Hort Innovation

Final Report

Which Plant Where adoption strategy and implementation

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Project code:

GC22000

Project:

Which Plant Where adoption strategy and implementation (GC220000)

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Public summary

The overall objective of the *Which Plant Where (WPW) extension and adoption project* was to ensure that the WPW tool becomes the sustainable go-to tool for plant selection and urban greening projects across Australia, informing decision-making across landscaping, education and consumer settings.

Our primary project pathways to achieving this objective were:

1. **Research and marketing to target markets to drive users** and understand the market segments with the MOST potential to uptake and use the tool,

2. **Development and implementation of an Adoption Plan** that outlines an awareness and outreach campaign and

3. **A road map for pursuing potential investors**, informed by the WPW Advisory Group and targeted stakeholder engagement.

In addition, we committed to implementing improvements to the tool and adding new species and traits.

Key project achievements:

- A **Key Insights Report** (October 2024)
- An **Awareness Outreach and Engagement Plan** (October 2024)
- An **Adoption Plan** (October 2024)
- A workshop with Hort Innovation on the findings from the Key Insights Report and the focus of the Adoption Plan (October 2024)
- An **Engagement Summary** and **Strategic Investment Plan** (April 2025) providing a roadmap for sustainable and strategic investment in WPW.
- Presentation to the Hort Innovation Project Control Group on the recommendations of the Strategic Investment Plan.
- Four Advisory Group Meetings (August 2024, November 2024, March 2025, July 2025).
- The project has also completed:
  - Engagement and data collection via a broad end-user survey, 15 interviews and five focus groups
  - Analysis of the outcomes from all the above to provide an **Engagement Summary Report** and **Strategic Investment Plan**.
  - Improvements to the WPW Online Tool and the addition of over 200 new species and 5 new plant traits (water use, salinity tolerance, flammability, infrastructure risk and expected lifespan). The updated WPW plant selection tool went live on 22 July 2025

The major findings of the research show that the WPW Tool is trusted and is a leading tool that is used in plant selection decision making across Australia, demonstrated by the rising adoption rates; the tool currently has >4,000 subscribers. The WPW Tool is highly valued across industry and government with the GreenLife Industry very supportive of the WPW Tool, specifically its potential ability to connect plant selectors with plant suppliers and as a credible source of information that supports decision-making. It is recognised that the WPW Tool is unique globally in providing future climate suitability information at the postcode level for plant selection.

The research showed that willingness to pay for the WPW Tool by government and landscape sectors is low and there was no single funding solution that would address the investment needs for the Tool to ensure its long-term sustainability. The most supported investment pathway was a mixed model investment pathway. This mixed model investment pathway uses a partnership approach to bring together Hort Innovation (as the primary owner and leader of the WPW Tool) with industry partners, research partners (to maintain the scientific rigour and credibility of the WPW Tool) and government partners to support sustainability and greening policy and inform end user needs and direction for the WPW Tool.

Keywords

Introduction

The need for the WPW plant selection tool

Our cities are increasingly challenged by expanding human population and climate change. Resilient urban green spaces are recognised as critical for the development and sustainability of liveable cities for the future, providing a range of ecosystem services and benefits.

The Which Plant Where climate-ready plant selector tool (WPW tool) and research initiative is aimed at helping Australian urban landscapes adapt to current and future climates. It provides a plant selection tool designed to guide growers, nurseries, landscape architects, local government, plant selectors and urban greening professionals. The project uses rigorous science to evaluate the resilience and suitability of thousands of horticultural species, promoting the development of sustainable and climate-ready urban green spaces. At commencement of this project, the tool contained more than 2,600 species, cultivars and hybrids, with information on their appearance, environmental tolerance and climate suitability. It is the only tool of its kind that is underpinned by scientific modelling of future climate scenarios.

The tool's functionality allows users to:

- Search by species or location to find species that will be suitable for urban plantings at the postcode-level under current and future (2030, 2050, 2070) climates,
- Filter species by appearance, environmental tolerance, urban space type and a range of ecosystem services (shade, carbon, biodiversity), and
- Create a species palette including a co-benefits calculator.

In addition to these functions, the WPW tool includes a range of information to provide guidance around Climate Change, Monitoring and Maintenance, Planning, Resilient Urban Landscapes, and Community Engagement.

Previous funding model

The WPW tool was launched as a fee-paying subscription-based online resource, designed primarily for plant selectors (buyers) such as local councils, developers and landscape architects, as well as plant providers (sellers) such as growers and nurseries.

In consultation with Hort Innovation, the paid subscription requirement was removed in November 2023 and the WPW Tool is now freely available online. The model now provides resources and information freely to any users, with additional information on climate suitability for species at the postcode level, available to those who create an account (subscribers). The WPW Tool now has high visibility with over 4,000 subscribers and continues to expand its subscriber base. However, to remain up to date and responsive to industry needs, an income stream is required to support and update the tool.

The subscription fee model was selected to ensure the program would be self-sustaining into the future. For the online tool to continue to be relevant in the market it needs to stay up to date, provide revised climate data and offer future enhancements and functionality. To achieve this, a reliable income stream is required to fund additional research, web development and program staff.

Despite the positive feedback received once the WPW Tool was launched, uptake of the subscription was not as high as expected. Most organisations did not renew their subscription into a second year. Anecdotal feedback indicates that councils and larger businesses were unable to get budget support for renewed subscription and small landscape businesses and sole traders found the subscription too expensive preferring a one-off payment each time they accessed the tool.

User insights and trends

As outlined above the initial uptake of the tool was low, with only 16 paid subscribers utilising the tool over the 3 month period since launch in May 2022. The were only 12 new subscribers from August 2022 to May 2023.

The number of subscribers surged between May and December 2023, reaching 659, and continued to rise sharply to 2,064 by July 2024. This significant increase is attributed to the tool being made free to access in November 2023, highlighting the importance of accessibility in driving user engagement and expanding the user base.

Increased adoption and subscriber numbers continued to grow throughout the life of this project and are now over 4,000.

