

22 March 2022

Anthony Witherdin
Director – Key Sites Assessments
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
4 Parramatta Square, Darcy Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

By email: Amy.Watson@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Amy,

**RE: Expansion of the Museums Discovery Centre SSD-10472 Modification 2
Request for additional information received 17/03/2022**

As requested we are submitting a response to the advice provided by EES and additional information as follows:

1. Provide further justification for the proposed relocation of replacement planting from open space within the Hills Shire Council to the Western Sydney University (WSU), Richmond Campus, including evidence that the proposal continues to deliver a net increase in tree planting.

The Tree Replacement Implementation Plan supports the government's NSW Koala Strategy – the biggest commitment by any state government to the future of koalas by supporting a range of conservation actions that will provide more habitat for koalas, improve koala health and safety, and build knowledge to improve koala conservation.

The NSW Koala Strategy sets out the first phase of actions to stabilise priority Koala populations in NSW. It provides a starting point to achieve the longer-term goal of increasing koala numbers across the State. The NSW Koala Strategy fulfils the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer's recommendation to deliver a strategy using the best available science. It also responds to feedback received from the NSW community on the scope of the Strategy and the Draft Saving Our Species (SOS) Iconic Koala Project. A key pillar of the NSW Koala Strategy is to support safe and healthy koala populations in NSW. The NSW Government wants to improve the triage, treatment and rehabilitation of koalas. A core component of this work is for the Taronga Conservation Society to work with tertiary institutions and relevant stakeholders, including the Vet Practitioners Board and other peak bodies (such as the Vet Nurses Council), to develop and implement wildlife care professional development training for veterinarians and veterinary nurses. An important component in the rehabilitation of koala's is the ability to provide quality browse (food) for koalas that come into Taronga's care when required. It can be at times difficult to provide koalas in care with adequate fresh eucalypt leaves. The collection of browse at Taronga is an essential requirement for a number of native animal species, which rely on browse as the primary food source in their diet. Browse is also used as a supplementary food source and behavioural enrichment device for a large number of species in the zoo population.

The provision of browse for koalas during the 2019-20 bushfire season was challenging. Taronga cared for a number of impacted koalas during this time. For Taronga to meet its commitments to conservation and to also be in a position to provide browse in emergency situations, the zoo must continue to increase its capacity at the Richmond plantation. It is critical that the supply of browse for both the immediate short-term collection requirements and the long-term future needs remains reliable and sustainable. The intent is that the plantation at Richmond will be maintained in perpetuity. Longevity of eucalypts vary, although 50 to 100 years + would be expected.

The proposed increased planting will be over and above the existing Taronga Conservation Society koala planting program and does not replace any planting losses due to previous drought or flooding events. It can be confirmed that the 600 trees will result in a net increase of trees on the Western Sydney University - Richmond Campus.

Western Sydney University and the Powerhouse are engaged in an ongoing and longstanding strategic partnership, in order to secure success for students and communities in Greater Western Sydney, through leading science and technology exhibitions, research and discovery.

The partnership between WSU and Powerhouse includes:

- Joint research projects
- Industry placement and postgraduate exchange programs
- Programming collaborations including Sydney Science Festival, Sydney Design Week and pop-up engagements at WSU campuses
- Scholar in residence program

In the submitted Tree Replacement Strategy – Addendum it was noted in Section 5: Implementation - that should agreement not be reached with Council, another possible option currently being considered is a collaboration with Wildlife Operations at the Taronga Conservation Society Australia. This involves supplying eucalyptus tube stock suitable for a plantation to supply feed to koalas, at Taronga's Richmond Plantation, in the Hawkesbury Local Government Area.

2. Justify why other potential replanting locations within the Hills Shire investigated within the Tree Replacement Strategy submitted with the SSD application have not been pursued.

The two proposed sites for replanting within the Hills Shire were selected by Council to reduce the total possible sites from 6 to 2, in order to provide the greatest impact in terms of providing shade and improvements to local ecological environments, in closest proximity to the MDC site. This prioritises the Council's properties in terms of identifying those areas which require the most urgent plantings for maximum community benefit. Section 5 of the Tree Replacement Strategy - Addendum outlined the process for determining which of these locations would be chosen for the replacement planting. Centenary of ANZAC Reserve is located in the closest proximity to the Museums Discovery Centre site, between Green Road and Harrington Avenue. There exist opportunities to increase tree canopy cover along the Green Road alignment in order to provide an increased green buffer to Green Road and providing increased canopy cover and shade to the surrounding sports fields for spectators.

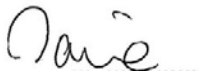
At Arnold Reserve there exists further opportunity to increase canopy cover and shade surrounding sports fields for spectators, and to provide improved outlook for surrounding residential housing. It is Council's preference that all replacement trees be planted at the Arnold Avenue Reserve if possible.

In consultation with the Council's Parks Assets Officer, the council's landscape architect has chosen endemic replacement tree species that are suited to the particular locations chosen, and also provide fodder for the Glossy Black Cockatoo, that is found in the Local Government Area. It is preferable for Council that planting occur between March and September, in order to minimise planting losses and to fit in with Council's planting programs.

Although the original Tree Replacement Strategy noted the benefits of planting trees at locations along Cattai Creek, adjacent the Hills Showground redevelopment, upon further investigation this proved to be problematic, as there were multiple landowners involved and it would result in a complex and lengthy process to negotiate with the multiple stakeholders.

If you require any further information, or if you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact the undersigned on 0400 311 043.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tania', written over a horizontal line.

Tania Alexander
Senior Project Manager
Create Infrastructure