of "taking a Movement and Place approach" in the context of existing planning and assessment processes. The recent Design of Roads and Streets (DORAS) manual assists with the design and improving our public realm with twenty-two (22) road and street typologies to achieve the 'right road for the right place.' The guide is practical with solutions and clear examples of road and street design solutions and supports TfNSW projects on state and non-state roads and Council projects on non-state roads.




Local Government initiatives

Climate mitigation initiatives that refine the approach to road safety and speed along our roads should be reflected in the Roads Act. Blacktown City Council (BCC) researched the ***Risk of NOT planting trees along our streets*** through challenging traditional street tree guidelines which highlight the safety risk to errant vehicles of large shade trees along roads. BCC partnered with a range of research organisations to highlight the risks of roads without trees to physical and mental health, as well as to the environment, infrastructure and the economy. This innovative research project led to changes in Council's policy position, an increase in canopy cover, resulting in a more resilient and safer urban environment. A summary is appended.

This research has received national and international recognition and is being adopted by other councils.

CONCLUSION

 appreciates the opportunity to comment on the review of the Roads Act. We welcome the opportunity for continued consultation and offer the Institute's support to achieve functional and high-quality outcomes for NSW.

Sincerely yours,



EXCELLENCE IN THE ENVIRONMENT AWARDS



COUNCIL NAME

Blacktown City
Council

WEB ADDRESS

www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

247 square
kilometres

POPULATION

382,831

Risk of NOT planting trees along our streets

Blacktown City Council challenged traditional street tree guidelines which highlight the safety risk to errant vehicles of large shade trees along roads. Council partnered with a range of research organisations to highlight the risks of roads without trees to physical and mental health, as well as to the environment, infrastructure and the economy. This innovative project led to changes in Council's policy position, an increase in canopy cover and it is resulting in a more resilient and safer urban environment.

Background

Western Sydney faces growing climatic uncertainty and a pressing need to adapt to rising temperatures. Shade trees are widely regarded as one of the most effective large-scale measures to mitigate urban heat and improve liveability.

However, traditional urban tree planting research and policy focus on minimising risks to errant vehicles and ignore the broader implications of streets without trees. Councils, including Blacktown, have held the policy position of not planting trees along roads over 50km/hr due to this perceived safety risk.

Council identified a gap in knowledge and research considering the broader benefits and risks to all groups within the community, including to health, infrastructure and environment.

Implementation

Blacktown partnered with researchers from Western Sydney University, the University of Wollongong and UNSW to understand academic evidence across the disciplines of health, environment and policy.

Other external stakeholders including Transport for NSW, Austroads, Western Sydney Local Health District and Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils were consulted through a series of risk workshops. Workshop attendees contributed to developing a risk matrix.



Using funding provided by the NSW Government's 'Greening our City Grant Program', council procured consultant to run the workshops and develop a report. The report concluded that not planting large shade trees along streets up to 70km/hr poses greater risks to many user groups. The findings were presented to Council for debate and council endorsed the initiative to plant large shade trees along 60km/hr and 70km/hr streets.

Following a scoping exercise, Council began a pilot program which involved planting 20 large shade trees along Council-owned streets. The initiative is being expanded to other areas within the LGA, including to the North West Growth Area.

Outcomes

The initiative has revolutionised Blacktown's approach to urban greening and led to the endorsement of a new policy position allowing shade trees along streets with higher speed limits.

The new position has already resulted in tree planting, allowing Blacktown to increase its urban canopy and tackle the urban heat island effect. This is leading to enhanced resilience, better community health, and improved environmental outcomes.

Council has also seen an improved approach to road design whereby large shade trees are being included in every design for every existing or new street within the LGA.

The project has demonstrated that the traditional narrative around tree planting is outdated and Council has set a precedent that other local government areas can adopt.

Key Learnings

Shifting entrenched perspectives requires robust and academically grounded research and data, particularly where there are safety concerns. The project highlighted the importance of working with diverse stakeholders, including academics, legal and risk experts to develop an evidenced-based rationale that was strongly backed by all parties. Involving neighbouring councils from the beginning could have further enriched the process and facilitated a quicker adoption of similar policies across Western Sydney.

The initiative has demonstrated the need for holistic risk assessments when evaluating new and existing policy positions. It is important that the needs and safety of all community groups are considered, accounting for all broader health, social, economic and environmental factors.





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This project was the 2024 Overall winner of the Innovation in Planning, Policies and Decision Making category at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards. This award was supported by our category partner Wolfpeak.