This project

The *Which Plant Where adoption and extension project* (GC22000) explored and implemented a robust and sustainable adoption plan for subscribers and a road map for future investment in the Which Plant Where climate-ready plant selector tool. The enhanced WPW tool will be instrumental in creating sustainable and resilient urban green spaces across Australia by focusing on, and promoting to, key users in priority sectors.

Effective adoption of the tool depends on it being targeted towards and promoted to users from identified priority sectors. The project brought together the leading researchers and developers of the Which Plant Where climate-ready plant selector tool with Mosaic Insights, a strategy, planning and design practice with experience in social science-led environmental management, working to create healthy urban landscapes. Working collaboratively with the horticultural industry, government agencies and businesses, the team has researched, developed and implemented a strategic adoption plan, underpinned by wide engagement with the Greenlife industry, local and state governments and utilities, and on-ground practitioners.

This project engaged with users and potential users across the sector to identify opportunities for improving user experience and expanding the tool (as identified in early engagement with industry post 2022 launch of the WPW Tool). Several of the identified solutions were implemented during the project. Longer term improvements are outlined in the Recommendations.

Methodology

The Which Plant Where adoption and extension project (GC22000) explored and implemented a robust and sustainable adoption plan for subscribers and a road map for future investment in the Which Plant Where climate-ready plant selector tool. The enhanced WPW tool is instrumental in creating sustainable and resilient urban green spaces across Australia by focusing on, and promoting to, key users in priority sectors.

The overall aim of this project was to ensure that the WPW tool becomes the sustainable go-to tool for plant selection and urban greening projects across Australia, informing decision-making across landscaping, education and consumer settings.

To achieve this, we undertook the following, via a staged approach (Figure 1):

1. Research into target markets and engagement with existing users to understand the market segments with the most potential to uptake and use the tool (Stage 1)
2. Development and implementation of an Adoption Plan which included and awareness and outreach campaign (Stages 2-3)
3. Development of a roadmap for pursuing potential investors (Stages 4-5)
4. Identify and implement improvements to the online search tool (Stage 6)
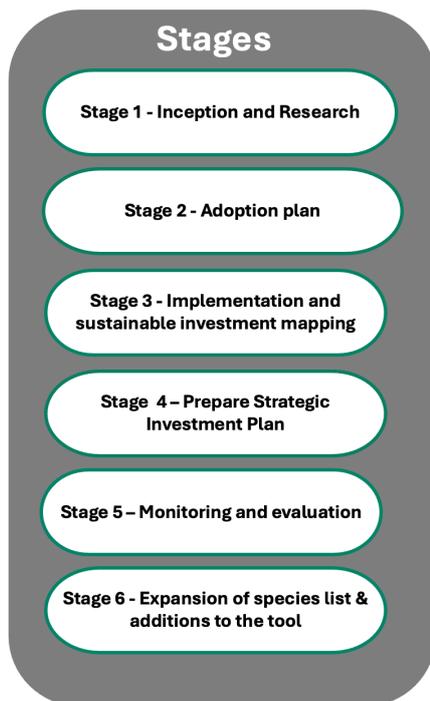

Figure 1. Key Stages in the Which plant Where Adoption and Extension Project

Key activities associated with the staged approach included

- Extensive research into previous use of the tool, website analytics and market segmentation
- Reconvening the Advisory Group with representation across the Greenlife sector and across the country, particularly expanding local government and nursery sector representation and representation outside NSW and Victoria.
- 4 meetings with the Advisory Group
- 2 meetings with the Hort Innovation Project Control Group
- Regular (fortnightly) meetings with the Macquarie and Mosaic Insights WPW project teams
- Analysis of results of engagement activities (survey, focus groups and interviews)

- Identification of short-term and long-term improvements to the tool
- Compilation of a list of ~200 species to add to the database
- Data collation on characteristics and environmental tolerance of the additional 200 species
- Research into 5 plant characteristics (lifespan, water use, salinity tolerance, flammability and tree roots) to add to the database

Results and discussion

The major findings of the research (survey, focus groups and interviews) showed that the WPW Tool is trusted as a credible source of information and is a leading tool that is used in plant selection decision-making across Australia. The WPW Tool is highly valued across industry and government with the GreenLife Industry very supportive of the WPW Tool, specifically its potential ability to connect plant selectors with plant suppliers and as a credible source of information that supports decision-making. The GreenLife Industry recognises the potential benefits that the WPW Tool can bring through providing information and direction on retail sector and landscape sector demand. The tool's development also reflected well on the industry as a leading innovator for climate-ready plant selection.

Roadmap for Future Investment

The research showed that capacity or willingness to pay for the WPW Tool by government and landscape sectors is low and there was no single funding solution that would address the investment needs for the Tool. The most supported investment pathway was the mixed model investment pathway, see Figure 2 for an overview of preferred investment pathways. This mixed model investment pathway uses a partnership approach to bring together Hort Innovation as the primary owner and leader of the WPW Tool along with other key industry partners (e.g. Evergreen Connect, Treenet, AILA), research partners to maintain the scientific rigour and credibility of the WPW Tool (e.g. Macquarie University) and government partners to inform end user needs and direction for the WPW Tool (e.g. Botanic Gardens and greening agencies).

The Advisory Group reviewed all investment options, and the mixed model investment pathway was the preferred investment pathway and the one that was most likely to be feasible, have value and enhance the impact of the WPW Tool.

The Strategic Investment Plan outlines a pathway to financial sustainability with Hort Innovation's leadership essential to safeguarding continuity and unlocking broader co-investment.

The Plan is informed by findings from the implementation of the Adoption Plan, namely the analysis of data collected from surveys, interviews and focus groups, input from the Advisory Group and direction from all sectors with an interest in the WPW Tool. These findings from the research phase of the *WPW Expansion and Adoption Project* have informed:

- an updated risk assessment and budget estimates for the WPW Tool
- an updated market assessment for the WPW Tool
- an assessment of five investment pathways against three criteria: feasibility, impact and value
- an investment roadmap and recommendations for the WPW Tool.

Without sustained financial backing, the WPW Tool will not be able to be supported beyond 2025 due to the basic costs of web hosting and maintenance.

