

## 10.1 TREE PLANTING PROJECT

**Councillor** Cl. Mark Baxter, Councillor  
**File No** F19/1930  
**Attachments** Nil

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### PURPOSE

To:

- address the ecology of the River
- address the unemployment in the river valley
- address the climate crisis (absorbing CO2)

### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council:**

- 1. That Council provides in principle support for a major tree planting endeavour along the banks of the Macleay River and its tributaries in order to address issues such as erosion, soil degradation, water quality etc.**
- 2. That Council provides letters of support, where appropriate, to any community group or not-for-profit organisation that seeks to develop applications for funding such a project**
- 3. That Council consider how to address the issues around degradation of the Macleay River Valley as part of its sustainability program**
- 4. Council endorses that consultation with stakeholders begin, so that landowners, landcare groups, interested residents can begin the process of planning and implementing the proposal.**
- 5. Council endorses that a committee be created - of stakeholders - so that the logistics of implementing the proposal can be addressed.**

### BACKGROUND

The State Government, via the DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENT, has instigated a '5 Million tree program for greater Sydney' and has requested Councils instigate sustainable development programs (see below). Our Council has done an exhaustive, professional study of our river, via the MACLEAY ECOHEALTH PROJECT 2015-2016, (see below), and has nominated the rehabilitation of the riparian zones - addressing riverbank erosion being part of that (see below). The MACLEAY LANDCARE, have made a Herculean effort at rehabilitation, planting over 10,000 trees (see below). So this proposal is coming on the back of this momentum.

May I PROPOSE a 'tree planting project' for the River Banks of the Macleay. There is a world-wide movement underway to re-tree the planet, for ecological reasons. Some astounding achievements have occurred - see below. I see the project as having multiple benefits:

1. Re-foresting the river banks from Kempsey to the mouth of the river, will stabilise the banks, and stop the constant erosion that continually silts up the river. The river is at a historic low depth, which only makes flooding more likely. Some 'expert' back in the fifties convinced the Council to remove the trees from the river banks. A catastrophic mistake.
2. Re-foresting the river banks will require a group of 'unemployed' becoming a green team, and, with supervision and training - that might include a TAFE course - will become qualified. Plants could be nursed from seeds into seedlings for planting. Preparation and planting, and watering, would

become the groups daily occupation for the year. This would mean some 10-20 unemployed would be given an avenue to get constructive work.

3. Planting a million trees would become part of our valley's effort to address climate change - pulling carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. It would be our constructive reply to the million trees that were destroyed by the bush-fires.

In all, the cost would be eclipsed by the 'environmental' and 'social' benefits.

Costs would be (roughly) :

1. Qualified supervisor (\$100,000 / year)
2. 10 workers @ \$800 per week (\$ 40,000/ year x 10 = \$400,000)
3. 10,000 black plastic seedling tubes to propagate seeds (@.20 cents each = \$ 2,000)
4. Council might donate the soil
5. Tools : 11 spades / 10,000 stakes / hoses / buckets / hats / gloves / (approx : \$ 12, 000)

Rough total COST : \$ 514, 000.

Rough total BENEFIT :

- 10 unemployed becoming trained workers, who will go on to find employment and become 'taxpayers'.
- river banks rehabilitated, reducing the severity of the flooding down river, as the river becomes deeper. Reducing flood costs
- a million trees absorbing CO2, benefitting the ecosystem, and giving kudos to our valley.
- a re-forested river becoming a permanent 'memorial' of the 2019/20 Bush-fire crisis.

References:

<https://trilliontrees.org.au/>

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/one-trillion-trees-world-economic-forum-launches-plan-to-help-nature-and-the-climate/>

<http://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/blogpost/what-would-it-really-take-plant-trillion-trees>

<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Open-space-and-parklands/5-million-trees>

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6320951/indians-plant-220-million-trees-in-one-day/?cs=14232>

### ***General Managers Comment***

*Internal resourcing of the initiative is not currently available and would require redirection from currently planned tasks within Council's Operating Plan. Per further information below the initiative is likely to better suited to being managed by an alternative agency.*

*Numerous ecological investigations and natural resource management plans have identified that the removal and degradation of native riparian vegetation in the lower and middle sections of the Macleay catchment has/is contributing to impaired ecological conditions. It has been recognised as a serious issue.*

*Siltation of sections of the river was managed in years gone by when the river was used for commercial activities by multiple dredging operations. Siltation has been an ongoing issue. Further the river entrance, being modified from Grassy Head to its current location, means the river is still finding its way from a geomorphical perspective.*

*The concept of establishing large scale revegetation programs has significant benefits for the Macleay catchment, however, such programs come with inherent logistical problems/issues such as land holder willingness, site access, maintenance of young seedlings, weed control measures, etc. Several sections of river frontage also have a directly adjoining public road, meaning insufficient room exists for plantings or a road safety issue would exist. In addition, having a number of diverse native species available generally, requires a long lead up time for nurseries to produce such large numbers.*

*Landcare in conjunction with LLS would most likely be the best approach to deliver such programs, given that the vast majority of intended plantings would be on private property. Council will continue to initiate native vegetation rehabilitation programs on Council owned and managed lands as resources become available, and will aid with private land owners interested in considering and/or undertaking such activities.*