

<b>Presented to</b>	Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held 16 April 2024
<b>Related to Item</b>	15.2 Notice of Motion – Grants for Native Planted Verges
<b>Submitted by</b>	Acting Manager Natural Area and Parks
<b>Attachments</b>	Nil.

The City of Melville (the City) has several avenues within our current programs and practices that allow residents to create a bio-diverse verge including:

- The Council Verge Policy that allows for maintained gardens and native vegetation on the verge within certain guidelines
- An annual native plant give away and our free verge tree on request or as part of our expansion program. This program has a budget of \$30,000 annually and includes the provision of 6,200 plants through a not for profit organisation (APACE) who administer the program on behalf of the City

In responding to the Notion of Motion to establish a specific grants program to encourage increased verge planting, there are a number of cost and resource implications to consider.

A grant for residents' program would need to establish criteria or guidelines regarding:

- eligibility and establishment requirements (e.g. plants per given area)
- success factors (mortality rate, replanting requirements, weed control, maintenance)
- auditing process to check establishment rates
- reporting and value for money assessment

These tasks above are not able to be delivered within the existing resources in the area and therefore additional staff would be required. The City has not evaluated the likely take up rate for such a program and a subsequent report can be provided if required.

The City has investigated the Water Corporation grant program, however this program is very small (\$10,000) to spread across multiple verges and it would be administratively demanding when compared to our current plant giveaway program.

An alternative could be to integrate verge tree planting into the City's current verge tree expansion program and to adjust the plant giveaway program to focus on verge planting. This could include the provision of verge friendly plants that would not obstruct sightlines or impact negatively on verge access for pedestrians.

If needed, the City's plant giveaway program could be expanded in 2024-2025 to include additional plants specifically for native verges. This initiative could be supported through greater community awareness campaigns outlining the benefits and opportunities for biodiverse verges by promoting City led verge revegetation projects similar to the recent planting along the Murdoch Drive verge between South Street and Farrington Road. These would provide a greater awareness of the benefits of biodiverse verges to the Community, potentially linking them to other Sustainability education and awareness programs.