Pathway	Mixed model	Membership	Sponsorship	Subscription	Advertising
Assessment Rating					
Comment	Preferred pathway to pursue immediately	Preferred pathway in the short to medium term which could be integrated with the Mixed model pathway	Not recommended	Not recommended in short term, however this is an important pathway for the future and can be easily integrated with the Mixed model and Membership pathways	Not recommended

Figure 2. Summary of the assessment of investment pathways

An investment roadmap was developed along with key recommendations for implementation. The investment roadmap presents a staged approach commencing with the mixed model investment pathway to secure the baseline resourcing and plan the capital investment needed for the WPW Tool (Figure 3). This will allow the stability and time required to progress a five-year plan for the WPW Tool which includes bringing in targeted investment for enhancements to the WPW Tool that align with the priority market segment needs. Adapting the WPW Tool to the user needs of priority market segments will open the WPW Tool to pursue the membership investment pathway in the medium term with further consideration of the subscription investment pathway in the medium to longer term.
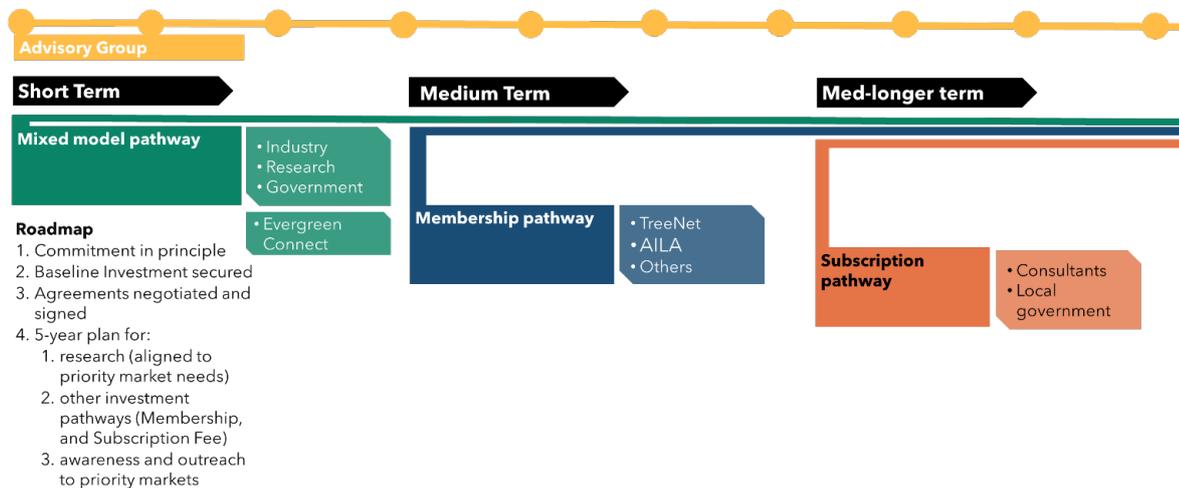

Figure 3. WPW Tool Summary of the Investment Roadmap

To implement the **Investment Roadmap**, it is recommended that:

1. Hort Innovation support a mixed model investment pathway (Figure 4) with negotiations for partnerships outlined in the Investment Roadmap (Section 7) between:
   a. Industry - Hort Innovation as **owners** providing baseline financial support for the Tool
   b. Research – Macquarie University as **research lead** providing day to day management of the Tool

<ol type="a" start="3">
Government – Botanic Gardens and agencies with greening agenda as **supporters and capital investors** via grants that align with government priorities

<ol start="2">
Other investment pathways of <u>membership and subscription</u> be integrated into the mixed model pathway over the medium to longer term to deliver baseline and more substantial capital funds from industry
Under the mixed model investment pathway the following are developed:
<ol type="a">
5-year agreement between Hort Innovation and Macquarie University
Agreement to link WPW Tool with the Evergreen Connect platform
5-year research plan (aligned to priority market needs)
5-year plan and business case for the introduction of other investment pathways that includes associated useability and functionality improvements
Updated 5-year WPW Adoption Plan and associated awareness and outreach plan

Future adoption and investment decisions for the WPW Tool to focus on:
<ol type="a">
strengthening the connection between plant selectors and providers via organisations such as Evergreen Connect,
providing value for money to users who are willing to pay to access the WPW Tool.

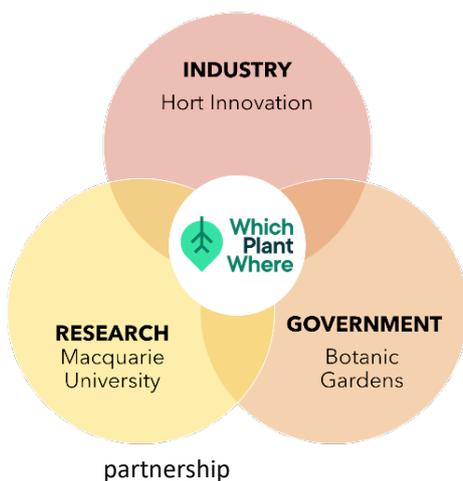
Continue to engage an Advisory Group, and prepare a plan for their ongoing engagement in the 5-year

partnership

Figure 4. Mixed model pathway – proposed partners

Expansion of Species list and improvements to the tool

A key component of this project was to expand the content of the online plant selection tool and make improvements to the user experience.

What we heard through stakeholder engagement and user feedback

Updates to improve the existing functions and useability of the WPW Tool in the short term:
1. Additional search, filter and viewing functions of plant species
2. jFix reported glitches/issues with the palette and provide clearer instructions for use
3. Expand species lists
4. Information on locally indigenous species
5. Address concerns about weed species
6. User friendly transparency on how benefits and climate resilience calculated, explanation of why species chosen

Possible expansion options reinforced by survey participants:
1. Inclusion of a feedback forum

2. Inclusion of bushfire resilience flammability characteristics/fire risk
3. Improved visuals, graphics and outputs from the WPW Tool
4. Inclusion of maintenance value/information of species (e.g. useful life expectancy, water usage, irrigation requirements, species tolerance and durability, community acceptance)
5. Integration with other complementary platforms and tools (e.g. Street Tree Trials, Plant Selector +)
6. Inclusion of information on species availability at local nurseries

