

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Michael Hoy
Superintendent Parks, &
Gardens
City of Box Hill

The papers delivered over the past two days provided a number of highlights which all those responsible for tree management need to be made aware of and implement. These are:

- 1 The need to provide for future generations of Australians so that they may enjoy the benefits of an enhanced environment. This relates firstly to retaining the existing tree cover, and secondly to ensure that our generation undertakes extensive planting programs to redress past wrongs and to enhance the existing environment for the benefit of future generations.
- 2 Carefully plan all aspects of tree planting and management to ensure that works are undertaken safely, efficiently and with effective community liaison.
- 3 Ensure that all personnel involved with tree management and maintenance are adequately trained in arboriculture.
- 4 When undertaking planting schemes carefully select the propagule source. If planting indigenous vegetation use only local material. If planting trees from other areas including overseas try to ensure that the propagules are from appropriate provinces where the plants grow in a similar climate and soil type.
- 5 The need to understand tree physiology, resistance to pests and diseases as well as environmental factors and ways which they can be modified to ensure the retention of special trees for the pleasure of the community for as long as possible.
- 6 Be aware of the latest scientific and technological advances, including a better understanding of tree structure, advanced methods of plant propagation, new techniques in direct seeding of trees, selecting the best specimens for propagating, using chemicals to limit tree growth, and using computers to manage the tree resource.
- 7 The need to encourage co-operation between professionals, and ensure a multidisciplinary approach is applied to environmental management. There is a need to ensure that a receptive environment exists in which all professionals are able to contribute towards an information pool to produce the desired result of a safe, attractive, healthy and functional environment.

Finally, a special thank you to all convenors, speakers, delegates and sponsors for contributing so much to making this a successful conference.

TREES IN THE ENVIRONMENT - CURRENT AND FUTURE CONFERENCE
13 - 15 APRIL, 1988

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Michael Hoy
Superintendent of Parks and Gardens
City of Box Hill

INTRODUCTION

During the Conference a wide range of issues relevant to the theme of "Trees in the Environment" were raised by speakers and delegates. Speakers with a broad spectrum of expertise provided enlightened and provocative papers, and I congratulate them for their professionalism and dedication.

COMMENTARY ON PAPERS

The first session provided a range of general background papers.

Dr John French urged the development of an holistic approval to urban forestry and to develop indigenous bushland approaches to urban area management. He questioned the use of chemicals around trees and our capacity to overcome this problem by using other methods of grass weed control.

Mr James Weirick analysed the ideals which have led to the development of Australia's questionably efficient "Planning Utopia" - Canberra. He also described the use of trees in Canberra to provide the vegetative structure for the urban areas of the city. This structure would hopefully provide Canberra with that heritage of trees apparent in Melbourne today - a heritage so fortunately provided by horticulturists in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Dr James Hitchmough dealt with concepts of tree selection, and proposed the formation of a group to research tree selection for various purposes in Australia. The RAIPR and AAA would have a significant role to play in the formation of this group. He suggested linking up with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs research station at Knoxfield. Other speakers provided insights into the use of trees in specific locations. Larry Parsons discussed the selection of appropriate species in the design of streetscapes of different characters. Tony Whitham in some detail dealt with tree selection and establishment techniques in parklands. Neil Seymour emphasised the need to seek the help of both entrepreneurs and the community in restoring tree cover along river and stream corridors.

Several speakers discussed the use of trees in the rural landscape. Peter Davies and Michael Watt described the way some farmers have effectively diverted capital and labor into tree restoration of cleared farmland. Techniques of tree establishment currently in use in the rural area were shown to have had some outstanding successes (especially the direct seeding programme undertaken by Michael Watt at Balmoral). Urban tree managers would do well to investigate and trial some of these proven methods.

Various speakers discussed programmes initiated to increase tree cover in Australia. John Whitelaw outlined the objectives, history and successes of the Greening Australia Organisation. He also expressed the need to address current and future environmental damage through legislative revegetation provisions. Peter Rendle explained the role of the Natural Resources Conservation League in educating Victorians of the need to care for trees. Tim Cox outlined the background and philosophies of the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, and the role played by the community and volunteers in revegetation issues.

Several papers dealt with plant physiology and functions. Dr Greg Moore stressed the need to understand and allow for plant form and function when selecting tree species was one of the highlights of the conference. He supported the tree structure theories of Dr Alex Shigo and used these to suggest a new test for tree stability ("the racking test") as a simple and effective way to ascertain tree root disorders.

Other papers outlined the problems associated with trees and their management. Dr David Aldous described in detail the biotic and abiotic factors which affect trees, and in another paper dealt with the need to educate both the general population and staff of the value of trees to minimise vandalism. Chris Nazer introduced the concept of integrated pest management, and the need to understand the whole ecology of the pests, the host trees, and the environment in which they live as well as the community which lives in close proximity to the trees. Peter Yan, analysed the use of chemicals to limit growth of street trees, to reduce the costs of pruning to clear overhead electricity wires.

The management of trees in the arboricultural field was outlined in two papers. Philip Smallman and Philip Kenyon both discussed the problems facing arborists due to poor tree selection, aging tree populations, poor pruning techniques and urban construction damage.

Another series of papers dealt with the development, protection and management of special tree populations. Roger Spencer, spoke about the history of tree selection in Melbourne, John Hawker on the Significant Tree program for Victoria and legislative controls necessary to protect them. John Patrick spoke on selecting appropriate trees and managing them to ensure that all the streets were not denuded at the one time. All stressed the need for planning to ensure that valuable and attractive environmental resources are provided for future generations.

Management of staff resources in the arboricultural industry was discussed by two speakers. Celia Kneen explained the structure of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service Arboricultural Unit, and the need to keep, train and supplement staff to effectively maintain the tree resources. Phil Kenyon presented in detail the need to take care and adopt that old adage "Prevention is better than cure" for all works associated with tree establishment and maintenance.

Peter Rendle dealt with the future use of computers for tree inventories, and managing the tree resource. Computers could provide an ideal program to ensure trees are cared for from the time of production to full maturity.

Robin Youl discussed methods of revegetation, giving heavy emphasis to planning, and the development of community based programs. He called for the need for a multidisciplinary approach to regenerative and environmental projects.

An economist's view of the tree asset was provided by Bill Leone. He introduced the concepts of future benefit and future nett capital value of trees. Bill also urged for a reassessment of existing amenity tree valuation formulae, to establish a recognised base for evaluation in Australia.

Finally, Dr Leon Pederick presented the hypothesis that no real "Perfect Tree" existed for any locality or use. He described the techniques used in raftwood tree breeding programs in Australia and the long series of steps necessary to produce improved varieties not only for forest purposes but also for street and park trees. When selecting trees for specific purposes care must be taken to ensure that selection from appropriate provinces is made.

CONCLUSION

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