



COUNCIL

Agenda and Reports

for the Special meeting on

Tuesday, 2 December 2025

at 7.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Adelaide Town Hall

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Our Adelaide.
Bold.
Aspirational.
Innovative.

Members: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Dr Jane Lomax-Smith (Presiding)
 Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Snape
 Councillors Abrahamzadeh, Cabada, Couros, Davis, Freeman, Giles, Maher, Martin,
 Noon and Dr Siebentritt

Agenda

Item		Pages
1.	Acknowledgement of Country The Lord Mayor will state: ‘Council acknowledges that we are meeting on traditional Country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains and pays respect to Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today. And we also extend that respect to other Aboriginal Language Groups and other First Nations who are present today.’	
2.	Acknowledgement of Colonel William Light The Lord Mayor will state: ‘The Council acknowledges the vision of Colonel William Light in determining the site for Adelaide and the design of the City with its six squares and surrounding belt of continuous Park Lands which is recognised on the National Heritage List as one of the greatest examples of Australia’s planning heritage.’	
3.	Apologies and Leave of Absence Nil	
4.	Declaration of Conflict of Interest	
5.	Deputations	
6.	Reports for Council (Chief Executive Officer's Reports)	
6.1	Tree Martin Management - Feasibility, Benefits & Disbenefits of Netting Trees in Rundle Mall	3 - 35
7.	Closure	

Tree Martin Management – Feasibility, Benefits & Disbenefits of Netting Trees in Rundle Mall

Strategic Alignment - Our Environment

Public

Tuesday, 2 December 2025
Special Council meeting

Program Contact:

Sarah Gilmour, Associate
Director Park Lands, Policy &
Sustainability

Approving Officer:

Ilia Houridis, Director City
Shaping

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to 'provide preliminary advice regarding the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall' in accordance with Council's resolution on 11 November 2025 regarding Tree Martins.

It is important to note that the reason to net trees is based on addressing conflicts between consistently unsafe environments for the Tree Martins and the existing uses of our urban environments, which include the safety of city visitors. The goal is to balance the conflicts that do occur between biodiversity in the urban realm and the existing land uses that have been implemented in the city, noting there can be instances where the two can be balanced.

If trees in Rundle Mall are netted, there is no certainty regarding where the Tree Martins may elect to roost during 2025/26.

During the 2024/25 migratory season (December 2024 to May 2025), Tree Martins roosted in six (6) trees located near the centre of Rundle Mall near Optus, OPSM, Sunglass Hut, Michael Hill Jewellers, Apple Store and Rundle Place.

Preliminary advice received from Ecosure Environmental Consultancy (Ecosure) on the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall is contained in **Attachment A**.

The following options for netting trees in Rundle Mall were considered:

1. Not netting any trees for the upcoming roosting season and maintaining a management regime, assuming the Tree Martins return to the same roosting site,
2. Netting the six trees used during the 2024/25 roosting season, or
3. Netting all 40 trees along Rundle Mall.

There are a range of benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall with considerations across business impacts, animal welfare, community expectations, Council's reputation and strategic objectives, urban ecology considerations, Rundle Mall objectives and stakeholder relationships.

Advice from the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) is that should the City of Adelaide seek to net trees in Rundle Mall; it could do so without a permit. This is subject to the netting of trees not requiring any protected animals to be caught, restrained or trapped and subsequently relocated, which would require a permit under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA). To avoid such issues, trees should be netted prior to being used by the birds (if netting will occur).

Netting creates risks of bird entrapment and in addition would require ongoing monitoring, maintenance and compliance checks to meet animal welfare obligations, including obligations under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* (SA).

While netting may mitigate issues at previously affected locations, it carries the risk of displacing impacts to other areas within Rundle Mall or alternative locations that cannot be pre-determined across the wider CBD. The potential risks at these other locations are unknown, and in addition to the monitoring of the netted trees, the City of Adelaide will need to maintain an on-ground response to support management and coordination at any new location the Tree Martins identify to roost in.

Enquiries have been made with external suppliers who advise that the earliest that netting could be sourced and installed in Rundle Mall is late January 2026. This could put the installation of the netting into the start of the 2025/26 migratory season and on that basis should Council resolve to proceed with that option, the Administration will seek a permit from DEW for that purpose.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT COUNCIL

1. Receives the preliminary advice provided regarding the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall as contained in Attachment A to Item 6.1 on the Agenda of the Special Council meeting held on 2 December 2025.
 2. Notes that while netting is technically feasible, it poses operational, welfare and reputational risks, and therefore is not recommended for implementation in Rundle Mall during the 2025/26 Tree Martin migratory season.
 3. Approves the continued mitigation and monitoring strategies for the 2025/26 Tree Martin migratory season and reviews the data collected and options developed through this season for implementation ahead of the 2026/27 season in partnership with the Department for Environment and Water and Green Adelaide.
-

IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	<p>Strategic Alignment – Our Environment</p> <p>Lead and advocate for the environmental value, productivity, quality and biodiversity of the Park Lands, squares, open space and streetscapes.</p> <p>Protect and store native habitat in our city.</p>
Policy	<p>The Adelaide Park Lands Management Strategy Towards 2036, the City of Adelaide's Integrated Climate Strategy 2030, and the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan's have commitments to biodiversity protection, city amenity, business vitality and community wellbeing. They support Council's objectives for a sustainable, liveable, and biodiverse capital city where people and wildlife coexist harmoniously and management of the Tree Martins aligns with these commitments.</p> <p>The Tree Martin Management Plan will be developed in alignment with Council's Integrated Climate Strategy 2030, Goal 3: A City Where Nature Thrives. It supports a comprehensive body of work by the City of Adelaide in relation to surveying and mapping urban biodiversity.</p> <p>The State Biodiversity Plan is yet to be developed following the assent of the <i>Biodiversity Act 2025</i> (SA).</p> <p>Management of the Tree Martins is being undertaken with regard to implications for businesses and Council's Economic Development Strategy</p> <p>On this basis, the development of long term options proposed across this next season to identify appropriate roosting locations and strategies to encourage relocation to these locations is being progressed with DEW and Green Adelaide to best balance biodiversity goals with Economic Development goals.</p>
Consultation	<p>Since the 2024/25 roosting season ending in May 2025, the Administration has continued to liaise with DEW and Green Adelaide to align approaches to Tree Martin management and protection.</p> <p>Administration has been in contact with businesses in Rundle Mall and briefed the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA) at their Board meeting held on 19 November 2026.</p>
Resource	<p>The Tree Martin management response is being undertaken using a combination of internal and external resources, including specialist consultancy services. Guidance and advice is being provided by AEDA, business stakeholders, Government agencies and stakeholders.</p>
Risk / Legal / Legislative	<p>Tree Martins are listed as a marine species under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth) (EPBC Act). Under ss 254–254E of the EPBC Act, offences apply to actions that harm, take, trade, keep, or move listed marine species; however, these provisions only apply within a designated "Commonwealth area" as defined in s 525. Based on current review, this definition has little to no application within the Council area, and neither Leigh Street nor Rundle Mall fall within Commonwealth land. Consequently, these EPBC Act provisions do not apply to Council actions.</p> <p>Tree Martins are a "protected animal" under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972</i> (SA). Advice from DEW is that a permit is not required for the netting of trees within Rundle Mall if the netting occurs ahead of the tree martin roosting behaviour.</p> <p>The <i>Animal Welfare Act 1985</i> (SA) requires that all reasonable measures are taken to prevent unnecessary harm, injury, or distress to wildlife. This includes monitoring for impacts of netting.</p> <p>The <i>Biodiversity Act 2025</i> (SA), which has not yet come into operation, introduces a general duty of care, requiring reasonable practical measures to prevent harm to biodiversity in any acts or actions undertaken.</p> <p>The City of Adelaide also considers public health and safety risks in the public realm, noting responses actioned at previous roosting sites to address conflicts for public health at outdoor dining venues.</p>