What we were able to implement with the available resources

Summary of Plant Selection Tool improvements

- Updated home page with more prominent 'contact us' (Figure 5)
- Over 200 additional species, with a focus on species from WA, Qld and NT. (Table 1)
- Additional data on
  - Flammability
  - Water use
  - Lifespan
  - Infrastructure risk – tree root behaviour
  - Soil salinity tolerance
- Improved search function
- Improved plant palette tool, including export
- Improved options for feedback

Output: Updated web-based plant selection tool (Figure 6)

Table 1: Summary of categories of the 200 new species added to WPW in 2025

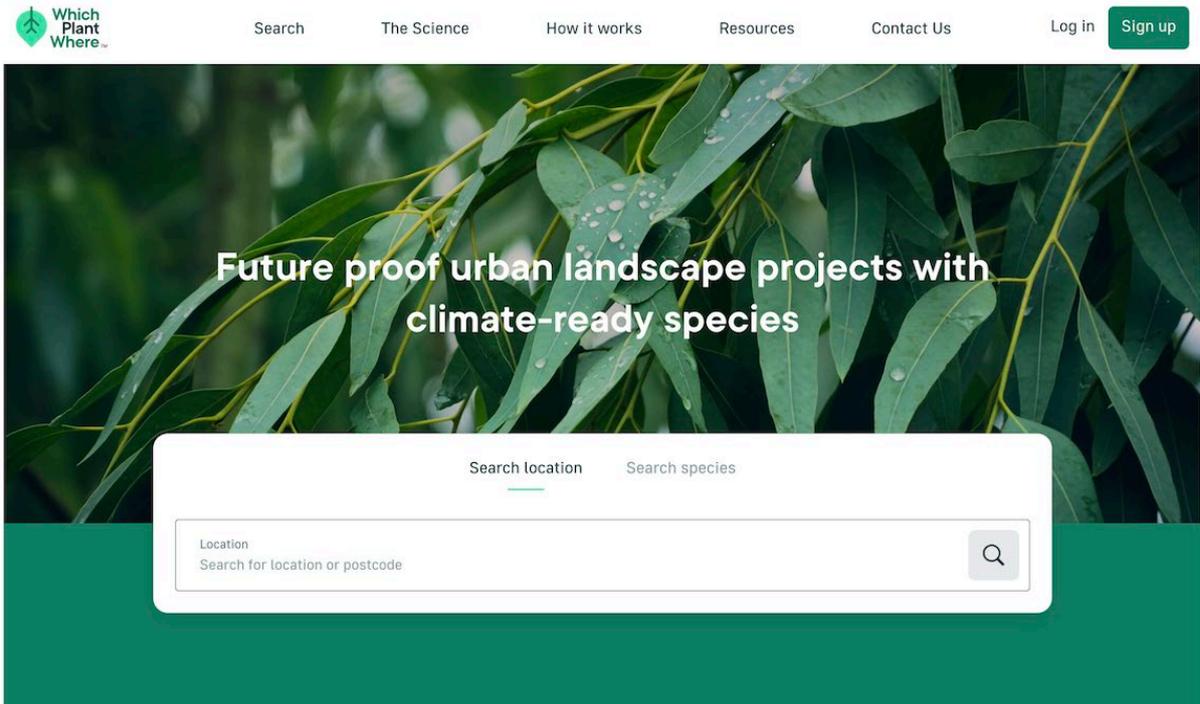| Category	Subcategory	Number of plant taxa
Origin	Native	105
Species classification	Species	180
	Subspecies	5
	Cultivars	18
	Hybrids	2
Form	Trees	130
	Shrubs	42
	Palms	7
	Herbaceous	12
	Ferns	1
	Grass or grass-like	7
	Climbers	6
Native State (Aust)	WA	61
	NT	42
	Qld	79
	SA	5
	NSW	36
	Vic	11
	Tas	3

Figure 5. Which Plant Where updated home page
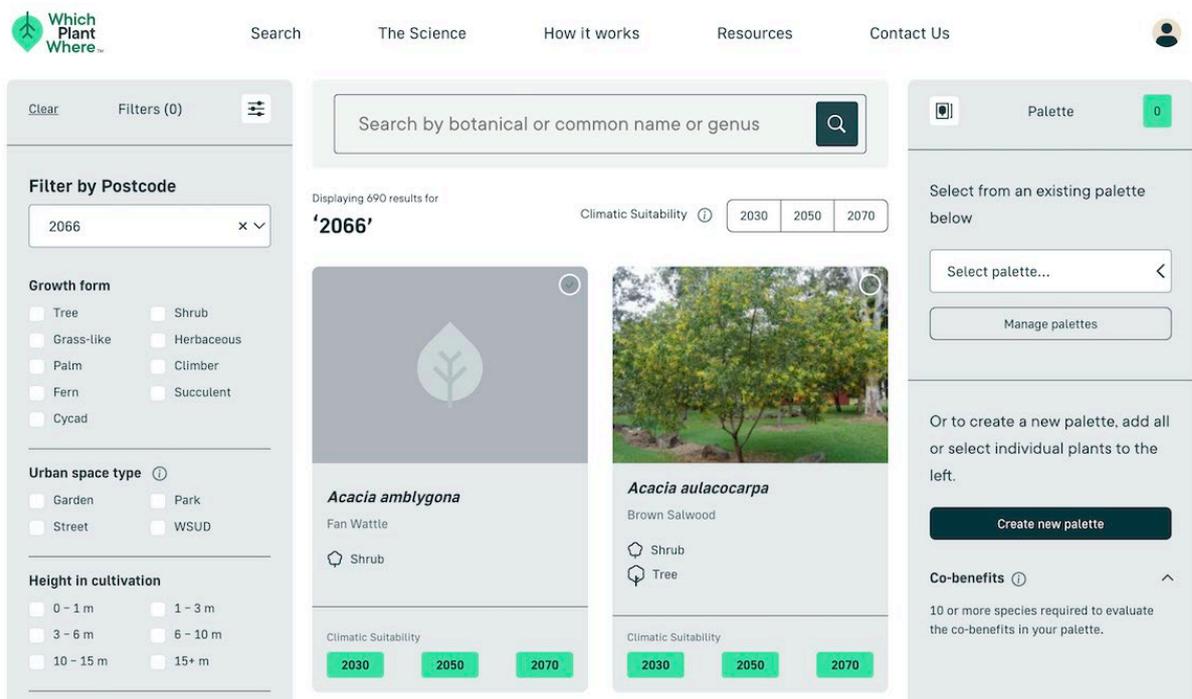

