

# THE NATIONAL TRUST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND SIGNIFICANT TREES

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*The National Trust of South Australia is an independent membership organisation established in 1955 and is committed to the conservation of our Natural and Cultural Heritage. The Trust manages heritage buildings and nature reserves throughout South Australia and is active in devising and disseminating policies on a range of heritage issues, advocating for improved protection and providing awareness raising programs in the broader community.*

The National Trust of South Australia recently reformed its Significant Tree Steering Committee as a response to concerns about Significant Tree legislation in South Australia. The committee has developed a Significant Tree Conservation Policy and recommenced accepting and assessing nominations of trees to its Significant Tree Register after a twelve-year break.

Treenet has kindly accepted our request to launch our new policy and the register at this 7<sup>th</sup> National Street Tree Symposium. In doing so I would like to introduce Phil McNamara to give you some background to the register and policy, and summarise some of the key directions we will be taking in the future.

## **THE NTSA SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER**

In 1981 the National Trust of South Australia (NTSA) resolved to establish a register of significant trees in response to the 'Year of the Tree.' In February 1983 a steering committee of amateur and professional botanists was established to assess nominations based on a range of criteria that were developed by the National Trust in Victoria. Between 1983 and 1992 a total of 625 trees were accepted to the register.

Between 1992 and 2004 the Register acted as a reference only and new nominations were not assessed. The NTSA did however continue to advocate on behalf of Significant Trees and held forums in 1998 and 2000 at the time the State was developing its new Significant Tree legislation.

In 2004 the NTSA reformed its Significant Tree Steering Committee in response to concerns about Significant Tree legislation in South Australia. The Register started up again also, with an additional 50 trees added since that time. The criteria for nominations and assessment processes have remained relatively unchanged since 1983.

Nominations are received free of charge, on-line or in hardcopy, from tree owners, local government, any individual, group or interested party. The NTSA defines Significant Trees as those having natural, historic or cultural, aesthetic or botanical attributes that are highly valued at national, state or local level. There are 16 criteria within these broader attributes for which trees may be nominated, including trees with natural habitat values, trees that celebrate a historic event or person, trees of great age or size, or trees of genetic value. They may be in the form of individual specimens, avenues or stands of trees and may occur anywhere in South Australia.

Nominated trees are accepted to the Register as either a Classified, Recorded or On File entry.

- The Classified level: represents individual trees, stands or avenues that are essential to the heritage of Australia or South Australia and must be conserved (National or State importance).
- The Recorded level: represents those that contribute to the heritage of Australia or South Australia, the conservation of which is encouraged (Regional importance).
- The On File level: represents trees that are not of State or Regional significance but which may nevertheless play a part in the importance of a town or area and whose conservation should be encouraged where appropriate.

Once accepted to the Register the owner, controlling authority and nominator are all advised of the nomination result. The Local Government Council is also advised and is asked to consider accepting Classified and Recorded trees to their local Development Plans in an effort to establish some means of protection and recognition for listed trees.

### **THE NTSA SIGNIFICANT TREE CONSERVATION POLICY**

The NTSA recognises that its Significant Tree Register does have its deficiencies, not unlike that of the current South Australian legislation, in that it recognises special classes of trees. Whilst it is important to recognise the significant attributes of trees on the register there is a tendency with any form of listing process to disregard as unimportant anything that is not on the register or not protected by the current legislation. I note that this has been raised as an issue at previous symposiums and in other related fields such as threatened species listings for biodiversity conservation.

The NTSA sought to address this concern in its Significant Tree Conservation Policy ratified by the Trust in July this year. The policy contains a definition for significant trees and advocates listing trees of significance to the NTSA register as a first step in developing a deeper recognition of the community wealth provided by trees. The policy also advocates for the continued planting and management of trees ensuring future communities are able to benefit from the continuing presence of trees and significant trees as an essential part of ecosystems and communities. This has to be done within a broader environmental construct recognised as a community goal by planners who are integral to so many decision making processes. The term 'urban forest' is often used as a label for this context, as it is the sum of all private and public trees that are of importance and interest to communities.

The NTSA also broadened the aims of its Significant Tree Steering Committee, beyond assessing nominations to the Significant Tree Register, by including promoting and facilitating the conservation and enhancement of trees and vegetation in South Australia, recognising their context and position in cultural landscapes.

### **LAUNCH OF THE NTSA SIGNIFICANT TREE CONSERVATION POLICY AND REGISTER**

I would like to thank Treenet for the opportunity of presenting today and now launch the National Trust of South Australia's Significant Tree Policy and Register which we will be communicating to all South Australian local government councils and members of parliament.