Opportunities	In 2025/26 the City of Adelaide is taking an informed approach to managing the Tree Martin migratory season, taking advice from DEW and Green Adelaide to have robust data and science led strategies to plan for future roosting seasons. This approach will enable on-ground actions to be tested for effectiveness, and data and evidence to be collected in 2025/26 to inform future management actions.
25/26 Budget Allocation	<p>There is no current budget allocation for netting trees in Rundle Mall.</p> <p>A budget review will be required for operational measures associated with the Tree Martin management response. Additional costs will be incurred if a decision is taken to net trees in Rundle Mall including net installation, management of tree litter (leaves) as the trees are not evergreen, and any other actions required. The cost for netting trees is estimated to be between \$25,000 for six trees and up to \$150,000 for more comprehensive additional netting, plus installation and ongoing maintenance costs.</p>
Proposed 26/27 Budget Allocation	Subject to decisions by Council, a budget proposal will be submitted to the 2026/27 Annual Business Plan and Budget process for the 2026/27 Tree Martin roosting season.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Annual with the Tree Martin migratory season between November/December and April/May.
25/26 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	<p>A CEO Undertaking was given at the meeting of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee held on 4 November 2025. The Undertaking was to provide Council Members with a further breakdown of the proposed 2025/26 Quarter 2 budget review of \$150,000 for the management of the operational response for the 2026 Tree Martin Migratory Season, prior to consideration by Council in early 2026.</p> <p>Planned 2025/26 on-ground response (Option 1)</p> <p>Based on the current preparations for the 2025/26 migratory season and probable return of Tree Martins to Rundle Mall, a Budget Review of \$150,000 is proposed for Quarter 2 of 2025/26.</p> <p>The Budget Review will cover costs including security, staffing of the response over extended hours, bird welfare and veterinary expenses, and additional training.</p> <p>The budget review seeks to manage the operational response which comprises a dedicated on-ground response team, costed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional security officer to be in Rundle Mall from 15 December 2025 for three nights per week; and if required, a nightly presence if the Tree Martin colony establishes and the size of the colony increases to levels experienced in 2024/25. • A staff member to be available and on-site over extended working hours (3 hours per night approximately ½ hour before sunset adjusted for daylight savings). • A bird welfare organisation to support the on-ground response as required, including allowance for veterinary expenses. <p>Costs of approximately \$6,500 has been incurred to date on training requirements for on-ground responders.</p> <p>Option 1 does not include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree netting in Rundle Mall. • Potential markers on catenary wires as an engineering assessment is not available to confirm if additional weight can be supported on existing wires. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Costs to businesses for taking action to reduce impact on their trading and bird welfare. Based on the actions taken by businesses these costs are anticipated to be in the order of \$60,000 to \$250,000 depending on the extent of preventative measures deployed.

	<p>Additional cleansing costs associated with the 2024/25 migratory season were accommodated within existing City Operations 2024/25 resources by adjusting precinct cleaning standards. The same approach will be adopted for 2025/26.</p> <p>Netting of Trees in Rundle Mall (Option 2)</p> <p>The cost for netting trees is estimated to be between \$25,000 for six trees and up to \$150,000 for more comprehensive additional netting of potentially all trees along Rundle Mall, including installation and maintenance costs.</p> <p>This cost would be in addition to the costs identified in Option 1 as a level of management action is likely to be required in alternative locations that the Tree Martin's subsequently choose to roost.</p> <p>The cost for mitigation measures by businesses is location dependent but the indicative range of \$60,000 to \$250,000 is considered a reasonable estimate for other locations (pending final assessment).</p> <p>Tree Martin Management Plan</p> <p>Approximately \$40,000 has been reallocated within the Park Lands, Policy and Sustainability 2025/26 operating budget to support preparation of the Tree Martin Management Plan in 2025/26. This cost does not form part of the Budget Review proposal and applies to both options as it is focused on the future scenarios and locations for management.</p>
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Tree netting in Rundle Mall will require ongoing monitoring and maintenance, the cost of which is dependent on the number of tree nets installed.
Other Funding Sources	Administration has raised the potential for external funding support from the State Government.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to 'provide preliminary advice regarding the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall' in accordance with Council's resolution on 11 November 2025 regarding Tree Martins.

Background

2. At its meeting on 22 April 2025, Council noted a range of actions had been undertaken by the Administration in collaboration with Green Adelaide and requested further advice in regard to Tree Martin management support measures ([Link 1](#)).
3. At its meeting on 13 May 2025, in response to a Question on Notice, Administration provided further background information on when the Tree Martins were first identified as significant problem ([Link 2](#)).
4. At its meeting on 14 October 2025, Council received an update on the matter ([Link 3](#)).
 - 4.1. The report responded to Council's resolution of 22 April 2025 that sought further advice regarding Tree Martin management support measures.
5. A workshop ([Link 4](#)) and report ([Link 5](#)) were presented to the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs (CPDBA) Committee on 4 November 2025 where an update on the current planning and response was provided.
 - 5.1. The workshop was delivered by Administration with the support of Professor Chris Daniels and Dr Stuart Collard from Green Adelaide; and Dr John Martin from Ecosure Environmental Consultancy.
 - 5.2. The 2025/26 response includes on-ground actions and longer-term data collection and planning.
6. At its meeting on 11 November 2025 Council resolved:
 - 6.1. **THAT COUNCIL:**
 - 6.1.1. *Notes the Administration is developing the draft Tree Martin Management Plan (the Plan) and that a copy of the draft Plan will be presented to the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee for consideration on 3 February 2026.*
 - 6.1.2. *Notes that it is not proposed to remove netting from Leigh Street.*
 - 6.1.3. *Requests administration provide preliminary advice regarding the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall at a special meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday 2 December 2025.*
 - 6.1.4. *Notes a Budget Review of \$150,000 will be submitted for Quarter 2 of the 2025/26 financial year to manage the operational response for the 2026 Tree Martin migratory season including costs for security, staffing of the response over extended hours, bird welfare and veterinary expenses, and additional training.*
 - 6.1.5. *Notes the working draft Tree Martin Management Operating Guidelines as contained in Attachment A to Item 7.1 on the Agenda for the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee held on 4 November 2025.*
 - 6.1.6. *Notes that the working draft Tree Martin Management Operating Guidelines as contained in Attachment A to Item 7.1 on the Agenda for the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee held on 4 November 2025 are an administrative matter for approval by the Chief Executive Officer.*

Tree Martin Roosting – 2024/25 Season

7. During the 2024/25 migratory season, (December 2024 to May 2025), it is estimated that approximately 10,000 Tree Martins roosted in six trees in central Rundle Mall. Note that there have been no formal counts undertaken and the Tree Martin is too small to tag.
8. The roosting behaviour created bird welfare concerns and operational impacts for nearby retailers that became evident when day light savings commenced (March/April 2025) which changed environmental conditions, in particular light conditions at the time the Tree Martins were returning to roost, resulting in bird collisions on shop fronts, droppings, and birds entering stores. Birds were disrupted from roosting due to several factors including natural predation and human interactions.