Figure 6. Search page – by species, with left hand side filter options, and right hand side palette menu

Outputs

Output	Description	Detail
Key Insights Report	Provides early insights into the tool, and its history. It identifies specific insights into the initial findings around challenges, usability and management of the tool.	The Key Insights report was a core output from Stage 1. It was brought together with the Key Insights Report to form the Draft Adoption Plan. It was submitted to Hort Innovation as part of Milestone 102, and presented to the Advisory Group in November 2024 (meeting #2).
Awareness, Outreach and Engagement Plan	A plan for the completion of data collection from industry and other nominated WPW stakeholders	The Awareness, Outreach and Engagement Plan was a core output from Stage 1. It was brought together with the Key Insights Report to form the Draft Adoption Plan.
Adoption Plan (final)	Provides guidance on increasing adoption and use of the WPW Tool	Presented to Advisory Group and to Hort Innovation Project Control Group. Submitted to Hort Innovation as part of Milestone 103. Figure 7. shows the Adoption Plan Framework and Figure 8 illustrates the market segments.
Survey	Online survey promoted through Greenlife, urban greening industry and government networks: 11 September – 31 October 2024. 254 participants.	Results summary presented to Advisory Group (November 2024) and reported in the Engagement Summary Report. Results shaped development of Investment Strategy and improvements to the online tool.
Focus Groups	Five online focus groups held during December 2024. 27 participants. The five audiences were users, non-users, greenlife businesses, local and state government, and NGOs and data users.	Results summary presented to Advisory Group (March 2025) and reported in the Engagement Summary Report. Results shaped development of Investment Strategy and improvements to the online tool.
Interviews	Between December 2024 and February 2025, 15 online interviews were held with 25 interviewees participating. The participants represented a broad range of WPW Tool end users from local and state government, industry bodies, green life businesses, consulting and not for profits.	Results summary presented to Advisory Group (March 2025) and reported in the Engagement Summary Report. Results shaped development of Investment Strategy and improvements to the online tool.
Engagement Summary Report	Analysis of data collected via a broad end-user survey, 5 focus groups,	Report findings presented to Advisory Group (March 2025) and included in Milestone 103 report to Hort Innovation (April 2025)

|	15 interviews, and 4 Advisory Group meetings	Findings underpinned development of Strategic Investment Plan. Figure 9 includes the growth in subscribers through the project.
Strategic Investment Plan	A roadmap for sustainable and strategic investment in the Which Plant Where plant selector tool (WPW Tool).	The recommendations outlined in this Plan are based on the findings of targeted research and engagement which took place in 2024-25 with over 300 users and potential users of the WPW Tool. Submitted with Milestone 103. Presented to Hort Innovation Project Control Group (May 2025) and Advisory Group (July 2025).
Updated Which Plant Where plant selection tool (website)	Additional species and traits and improved functionality.	**Tool enhancements:** >200 new species; addition of information on individual plant species' expected lifespan, water use, salinity tolerance, flammability and infrastructure hazard; and improved functionality and user experience. Website updated on 21 July 2025. https://www.whichplantwhere.com.au/
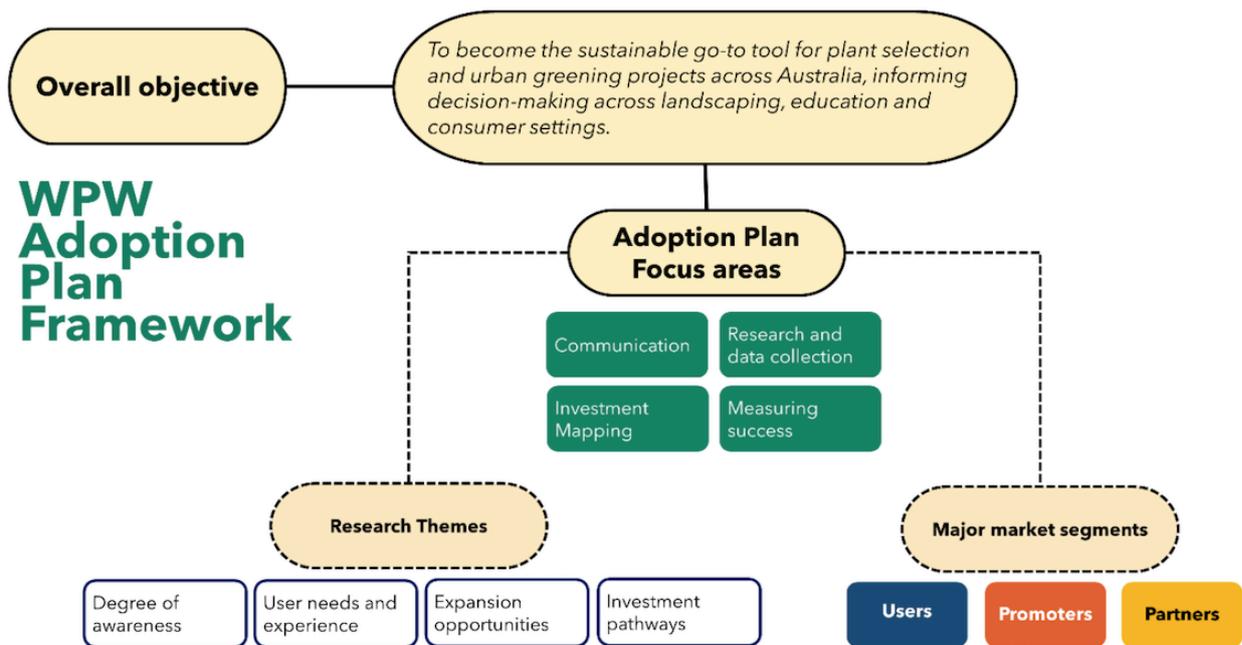
Figure 7. Which Plant Where Adoption Plan Framework

