



**Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia**

The Secretary **30 July 2008**
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Sent via email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

**Re Senate Committee Review into Legislation and Conditions relating to the Planting of
Trees for Carbon Sequestration.**

Dear Sir,

The Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) is the Peak Industry body for the industry that is responsible for producing all the plant seedlings in Australia. This includes those trees used in widespread plantings in rural areas as well as trees planted within the urban environment. The basic facts of biology are that wherever a tree is planted it will sequester carbon and have a positive impact on the environment.

The NGIA supports the guidelines as proposed and seeks to have these same guidelines and subsequent incentive for planting to be applicable to the Urban Forest. Our comments are attached regarding how urban plantings comply fully with the guidelines.

Australia has only recently adopted the concept of Urban Forestry, as being the management of all trees and plants within the urban environments. In the USA and Europe this concept is widely established and the carbon sequestered by trees is measured, recorded and valued.

The NGIA is working with State and Local governments as well as other sectors of the community to get increased tree plantings in the urban landscape. Having these plantings which are monitored, measured and managed being subjected to the same taxation benefits that apply to plantation forestry would be a major advantage to getting greater support from Australians in all areas.

We have attached an article by Dr Jim McPherson, Director of the Urban Forestry Research Team with United States Department of Agriculture and Forestry as supportive material to the benefits that will accrue from increased plantings of trees be it for carbon Sequestration or the multitude of other benefits that will accrues to Australians residing in Urban environments.

Yours sincerely

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Nursery and Garden Industry comments on the Guidelines and inclusion of the Urban Forest as a viable consideration for increased plantings of Trees for Carbon Sequestration and Emissions reduction.

Environmental and Natural Resource Management Guidelines in relation to the establishment of trees for the purposes of carbon sequestration

Comment:

Under these guidelines the concept of Urban Forestry is recognised as a legitimate activity for the planting and establishment of trees for the purposes of carbon sequestration. The urban environment within Australia is as extensive as the area allocated to plantation forestry and being primarily coastal is subjected to ideal rainfall patterns for tree growth.

1. Carbon sink forest establishment should be based on regionally applicable best practice approaches for achieving multiple land and water environmental benefits.

Compliance with this guideline may be achieved by, for example:

- avoiding clearing land of remnant native vegetation as determined by the relevant state or territory legislation; and
- taking into account features of plantation and forestry best practice guides (e.g. state and territory codes of practice) relevant to carbon sink forests; and
- establishing carbon sink forests in ways to avoid any significant negative impacts on water availability; and
- establishing carbon sink forests in ways to enhance potential salinity mitigation benefits and prevent potential increases to in-stream salinity; and
- developing a weed and feral animal management plan and fire management plan as applicable to the state or territory jurisdiction.

Comment:

Trees in the Urban Forestry environment will comply with all these guidelines and have major economic benefits other than just carbon sequestration. Salinity mitigation is a major issue in areas of the Sydney basin and these areas are also subjected to (or will be) a major heat island affect were temperatures due to increased building and hard surfaces means result in greater evaporation which compound the salinity impact. Major tree planning as street trees or as plants on specified land/green belts would mitigate the “heat island “ impact.

Research work conducted in the USA shows major temperature drops can be achieved with increased canopy cover from urban trees. Recent work from the University of Queensland models air conditioner use increases by 59% with 2 degree temperature increase.

2. Carbon sink forest establishment activities should be guided by regional natural resource management plans and water sharing plans, and environmental impacts at a catchment scale should be considered.

Compliance with this guideline may be achieved by ensuring that establishment activities are consistent with regional natural resource management plans, for example by identifying:

- strategies for ensuring that individual carbon sink forest plantings account for natural resource management priorities at a larger regional scale; and
- potential cumulative environmental impacts of carbon sink forest activities at a catchment scale.

In cases where establishment of carbon sink forests would represent a significant interception activity in a catchment that has been identified as fully allocated, over-allocated or approaching full allocation, water access entitlements must be obtained.

Comment:

Trees planted in the Urban Forest environment for carbon sequestration generally would not impact on water availability in a detrimental manner. Urban tree plantings have been proven to control major run off events associated with heavy rainfall events. This interception then aids in the run off management. Technology exists where stormwater and runn off can be directed into areas of urban tree planting to benefit growth.

3. Carbon sink forest establishment activities should recognise and adhere to all government regulatory requirements.

Compliance with this guideline may be achieved by meeting any applicable Commonwealth, state and territory legislation, and local and regional regulations, when establishing carbon sink forests.

In cases where establishment of carbon sink forests would represent a significant interception activity in a catchment that has been identified as fully allocated, over-allocated or approaching full allocation, water access entitlements must be obtained.

Comment:

Recognition of trees planted in the Urban Forest would ensure that local government can be directly involved in mitigation strategies that have a direct

benefit to urban communities. Public awareness of the role plants play in the carbon sequestration cycle would be increased and many other environmental and health benefits would be achieved.

At present the issue of Local Government have security of tenure over land associated with roadsides, green belts etc may be an issue that can easily overcome by legislation that recognises the role of Urban Forests within the overall Australian emissions control strategy.

In the USA research has shown that tree management for carbon sequestration and environmental benefits provides a financial incentive for local councils and communities to benefit from trading the value of the carbon, and those funds being used to manage the asset for the benefit of the wider community.

The Nursery and garden Industry Australia sees this concept has a major opportunity to extend a program that has traditionally be located in rural areas to be brought into the focus of the majority of Australians who reside in urban areas.

The benefits from increasing the Carbon Sequestration tree plantings within the urban area are far greater than just the carbon sequestered, whereas for rural plantings the carbon sequestration is the major benefit.

The technology is available to measure and manage trees in the urban area and with slight modification it can be adapted to suit Australian species and growth characteristics. The use of such technology in New York resulted in the Council investing \$400 million in tree programs to increase emissions reduction and improve the environment- carbon sequestration is the economic bonus.