9. Tree Martins are thought to select urban roosting sites like Rundle Mall because these urban environments mimic the natural environmental locations they typically seek, where multi-story buildings, noise, light, tree canopy and human activity reduce predation risk.
10. The trees selected for roosting by the Tree Martins were located near Optus, OPSM, Sunglass Hut, Michael Hill Jewellers, Apple Store, and Rundle Place.
11. There are 40 trees in total along Rundle Mall.

2025/26 Roosting Season

12. The City of Adelaide is seeking to deliver a collaborative approach to Tree Martin management that aims to minimise bird fatalities and ensure business operations, customer amenity, and public spaces remain clean, safe and attractive throughout the summer trading period.
13. The specialist advice is that Tree Martins show site fidelity and while there is no certainty of roosting location in 2025/26, a probable scenario is that the birds return to Rundle Mall.
14. On this basis, the proposed approach for the 2025/26 roosting season is to seek to contain the number of affected businesses that require mitigation measures.
15. Administration, in partnership with the Rundle Mall Management team through the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA), is coordinating engagement with businesses affected last season should roosting occur in the same location.
16. In the 5 months since the 2024/25 migratory season concluded in May 2025, Administration has undertaken the following steps in preparation for the upcoming migratory season:
 - 16.1. Completed procurement and engagement of expert environmental consultancy Ecosure to develop an on-ground response for the 2025/26 migratory season and a Tree Martin Management Plan to guide future seasons.
 - 16.2. Collaborated with the Department of Environment and Water (DEW) to address training and permit requirements.
 - 16.3. Engaged in ongoing discussions with veterinarians and wildlife rescue volunteers to ensure a coordinated response and observe animal welfare standards.
 - 16.4. Developed draft Operating Guidelines to provide clear escalation pathways for incident response and reporting with advice from Green Adelaide and DEW.
 - 16.5. Established an on-ground response which involves deploying dedicated customer service and security staff to support management actions in 2025/26.
 - 16.6. Briefing of AEDA including their Chair, Board and Administration.
 - 16.7. Met with key businesses, such as Apple, Rundle Place, and Optus Adelaide seeking support from businesses to reinstate successful measures from the previous season and trial additional measures for the upcoming season, including:
 - 16.7.1. Installation of temporary window film on affected shopfronts
 - 16.7.2. Installation of internal netting to prevent birds entering atriums
 - 16.7.3. Mobile installations
 - 16.7.4. Dimming of lighting; and
 - 16.7.5. Closure of doors at dusk, where feasible, to reduce bird entry into premises.
 - 16.8. Investigating illuminated markers to catenary lighting in affected areas. The catenary wires in Rundle Mall are for the purpose of providing safety lighting along the length of Rundle Mall. There is currently no option to remove these wires, and preliminary assessment has not been able to confirm the wires can support additional weight.
 - 16.9. Monitoring for the return of Tree Martins to the CBD has commenced and preparation of inspection and cleaning schedules to be increased during the peak season to maintain public hygiene and amenity.
17. A communications plan has been developed to keep businesses and the community informed throughout the season. Key initiatives ready to be deployed pending Council's decision on netting trees, include:
 - 17.1. A dedicated webpage on the City of Adelaide website providing up-to-date information on Tree Martin management and the 2025/26 on-ground response.

- 17.2. Postcards to be distributed from approximately 8 December 2025 to businesses in Leigh Street and Rundle Mall, pending Council's decision regarding netting, and other locations as required.
- 17.3. Public signage in Rundle Mall highlighting the expected presence of the Tree Martins and providing a QR code link for further information.
18. The City of Adelaide's Place Coordinators and AEDA are continuing to support the delivery and distribution of information across business precincts.
19. A high-level review of businesses adjacent to trees along the length of Rundle Mall has been prepared. Should the trees immediately adjacent to the Apple Store be netted and the birds dispersed, similar or greater implications are considered possible along the length of Rundle Mall.
20. With the support of DEW, Green Adelaide and the consultant team, detailed assessment of management options, along with data and evidence collection, is being undertaken to inform management actions in the 2025/26 roosting season and future strategies. These assessments need to take place during the season to continue to observe Tree Martin behaviour and their responses to the various mitigation strategies put in place.
21. The best opportunity for detailed review and analysis of Tree Martin colony behaviour, observations, and field research, is to capture the full roosting season. This requires a level of certainty regarding where the birds will roost. Tree Martins have not yet been sighted in Rundle Mall or Leigh Street.
22. Administration has undertaken site assessments at previous roosting locations. Should the birds choose an alternative location or be displaced from Rundle Mall (as was the case for Leigh Street), the early stages of the season could be redirected to assessing, negotiating and putting in place mitigation measures suitable to the roosting location.
23. While the City of Adelaide is better placed to respond in the upcoming season in terms of communications, partnerships and welfare responses, specific mitigation measures are location dependent.
24. In addition to the on-ground operational response, the development of a Tree Martin Management Plan has commenced and will continue to be refined during the 2025/26 migratory season, incorporating operational learnings, ecological monitoring data, and stakeholder feedback and endorsement from Green Adelaide and DEW.
25. The finalised Plan will be completed at the conclusion of the 2025/26 season to guide future management of Tree Martin roosting across the city.

State Government Advice

26. Tree Martins are classified as a "protected animal" under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA). Actions such as netting or otherwise interfering with roosting trees may require a permit from DEW.
27. Accordingly, advice was sought from DEW regarding the legal implications, if any, of installing netting to some or all trees within Rundle Mall ([Link 6](#)).
28. DEW has advised that a permit is not required under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA) to take pre-emptive action to net trees provided the netting is installed before Tree Martin roosting behaviour.
29. DEW further advised that whilst a permit is not required, Council has obligations under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* (SA) to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to prevent unnecessary harm, injury, or distress to wildlife.
30. As netting creates risks of bird entrapment, ongoing monitoring, maintenance and compliance checks would be required to meet animal welfare obligations.
31. DEW's advice is provided below:
 - 31.1. Should the City of Adelaide seek to net trees in Rundle Mall, it could do so without a permit. This is subject to the netting of trees not requiring any protected animals to be caught, restrained or trapped and subsequently relocated, which would require a permit under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. To avoid such issues, trees should be netted prior to being used by the birds (if netting will occur).
 - 31.2. DEW's advice to the City of Adelaide remains consistent, that netting trees to restrict Tree Martin roosting has been shown to have significant consequences for those birds and should be very carefully considered before being implemented. All reasonable measures should be taken by the Council and local businesses to address and mitigate the impacts of the Tree Martins before trees are netted to relocate the birds.