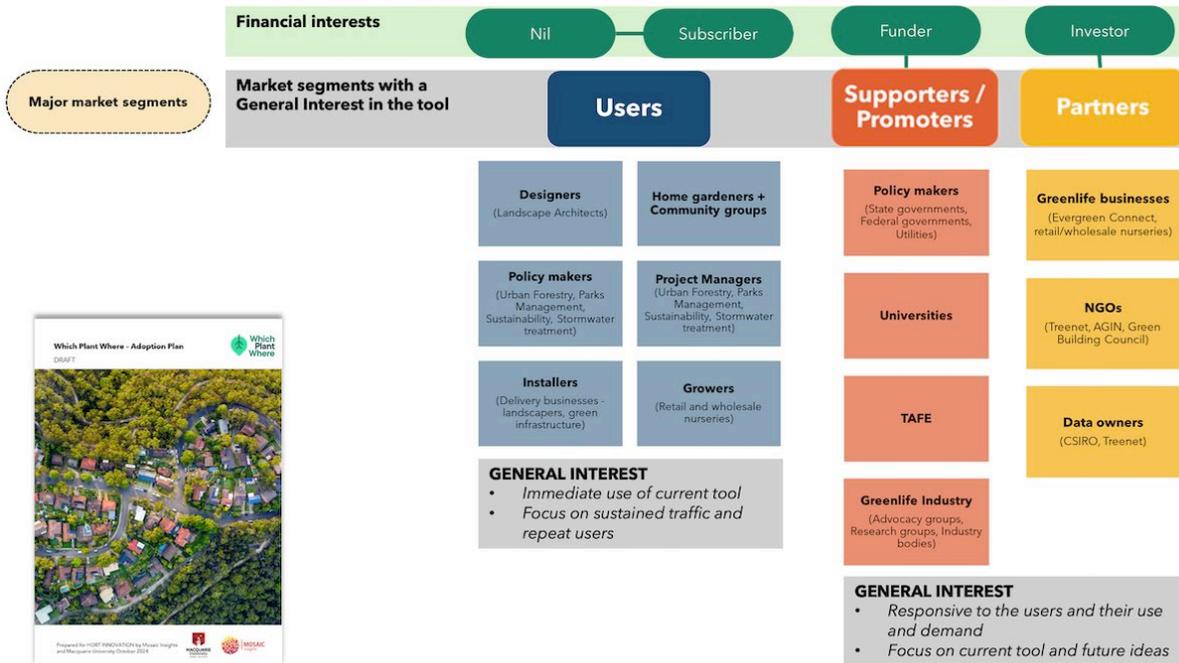# Adoption Plan – WPW market segments

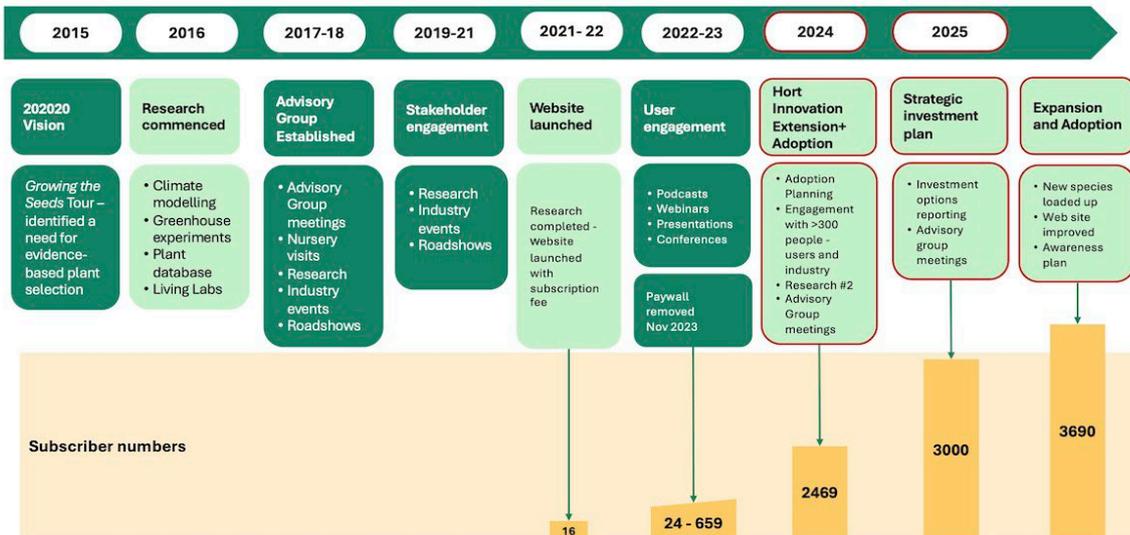Figure 8. Adoption Plan – Which Plant Where market segments

Project Background

Figure 9. Project timeline from initial idea to July 2025, showing key activity and growth in subscriber numbers

Outcomes

Table 3. Outcome summary

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Final Adoption Plan	Australia will be better placed to manage future climate and environmental challenges through increased application of urban greening in design. Increased urban greening at a grass roots level across Australia leading to healthy, sustainable and resilient communities.	The *Adoption Plan* serves as a roadmap for understanding and ultimately responding to the needs of the industry and the primary market segments of the Which Plant Where (WPW) tool. Implementation of the Adoption Plan assisted with understanding the interest and opportunities for strategic financial investment in the tool, and retaining its operational capacity for the future.	Informed by an initial analysis of the WPW tool (*Key Insights Report* Mosaic Insights, Macquarie University, October 2024) and the *Outreach, Awareness and Engagement Plan* (Mosaic Insights, Macquarie University, October 2024).
Strategic Investment Plan	Australia will be better placed to manage future climate and environmental challenges through increased application of urban greening in design. Increased urban greening at a grass roots level across Australia leading to healthy, sustainable and resilient communities.	The Strategic Investment Plan provides a roadmap for sustainable and strategic investment in the Which Plant Where plant selector tool. The recommendations outlined in this Plan are based on the findings of targeted research and engagement which took place in 2024-25 with over 300 users and potential users of the WPW Tool.	Informed by findings from the implementation of the Adoption Plan, namely the analysis of data collected from surveys, interviews and focus groups, input from the Advisory Group and direction from all sectors with an interest in the WPW Tool. These findings from the research phase of the *WPW Expansion and Adoption Project* have informed: • an updated risk assessment and budget estimates for the WPW Tool • an updated market assessment for the WPW Tool • an assessment of five investment pathways against three criteria; feasibility, impact and value • an investment roadmap and recommendations for the WPW Tool.

