

## Nature a valuable investment for homeowners and businesses

*New survey shows investing in greenery leads to significant payoffs*

An independent survey commissioned by Planet Ark has found that many Australians clearly value the health and wellbeing benefits of living in a home and neighbourhood with lots of nature.

The survey showed that Australians would be willing to pay an average of \$35,000\* more for a home in a nature-filled neighbourhood than for an identical house with little surrounding nature.

Released in the lead up to National Tree Day on Sunday 27th July, the survey results are being published in Planet Ark's *Valuing Trees – What is Nature Worth?* report, sponsored by Toyota. The report explores the social and financial, health and wellbeing, and ecological benefits of having trees, plants and other natural elements at home, in the workplace and at school.

Four out of five Australians (78%) said they would prefer to live in a home with many natural elements, such as trees, plants and a garden, over one that does not have these features.

When asked to consider their ideal home and its features, Australians rated having a home with a backyard and living in a "green" neighbourhood with trees, parks and gardens even higher than being close to work, having easy access to public transport, and having good shops or a shopping centre nearby.

In recent years, several studies have been done to place a value on trees in a number of Australian cities.

Each shade tree over a house has been estimated to save ~30 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year in air conditioning costs<sup>i</sup>. Based on this figure, 100,000 mature shade trees in an Australian city could save approximately half a million Australian dollars in energy costs<sup>ii</sup>.

Urban vegetation also helps lower the risk of death and illness from heatwaves, and reduces carbon dioxide emissions, air pollution, demand for water and anti-social behaviour.

Having easy access to nature and natural surroundings provides significant health benefits, which are becoming increasingly important as our society spends more time inside.

Research commissioned by Planet Ark in 2013 found that, on average, Australians spend just 4.7 hours per week doing outdoor recreational activity. Yet a vast number of studies have confirmed that having contact with nature and access to green space can positively impact people's health in a number of ways - by improving indoor air quality and associated health issues, lowering stress and boosting wellbeing, improving mental health, encouraging people to do more physical activity, lowering obesity and accelerating healing after surgery.

The survey showed access to natural settings and outdoor breaks are also important at work. Australian employees are willing to sacrifice an average of \$3,674 in pay to have greener and more natural workplaces.



Work-related stress is a serious and costly problem in Australian workplaces, exacerbated by our time-poor lifestyles. Amongst the nation's indoor workers, 1 in 4 people don't take breaks outside at all, yet 69% of people want to spend more time outdoors. Two in five respondents said they were too busy to take breaks, despite the fact that getting outside into nature has been shown to help people recover from mental fatigue and stress and restore attention.

In light of these research findings and the many clear benefits associated with contact with nature, Planet Ark is encouraging everyone to incorporate more green into their homes, offices and schools, and participate in a National Tree Day activity in their community, workplace, school or in their own backyard.

For more information and to find your nearest Tree Day site, please visit [treeday.planetark.org](http://treeday.planetark.org) or call the National Tree Day Hotline on 1300 88 5000.

- ENDS -

(\*assuming a base cost of \$500,000, or 7%).

*Valuing Trees –What is Nature Worth?* is an independent survey commissioned by Planet Ark, and sponsored by Toyota Australia, in March 2014. It was conducted by Pollinate, a specialist communications research company, to investigate the health and wellbeing, ecological, social and financial benefits of having trees, plants and other natural elements in the workplace, at home, in the community and at school. The survey explored Australians' attitudes, behaviours and preferences in regards to contact with nature and how much Australians financially value nature, particularly at work and in their neighbourhood.

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<sup>i</sup> Fisher, P. (2009). Why We Need The Urban Forest. *Urban Magazine*, July 2007.

<sup>ii</sup> Moore, G. M. (2009). Urban Trees: Worth More Than They Cost. In Lawry, D., Gardner, J. & Smith, S. (eds). *Proceedings of the 10th National Street Tree Symposium*, Adelaide, SA. Adelaide: TREENET.

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