- 31.3. Netting of the trees in Leigh Street contributed to animal welfare issues for the Tree Martin colony. Netting trees in Rundle Mall, whether it was all the trees or only a sub-set of them, could conceivably have similar consequences. In assessing future management options, the Department encourages Council to consider the potential animal welfare implications and seek to reasonably mitigate or prevent that harm occurring should it net roosting sites.
- 31.4. DEW recommends co-existence with the Tree Martins at roosting sites under a colony management plan as the best approach to address the environmental and animal welfare concerns, recognising the unique wildlife phenomenon that it is.
32. In the event Council determines to net trees in Rundle Mall and the Tree Martins have returned to roost, Administration will seek the appropriate permits from DEW in line with the legislative requirements.

Consultant Advice

33. Ecosure was engaged to provide preliminary advice on the feasibility, benefits, and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall (**Attachment A**).
34. The following options for netting trees in Rundle Mall were considered:
 - 34.1. Not netting any trees for the upcoming roosting season and maintaining a management regime, assuming the Tree Martins return to the same roosting site,
 - 34.2. Netting the six trees used during the 2024/25 roosting season, or
 - 34.3. Netting all 40 trees along Rundle Mall.
35. In summary, the benefits of netting the six trees in front of businesses affected last season or all the trees in Rundle Mall include:
 - 35.1. Reduction in bird welfare incidents: Netting would likely prevent collisions with shopfronts and entrapment within buildings associated with roosting in trees in Rundle Mall but would need to have monitoring in place for trapped birds.
 - 35.2. Minimised impacts on specific retailers: Reduced faecal contamination, fewer birds entering stores in that part of Rundle Mall, and lower operational disruption and costs associated with installation of mitigation measures (e.g. decals on glazing).
 - 35.3. Potential cost savings: Lower ongoing costs for the City of Adelaide relating to on-ground management, monitoring, and mitigation in Rundle Mall (pending where the Tree Martin colony subsequently establishes).
 - 35.4. Stakeholder and community consideration: Businesses operating in locations impacted by the Tree Martin roosting colony are concerned about impacts on business branding and trading.
36. Disbenefits of netting include:
 - 36.1. Animal welfare concerns: Netting may entrap birds if poorly maintained, cause Tree Martins to relocate to other (potentially higher-risk) areas, limit effective management due to site constraints, and potentially impact other bird and wildlife species.
 - 36.2. Ongoing maintenance required: Regular inspection, repair, and compliance checks of netting are necessary to meet obligations under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* (SA).
 - 36.3. Visual and urban amenity impact: Netting may alter the streetscape and affect the appearance of the city's premier retail street.
 - 36.4. Displacement risk: Netting may cause Tree Martins to relocate to other trees in Rundle Mall or nearby locations creating new, unpredictable roost sites of which the management implications are unknown. Experience in Leigh Street shows that while netting reduced impacts locally, it shifted welfare and business issues to other locations and the issues remain (i.e. food and beverage locations, large windows, internal malls, catenary wires).
 - 36.5. Strategic and management considerations: Netting promotes reliance on hard exclusion rather than co-existence-based management, may set a precedent for wildlife exclusion elsewhere, may conflict with Council's goal of a 'city where nature thrives', and could limit opportunities for behavioural research needed to inform medium- to long-term management.
 - 36.6. Stakeholder and community consideration: Netting is non-preferred by environment agencies, Green Adelaide, DEW, wildlife groups, and the broader community, who expect nature-positive management approaches. The situation has a high potential for negative media or community sentiment, especially if welfare incidents occur.

36.7. Operational / cost: Additional upfront costs for netting and installation.

37. It should be noted that even with ongoing monitoring and operational responses, including the positive support through volunteer and veterinary groups, bird strikes are still likely to be seen within Rundle Mall when considering the volume of Tree Martins in a confined space, the natural and pre-existing urban elements and noting that predators are also aware of the roosting location. In combination this means that just like in nature, there will continue to be impacts seen at Rundle Mall, albeit these impacts are anticipated to be far fewer with the bird welfare measures in place.

Summary

38. Based on current information, the preliminary advice is that netting remains feasible provided it occurs before the birds return to roost.
39. Enquiries have been made with external suppliers who advise that the earliest installation could commence is late January 2026.
40. If netting were to occur after the Tree Martin colony has returned, this process is dependent on a permit from the Department for Environment and Water.
41. While netting may mitigate issues at previously affected locations, it carries the risk of displacing impacts to other areas within Rundle Mall or the wider CBD. The potential risks at these other locations are unknown, and in addition to the monitoring of the netted trees will need to include an on-ground response to support management and coordinated action at any new location.
42. Council will be required to monitor netted trees to ensure any trapped or injured birds are promptly managed.
43. The State Government recommends co-existence with the Tree Martin colony at roosting sites under a management plan as the best approach to address the environmental and animal welfare concerns.
44. The preliminary advice provided by Ecosure recommends that netting not proceed without further collection and assessment of data, and that the City of Adelaide adopt an adaptive mitigation approach for the upcoming season, with a review following the 2025/26 migratory season.

Next Steps

45. Subject to Council's consideration, Administration will:
- 45.1. Work with Rundle Mall retailers, Green Adelaide, and DEW to implement an on-ground management approach for the 2025/26 migratory season.
- 45.2. Implement a coordinated on-ground welfare response and community engagement to minimise disturbance within Rundle Mall, or other location, including managing volunteers and communications with stakeholder groups.
- 45.3. Monitor conditions and bird activity throughout the season and adjust management as required.
- 45.4. Conduct a post-season review in June 2026 to enable finalisation of the Phase 2 – Tree Martin Management Plan for reporting early in 2026/27.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 – [Meeting Minutes – Council – Tuesday, 22 April 2025](#)

Link 2 – [Council – Question on Notice Reply – Tuesday, 13 May 2025](#)

Link 3 – [Agenda – Council – Tuesday, 14 October 2025](#)

Link 4 – [Agenda – Workshop - City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee –Tuesday, 4 November 2025](#)

Link 5 – [Agenda – Report - City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee –Tuesday, 4 November 2025](#)

Link 6 – [Advice from DEW regarding the legal implications](#)

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Preliminary Advice - Feasibility, Benefits and Disbenefits of Netting Trees in Rundle Mall (Ecosure)