Updated WPW tool function	Australia will be better placed to manage future climate and environmental challenges through increased application of urban greening in design.

Increased urban greening at a grass roots level across Australia leading to healthy, sustainable and resilient communities. | 200 species added to the online database

5 priority characteristics added to the online database of 2,800 species

Improved search function

Improved feedback function

Improved plant palette function | Informed by industry feedback through Advisory Group, industry contacts (including survey, focus groups) and web contact form, as well as extensive desktop research into plant databases and peer-reviewed research. |
| To see the WPW tool as the go-to-tool for plant election – as a free resource for individuals and professionals | Australia will be better placed to manage future climate and environmental challenges through increased application of urban greening in design.

Increased urban greening at a grass roots level across Australia leading to healthy, sustainable and resilient communities. | Continued increase in subscriber numbers and site visitors – from 2,469 at the commencement of this project to 4,109 at the date of submission of this report, without implementing any targeted promotion or communication campaign (ie by word of mouth) | Informed by research and analysis for development of the Adoption Plan and Strategic Investment Plan |
| Secure sustainable financial support for the WPW tool (eg from government, industry, educations sectors) | Australia will be better placed to manage future climate and environmental challenges through increased application of urban greening in design.

Increased urban greening at a grass roots level across Australia leading to healthy, sustainable and resilient communities. | **An investment roadmap was developed along with key recommendations** for implementation. Success is dependent on implementation of the recommendations contained in the Strategic Investment Plan. | The investment roadmap presents a staged approach commencing with the mixed model investment pathway to secure the baseline resourcing and plan the capital investment needed for the WPW Tool. This will allow the stability and time required to progress a five-year plan for the WPW Tool which includes bringing in targeted investment for enhancements to the WPW Tool that align with the priority market segment needs. Adapting the WPW Tool to the user needs of priority market segments will open the WPW Tool to pursue the membership investment pathway in the medium term with further consideration of the subscription investment pathway in the medium to longer term. |

Monitoring and evaluation

Table 4. Key Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?	Engagement through survey, focus groups and interviews has demonstrated a high level of demand and support for the tool.

The WPW tool is well placed to inform decision-making across the sector.

The Sustainable Investment Strategy clearly outlines the pathway to securing sustainable financial support for the WPW tool | For the WPW tool to become the sustainable go-to tool, further investment is needed, as outlined in the recommendations in the Strategic Investment Plan.

Further investment is needed to maintain research integrity and regularly update supporting scientific data. Climate mapping is due in 2026.

Adoption of the recommendations and implementation of the roadmap is vital to achieving the objective of sustainable financial support |
| How relevant was the project to the needs of intended beneficiaries | WPW tool use has increased across local govt and consultancy sectors as well as with private users.

WPW tool content has increased in value with more species in WA and Qld, and more information on plant characteristics such as flammability and water use. | Continued updating of supporting science, and addition of species to the tool will enable the tool to stay relevant. |
| How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project? | Target markets were successfully engaged through survey, focus groups and interviews, as well as via the Advisory Group, and communication through industry channels via LinkedIn, Greener Spaces Better Places, and conferences and forums (including Treenet, Citygreen and NGIV).

The Advisory Group was consulted regularly on project developments and met 4 times during the project. Users were kept updated through survey, focus groups and interview communication. | Ongoing and regular communication with tool users and the industry sector will be critical for keeping the sector up to date with the benefits of the tool. |
| To what extent were engagement processes appropriate to the target audience/s of the project? | Engagement was predominantly through online meeting platforms of Zoom and Teams to facilitate participation from individuals across the country. In person meeting was discussed for one Advisory Group meeting, but would have excluded too many members.

Engagement also occurred through | Ongoing and regular communication with tool users and the industry sector will be critical for keeping the sector up to date with the benefits of the tool. |

	workshop sessions at NGIV conference. Informal discussions at all conferences attended was useful for additional promotion and informal feedback.	
What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?	Internal scheduling and regular team meetings ensured outputs and reports were delivered on time. Scheduling delays started to occur towards the end of the project due to insufficient feedback on key milestone reports. Several updates were made to the WPW tool to improve user experience and understanding of user needs, including: improved sign-up process to capture user sector affiliation; improved search function and navigation for plant searches; improved feedback mechanisms; and improved palette export functionality.	None Faster and more detailed feedback from Hort Innovation on Milestone reports and key recommendations. Further funding will enable continued improvements and additions to the WPW tool as user needs evolve.

Recommendations

What we heard

The Tool is trusted and the market wants this Tool, it influences purchasing decisions.

Engagement with over 300 end users, including councils, consultants, landscape architects, and home gardeners, confirmed that the WPW Tool is trusted, useful, and unique in offering climate- resilient plant selection guidance across Australia. The platform currently has over 4,109 subscribers, this number grows daily, reflecting increasing demand and broadening awareness.

The Tool is actively used by those making plant selections and specifying species for on-ground works. These are the decision-makers who create demand for nurseries, not the nurseries themselves. WPW creates a direct line between market demand and supply.

What's at risk

Without investment, the WPW Tool will be offline by 2026.

There is currently no secured funding for the platform beyond June 2025. Without a minimum of ~$125k/year recurrent funding ($25k for website hosting plus $100k for minimal administration, web maintenance and business development), the Tool will become inoperable, undermining 7+ years and $3.3 million of Hort-funded R&D, market engagement, and adoption traction. The tool is the only one of its kind globally and the only source of plant species climate suitability in Australia.

The baseline funding required of Hort Innovation to support the WPW team to pursue new funding options is $125k, with ongoing capital investment needed every five years to update climate data and add new species at the cost of $375k, this does not include any technical or user modifications. If no funding is committed the tool, then its associated data and research will no longer exist publicly from January 1, 2026.