- END OF REPORT -



ecosure
improving ecosystems

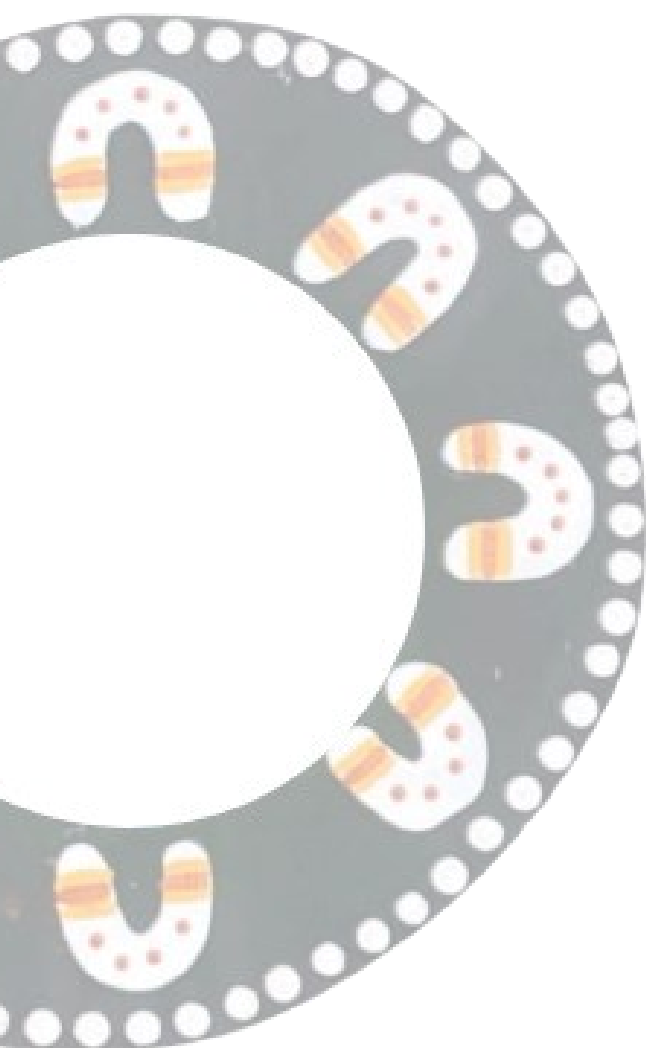


FEASIBILITY, BENEFITS AND DISBENEFITS OF NETTING TREES IN RUNDLE MALL

November 2025
CITY OF ADELAIDE

Acknowledgement of Country

Ecosure acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we work. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present who hold the Songlines and Dreaming of this Country. We honour and support the continuation of educational, cultural and spiritual customs of First Nations peoples.



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1 Introduction

At the City of Adelaide (CoA) Council meeting on 11/11/2025, Council resolved that “administration provide preliminary advice regarding the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall at a special meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday 2 December 2025”. This report provides the requested advice.

Contextually, “netting trees in Rundle Mall” relates to six (6) of the 40 Chinese elm trees (*Ulmus parvifolia*) in the shopping precinct. Specifically, during the summer and autumn of 2024-2025, over 10,000 tree martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*; Appendix 1), a small native bird species, were observed roosting at night in these six trees. These are located in front of several shops: Optus, OPSM, Sunglass Hut, Michael Hill Jeweller, Apple Store, and close to the main entry into Rundle Place, a large four-storey mall (see Appendix 2).

The issue is that these small birds were observed colliding with shop windows and flying into shops, resulting in numerous incidents across the 2024-2025 summer and autumn. These incidents represent a bird welfare issue and cause impacts to the adjoining businesses.

2 Location description

Rundle Mall is the major pedestrian shopping precinct located in the heart of Adelaide’s city centre. Located between King William Street and Pulteney Street, just north of Victoria Square, Rundle Mall creates a 500-metre-long pedestrian-only shopping experience. The mall is a central thoroughfare connecting key shopping landmarks such as the Adelaide Arcade, Adelaide Central Plaza, The Myer Centre, Regent Arcade, Rundle Place, and Rundle Mall Plaza.

Rundle Mall incorporates 40 Chinese elm trees. The trees are planted in linear stands dispersed along the mall. Six (6) trees located near the centre of the mall were used as a roost by over 10,000 tree martins’ (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) during the 2024-2025 summer and autumn (Figure 1). These trees are located in front of Optus, OPSM, Sunglass Hut, Michael Hill Jeweller, Apple Store, and to the side of Rundle Place, a large four-storey mall. Business impacts during the 2024-2025 roosting season were within the stores on the southern side of Rundle Mall near the roosting trees. Stores on the northern side were either unaffected or did not require any intervention during the roosting season.

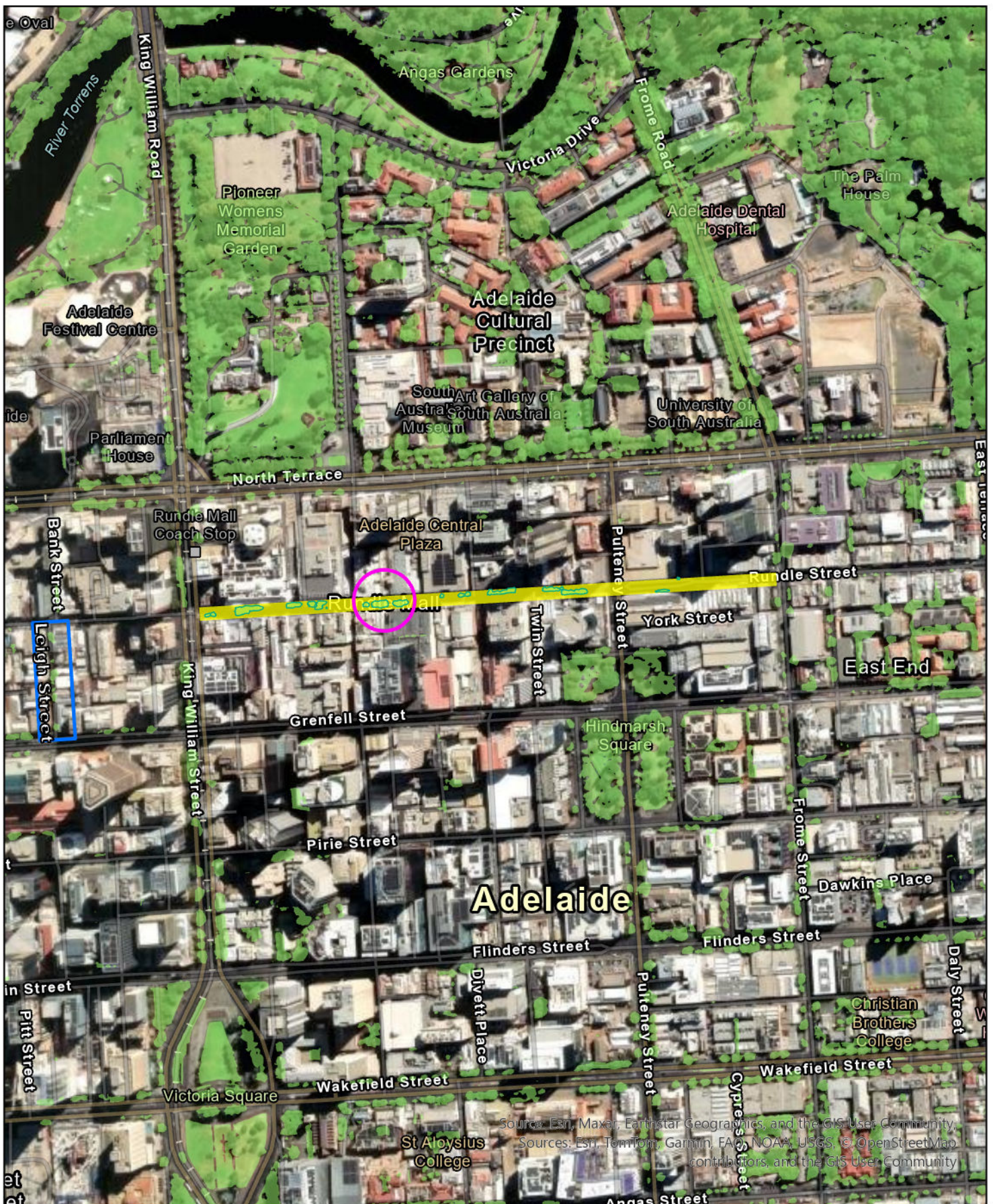


Figure 1 Location of Chinese elm trees in Rundle Mall

City of Adelaide

PR9200 Feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall

- Street trees and greenspace
- Rundle Mall
- Tree martin roost trees 2024 - 2025
- Former roost location: Leigh Street



Job number: PR9200
Revision: 1
Author: VH
Date: 21/11/2025



GDA2020
Datum: GDA2020
Units: Degree

3 Benefits and disbenefits

Category	Benefits	Disbenefits
Business impacts	Likely reduces impacts to the businesses directly affected in the 2024-2025 roosting season (faeces, birds entering stores, collisions).	<p>High likelihood birds move to other parts of Rundle Mall (there are 40 Chinese elm trees), potentially increasing impacts to more businesses (Appendix 2).</p> <p>Creates new, unpredictable roost sites that may be harder to manage. For example, the decision to net the trees in Leigh Street demonstrates this risk and the potential for increased welfare issues and business impacts. Netting the Callery pear (<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>) trees in Leigh Street prevented roosting, removing the impact to business, including public health and safety risks for outdoor dining venues, however the issue moved to Rundle Mall.</p>
Bird welfare	Likely reduces bird collisions and welfare issues in the netted trees, noting challenges within Rundle Mall associated with catenary wires, reflective shop front surfaces and indoor Malls with large entries, in addition to natural predation.	<p>Welfare risks if birds become trapped in or under netting (see Appendix 3: Wildlife Friendly Netting factsheet by the Department of Environment and Water (DEW)).</p> <p>Birds may relocate to areas with greater hazards (e.g. vehicle disturbance, increased glass frontage, reduced lighting control).</p> <p>Reduced ability to effectively manage due to site constraints.</p> <p>Impacts on other bird and wildlife species.</p>
Operational/Cost	Reduced need for increased daily cleaning and maintenance in the Mall (though could mean additional cleaning in other location(s) if colony relocates).	<p>Netting trees is a significant cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ~\$25,000 for the six focal trees in Rundle Mall, plus ongoing maintenance · ~\$125,000 for the 34 additional trees in Rundle Mall, plus ongoing maintenance. <p>Netting also introduces the risk of bird entrapment and requires ongoing monitoring, maintenance and compliance checks, including an increased inspection burden to ensure no animals become trapped.</p> <p>Net damage from wind, UV, and vandalism requires frequent repair.</p> <p>Unknown new roost locations may not offer the same safety or management conditions.</p>
Community and Reputation	Visible action demonstrating Council responsiveness to retailers.	High reputational risk: netting of street trees in the city's premier retail precinct may be perceived as "anti-wildlife", and impact on attractiveness of

Category	Benefits	Disbenefits
		<p>retail environment.</p> <p>Potential negative media or community sentiment, especially if welfare incidents occur.</p>
Environment and Amenity	May reduce faeces and mess under affected trees and reduce bird welfare issues associated with daylight savings which conflated issues of bird collisions in the Mall.	<p>Visual impact of netting trees in the city's premier retail street.</p> <p>Nets may reduce airflow, light penetration, and increase heat stress for trees.</p> <p>Potential impact on tree growth and desirable form with nets on.</p> <p>Prevents other wildlife from accessing the trees along Rundle Mall.</p>
Strategic/Urban Ecology	Contributes to understanding tree martin roost preference and management.	<p>Encourages reliance on "hard exclusion" methods rather than integrated/coexistence-based management.</p> <p>Risk of creating precedent for netting or excluding wildlife in other areas.</p> <p>At odds with Councils strategic objectives and goals to be a 'city where nature thrives'.</p> <p>Netting trees in Rundle Mall and displacing the population may restrict the ability of behavioural research to be safely undertaken to inform the medium to long term Management Plan.</p>
Stakeholder relationships	Could reassure directly affected retailers.	May strain relationships with environment agencies, Green Adelaide, DEW, wildlife groups, and broader community expecting nature-positive approaches. May transfer impacts to other retailers or hospitality venues.

4 Feasibility

The Department for Environment and Water has advised that a permit is not required under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* for the City of Adelaide to install netting on trees in Rundle Mall, provided the works occur before tree martins return to roost. Although a permit is not required, compliance with general animal welfare obligations still applies. This would necessitate routine and proactive monitoring to ensure no birds or other animals become trapped in or beneath the netting, including a formal inspection schedule, rapid response capability, and clear incident protocols.

The estimated cost to net the six trees used as the primary roost in the 2024-2025 season is approximately \$25,000, in addition to ongoing maintenance costs. However, given the presence of 40 Chinese elm trees throughout Rundle Mall and the high likelihood that excluding the six trees may lead to birds relocating elsewhere within the precinct, it is probable that the majority, or potentially all, trees would ultimately require netting for the measure to be effective.

Netting all 40 trees along Rundle Mall is estimated to cost approximately \$150,000 to install, with unknown but ongoing annual maintenance costs. Maintenance requirements would include inspection and repair following weather events, vandalism, UV degradation, and tree growth, as well as ongoing monitoring to prevent wildlife entrapment.

Based on current information, netting is considered technically feasible but operationally will require ongoing resource commitment to manage welfare risks and maintain the nets in a high-traffic retail environment.

5 Conclusion/Preliminary Advice

Advice from the DEW confirms that netting trees in Rundle Mall does not require a permit under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, provided installation occurs before tree martins return. However, netting creates risks of bird entrapment and would require ongoing monitoring, maintenance and compliance checks to meet animal welfare obligations.

Netting the six trees used in the 2024-2025 season is estimated to cost approximately \$25,000, with additional maintenance costs. As tree martins are likely to relocate if only these trees are netted, broader netting may be needed. Netting all 40 trees in Rundle Mall is estimated at around \$150,000, alongside significant ongoing maintenance requirements. Decisions about netting a selection of trees in Rundle Mall should have regard to factors such as large entries to multi-storey Mall's and other shopfront characteristics that exacerbate bird welfare impacts.

Although netting may reduce impacts at the original roost site, it presents considerable risks, including displacement of birds to other parts of the Rundle Mall or city, welfare issues in less suitable locations, reputational concerns around excluding wildlife in a high-profile precinct, and impacts on visual amenity.

Overall, netting is technically feasible but poses operational, welfare, and reputation risks. A coordinated on-ground response remains the preferred, lower-risk approach for the 2025-2026 season, and netting is not recommended at this stage.

6 References

Birds in Backyards 2025, *Tree Martin*. Available at:
<https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Petrochelidon-nigricans>


Department of Environment and Heritage 2008, *Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges South Australia Threatened Species Profile: Tree Martin*, 'Petrochelidon nigricans'. Available at:
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Green Adelaide 2025, *Tree martin update*. Available at:
<https://www.greenadelaide.sa.gov.au/discover/native-animals/tree-martins>

Museums Victoria 2025, *Museums Victoria Collections: 'Petrochelidon nigricans', Tree Martin*. Available at: <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/species/7383>

Appendix 1 Tree martin species profile

Name	Tree martin, <i>Petrochelidon nigricans</i>	
Size	Length: 12 cm, wingspan: 28 cm, weight: 15 g (Museums Victoria 2025)	
Identification	<p>Small bird with glossy blue-black feathers on the neck, back and crown, and cream feathers on the breast and belly. Wings and notched tail are brownish-grey, with a darker grey underneath and reddish-brown markings on the head.</p> <p>Males and females look very similar. Young are browner and paler.</p> <p>(Image: www.ebird.org [Ged Tranter])</p>	
Distribution	Widespread throughout Australia, between January and May, before heading to northern Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia from May to July (Green Adelaide 2025).	
Preferred habitat	<p>Generally, occur in airspace above open spaces such as grassland through to forests and wetlands, farmlands, and cities and suburban areas. Prefer to live within proximity to water sources. In non-urban areas they prefer open woodland with large trees that provide nest holes.</p> <p>In Adelaide, recorded roosting locations in the urban environment have included Chinese elm trees and Callery pear trees, where noise, light (e.g. fairy lights), and people are present (Green Adelaide 2025). These locations have been non-vehicular in nature.</p>	
Behaviour	Seasonally migratory. Will fly in an erratic but skilled way in pursuit of flying insects. May fly in large flocks as they approach their roosting site near sunset, that rise and then dive down as a large flock into the vegetation, avoiding predators such as peregrine falcons (Birds in Backyards 2025).	
Breeding	August-January. Nest in horizontal hollows of gum trees, and vertical banks of eroded creek lines. Can use artificial nests such as steel tubing and vent holes in buildings (Green Adelaide 2025). Nest hollow lined with grass and leaves (Department of Environment and Heritage 2008). Clutch 2-5 eggs with brown and mauve spots. Incubation for 14-16 days. Both parents incubate the eggs and feed the young.	
Conservation status	Colonial breeder, migratory breeder.	

Appendix 2 Rundle Mall and site photos

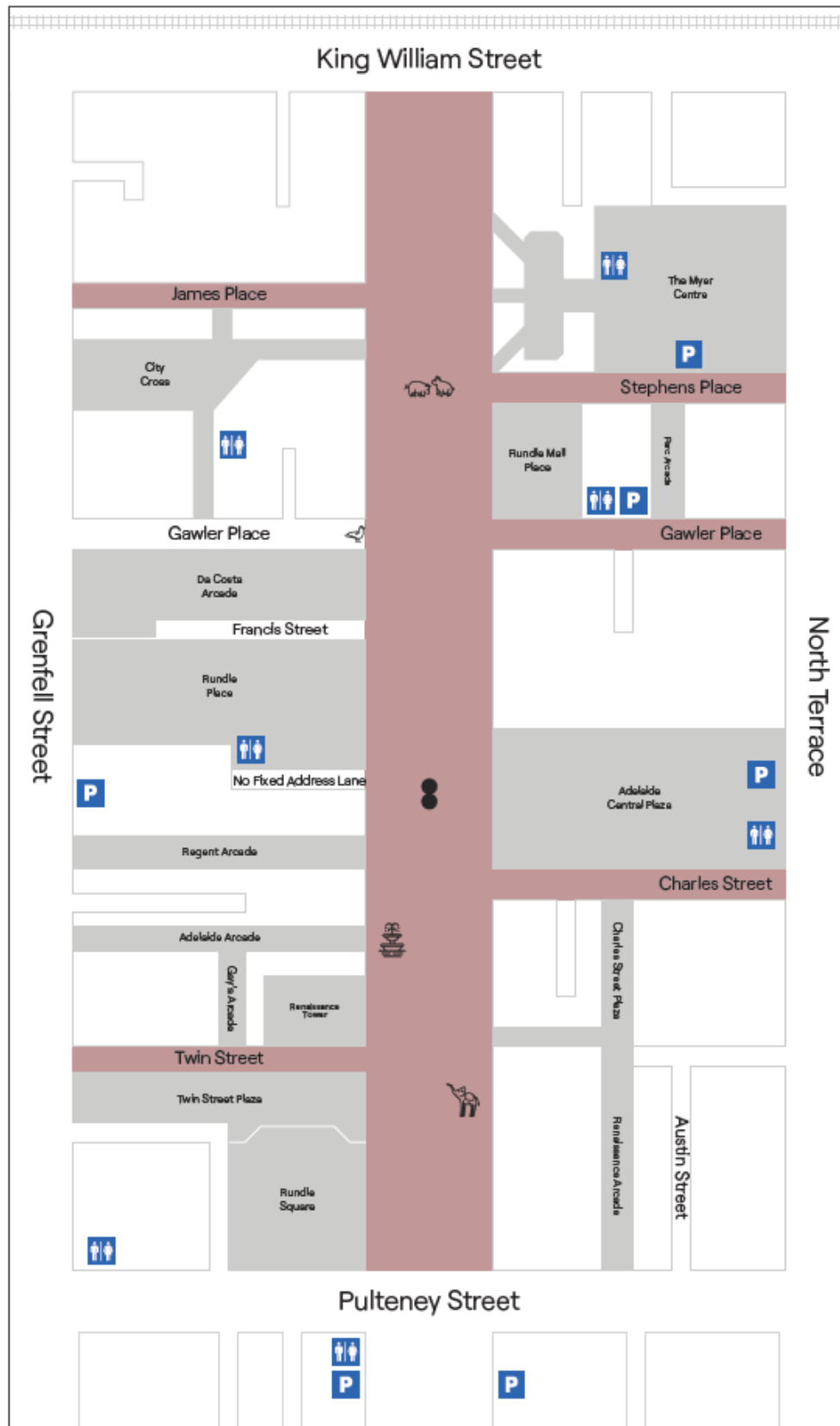


Figure 2 Rundle Mall (source: rundlemall.com)



Figure 3 Rundle Place, Rundle Mall, with Chinese elm trees located near the entry in front of the Apple Store



Figure 4 The Myer Centre, Rundle Mall, with Chinese elm trees located at the entrance



Figure 5 Regent Arcade, Rundle Mall, with Chinese elm trees located down the mall



Figure 6 Adelaide Arcade, Rundle Mall, with Chinese elm trees located at the entrance



Figure 7 Adelaide Central Plaza, Rundle Mall, with Chinese elm trees located down the mall



Figure 8 Rundle Mall Plaza, Rundle Mall, with Chinese elm trees located near the entrance

Appendix 3 Wildlife-friendly temporary horticultural netting fact sheet

Wildlife-friendly temporary horticultural netting

For commercial and non-commercial fruit and nut trees

Protecting crops and wildlife

Temporary netting is a popular way to protect fruit and nut trees from wildlife. It also provides some protection from sunburn, wind and hail damage.

There are a range of netting options available to protect crops from wildlife.

Unfortunately, some netting (or the way it is erected) can entangle birds, possums, flying foxes, snakes and lizards; causing stress, injury or death.

For individual trees in domestic backyards, the best way to prevent animals becoming entangled in a net is to avoid it altogether by **protecting individual fruit** using fruit protection bags.

However, if you choose to use temporary netting, it is possible to protect the produce and wildlife by following the simple principles outlined below.

Light (colour)

Use a net(s) lighter in colour than the background foliage, *ideally white*, so birds and mammals can see and avoid it, especially at night.

Strong

Use a durable, densely woven or knitted net(s) that does not stretch and enable animals to become entangled¹.

Alternatively, use 30% (shade factor) shade cloth. Avoid thin, lightweight nets (e.g. extruded) as they are easy for animals to pull out of shape and become entangled, and are not very durable.

¹ Ideally, made from high-density polyethylene monofilament, a minimum of 500 microns thick, with woven selvedge edges that give extra strength and ensure the net will not unravel.

Small (aperture)

Use a net(s) with apertures 5 mm x 5 mm or less (if single strand, 2 mm x 2 mm or less) to prevent access by small animals (e.g. birds) and/or the entanglement of larger animals' wings or feet.

The finger test – choose netting that you cannot poke your finger through.

Taut

The net should be taut enough that it does not sink under the weight of animals or form folds around them² when they land or crawl over it. The best way to do this is to make a sturdy frame:

- The frame could be made from commercial grade polythene pipe, metal or timber (checkout the internet for construction techniques). Allow for some tree growth and to provide some distance between determined animals and the produce.
- Tension the net tight against the frame and stop animals getting under it by weighing it down (e.g. with pipes or timber wrapped around the ends of the net), or pin down with tent pegs and tuck any excess net under.
- Fasten the net to the frame (e.g. with cable/zip ties, tie wires or string) to keep it taut and prevent sagging. Do not forget to create an opening and fasten tight, e.g. with butterfly clips or clothes pegs.

The bounce test – the net should ideally be tight enough that animals almost 'bounce' off it when they land on it.

² Common brush tail possums can weigh up to 3.5 kg, common ringtails 1.1 kg, and grey-headed flying foxes up to 1 kg

Check the net regularly

During the fruiting season, check the net regularly for holes, or trapped or entangled wildlife.

Trapped or entangled wildlife

Trapped but uninjured wildlife

- release the wildlife as soon as discovered
- check the integrity of the net.

Entangled and/or injured wildlife

Entangled and/or injured animals are likely to be highly stressed and potentially dangerous.

DO NOT attempt to remove them from the net

– cover them with a towel and contact a licensed wildlife rescuer group (e.g. Fauna Rescue SA) trained to handle and care for wildlife.

DO NOT attempt to rescue entangled and/or injured flying foxes or bats of any kind.

DO NOT handle dead flying foxes or bats due to the risk of infection by Australian Bat Lyssavirus, which can be transmitted by a bite or scratch from an infected animal.

Call the Fauna Rescue SA Microbats and Flying Foxes Rescue hotline on 8486 1139.

DO NOT attempt to rescue entangled and/or injured snakes. Call a licenced snake catcher.

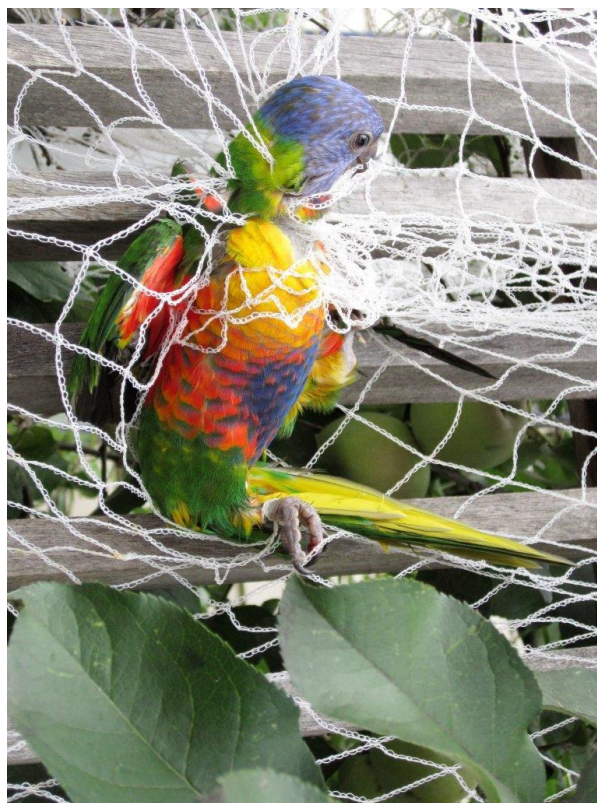
Risks of entanglement

As they struggle to escape, entangled wildlife can become stressed, break bones and tear wing membranes.

Thin monofilament line can cut into animals; causing deep wounds or stop circulation.

Ultimately, these injuries can lead to shock and even death, particularly if the animal is trapped for a long time.

Entangled flying foxes may also be mothers nursing young that are waiting at a nursery roost. If these mothers cannot return to the roost within a day, these young will starve.



Netting with large apertures can trap native fauna
Photo: Victorian Advocates for Animals

Destruction permit

Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, a Permit to Destroy Wildlife may be granted to allow for the destruction or removal of wildlife that are causing damage to the environment, crops, stock or other property (including to nets).

The destruction of any animal must comply with codes of practice or animal welfare standards outlined in the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* and the regulations under that Act.

For more information

Animal Welfare Act; National Parks and Wildlife Act:
legislation.sa.gov.au

Queensland Government Netting Fruit Trees guide
environment.des.qld.gov.au

Grey-headed Flying-foxes in South Australia:
naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidemtloftyranges

Fauna Rescue of South Australia Inc.:
faunarescue.org.au

Appendix 4 Netted trees in Leigh Street



Figure 9 Gallery pear tree fitted with bird exclusion netting on Leigh Street, Adelaide

Revision History

Revision No.	Revision date	Details	Prepared by	Reviewed & approved by
00	17/11/2025	Preliminary Advice Regarding Netting Trees In Rundle Mall To Deter Tree Martin Roosting	Dr John Martin, Principal Ecologist	Heather Richards, Senior Environmental Scientist
01	19/11/2025	Feasibility, Benefits and Disbenefits of Netting Trees in Rundle Mall	Heather Richards, Senior Environmental Scientist	Dr John Martin, Principal Ecologist
03	20/11/2025	Feasibility, Benefits and Disbenefits of Netting Trees in Rundle Mall	Veronica Hutchison, Ecologist	Dr John Martin, Principal Ecologist
04	26/11/2025	Feasibility, Benefits and Disbenefits of Netting Trees in Rundle Mall	Veronica Hutchison, Ecologist	Dr John Martin, Principal Ecologist

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Report compiled by Ecosure Pty Ltd

ABN: 63 106 067 976

admin@ecosure.com.au www.ecosure.com.au

PR9200-RE.Feasibility, Benefits and Disbenefits of Netting Trees in Rundle Mall

Brisbane

PO Box 675
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006
P 07 3606 1030

Coffs Harbour

PO Box 4370
Coffs Harbour Jetty NSW 2450
P 02 5621 8103

Gladstone

PO Box 5420
Gladstone QLD 4720
P 07 4994 1000

Gold Coast

PO Box 2034
Burleigh Waters QLD 4220
P 07 5508 2046

Rockhampton

PO Box 235
Rockhampton QLD 4700
P 07 4994 1000

Sunshine Coast

PO Box 1457
Noosaville QLD 4566
P 07 5357 6019

Sydney

PO Box 880
Surry Hills NSW 2010
P 1300 112 021

Townsville

PO Box 2335
Townsville QLD 4810
P 1300 112 021



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