The WPW tool was developed between 2017 and 2022 and funded by Hort Innovation, the NSW Government, Macquarie University and Western Sydney University. In total $11.4M has been spent on the research, development, communication and outreach aspects of the tool.

What this plan recommends

Support a mixed model investment pathway, with Hort Innovation as the cornerstone funder in partnership with Macquarie University and others.

A mixed model was the preferred investment pathway identified through research and endorsed by the Advisory Group. Hort's leadership and funding role provides credibility, stability, and supports co-investment and contribution from research, other industry, and government sectors. No other pathway is as feasible or aligned with Hort's long-term strategy.

What this enables

- A staged pathways to financial sustainability and industry impact.

- With modest upfront investment from Hort, the WPW Tool will be able to:
  1. Maintain platform continuity and user trust
  2. Deliver enhancements targeted at the GreenLife retail and landscape sectors
  3. Enable regular tool expansion with new species
  4. Enable monetisation via future partnerships and subscription options
  5. Ultimately increase the diversity and volume of plants sold through better-informed market demand

To **implement the Investment Roadmap**, it is recommended that:

1. Hort Innovation support a mixed model investment pathway (Figure 2) with negotiations for partnerships outlined in the Investment Roadmap (Section 7) between:
    a. Industry - Hort Innovation as **owners** providing baseline financial support for the Tool
    b. Research – Macquarie University as **research lead** providing day to day management of the Tool
    c. Government – Botanic Gardens and agencies with greening agenda as **supporters and capital investors** via grants that align with government priorities
2. Other investment pathways of membership and subscription be integrated into the mixed model pathway over the medium to longer term to deliver baseline and more substantial capital funds from industry
3. Under the mixed model investment pathway the following are developed:
    a. 5 year agreement between Hort Innovation and Macquarie University
    b. Agreement to link WPW Tool with the Evergreen Connect platform
    c. 5 year research plan (aligned to priority market needs)
    d. 5 year plan and business case for the introduction of other investment pathways that includes associated useability and functionality improvements
    e. Updated 5 year WPW Adoption Plan and associated awareness and outreach plan
4. Future adoption and investment decisions for the WPW Tool to focus on:
    a. strengthening the connection between plant selectors and providers via organisations such as Evergreen Connect,
    b. providing value for money to users who are willing to pay to access the WPW Tool.
5. Continue to engage an Advisory Group, and prepare a plan for their ongoing engagement in the 5 year partnership

Refereed scientific publications

None.

Intellectual property

The Which Plant Where online tool is owned and managed by Macquarie University. All copyright, intellectual property and trademarks of the tool are held jointly by Macquarie University and Hort Innovation, as detailed below. All listed IP is encrypted and stored on multiple platforms to ensure protection.

Plant species database

The plant species data base contains over 2,800 plant species and descriptions for elements such as their physical parameters (i.e. height and width), preferred site conditions (soil/water use), tolerances (drought/frost/ salt), performance attributes (lifespan/flammability) and urban application (i.e. Street tree/ Park Street/ WSUD).

Form		Site	Performance
Height in cultivation ↕ 10 – 20 m	**Spread in cultivation** ↔ 8 – 15 m	**Urban space type** Park, Garden, Street	**Shade tolerance** ☼ Full sun
Origin Native	**Flower colour** White, cream	**Use** Shade, Screen, Mass Planting	**Tolerance** High coastal
Flower period Spring, Autumn	**Leaf colour** Green	**Soil texture** Sand, Clay	**Soil Salinity** Moderate
Leaf loss Evergreen	**Canopy area** ⓘ 176.7 m²	**Planting & Maintenance** Warm	**Biodiversity** Bird
		Soil Volume ⓘ ↔ 30 – 106 m³	
		Water use High	

Figure 10. Example of species profile page

Climate suitability modelling and mapping

Climate suitability maps for each species in the tool have been produced to identify areas suitable for the species to grow in, under both current and future climates. These maps were created using modelling techniques which utilised species occurrence records and climate data to extrapolate the most suitable growing regions for species under a variety of climate scenarios.
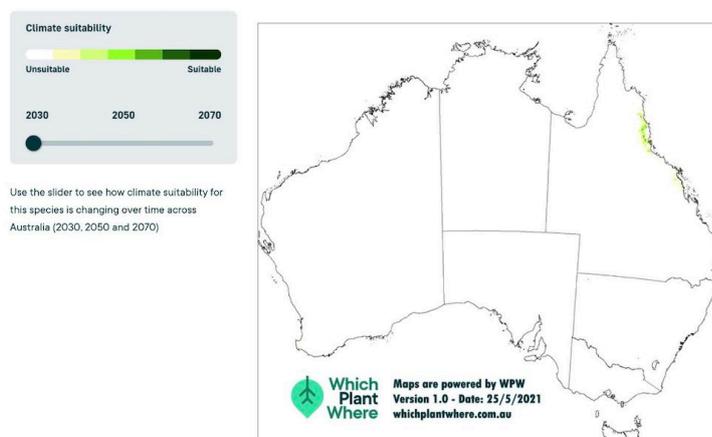
Figure 11. Example climate suitability map Local occurrence and global occurrence of plants is also provided on the website but is not the IP of WPW – this information is derived from Australia's Living Atlas (ala.org.au) and/or the Global Biodiversity Information Portal (gbif.org).

Glasshouse experiments and living lab research

A range of data presented within the web tool was derived from research undertaken in the glasshouse experiments and living lab trials (WPW 2016-2021). This data is owned by Which Plant Where (Macquarie University and Western Sydney University) and forms part of the IP contained within the plant selector tool.

Image database

Images used on the website are not owned by Which Plant Where, they are used with permission and credited to the owner of each image. They do, however, form part of the IP contained within the plant selector tool.

Credit: Peter de Lange

Credit: © Fagg, M (2006)

Credit: Guy Taseski

Credit: Peter de Lange

Figure 12. Example of images and credits from the Which Plant Where tool

Acknowledgements

The Which Plant Where project team thanks the following for their valuable input into the Extension and Adoption project: