



TREES

the Guardians of Life

Information and Support Package

Supported by City of Parramatta



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Trees, the Guardians of Life

Competition Summary

1. The City of Parramatta is supporting participation by its LGA high schools in 2024 online Speaking 4 the Planet competition. This Information and Support Package is for schools and students participating in this event. The package contains information about the competition category and the judging criteria; it also provides some links to articles relevant to the theme.
2. Closing date for submissions is **25 October 2024**
3. The topic for the competition is **Trees, the Guardians of Life**. This is linked to Sustainable Development Goal #15.
4. There are two age groups for the competition:
 - Junior – Yrs 7, 8, 9. A **4mins** speech on the competition topic.
 - Senior – Yrs 10, 11, 12. A **4mins** speech on the competition topic.
5. Each school may enter up to 2 students in each category.
6. Participation is free for schools and students.
7. Research is vital. This package contains links to useful articles and programs and talks. All participants are encouraged to do their own research.
8. Participants are to prepare and deliver speeches that are **original**. They are also invited to make their work quirky.
9. Judges will use the criteria in this support package to judge each submission.
10. Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third places. All participants receive a certificate.
11. Please note that the videos may be placed on the S4P website and used for promotional purposes. City of Parramatta council and Paddy Pallin may also use them on their websites. Sutherland Shire Environment Centre may use them for its Annual Report. Participating schools may use them. In addition, winning entries will form a part of a new digital magazine that will be sent to schools and key decision-makers in our communities and country. **By submitting your video, you acknowledge and agree to such uses of the videos.**

Trees Matter

improve health

are beautiful and
inspirational

generate oxygen

sequester carbon

boost wildlife

TREES

help science

reduce pollution

grow the economy

cool the air

protect the soil and
improve soil quality

help conserve
water

ameliorate climate change
and counter-act global
warming

can be a flood-
proofing tool

Contents

1. Purpose of this booklet.....	6
2. Speaking 4 the planet: Changing the world, one presentation at a time	6
3. Competition partners	9
4. Target audiences	11
5. Competition categories and criteria.....	11
6. Prizes	14
7. Resources	14

Prepared by **Phil Smith** and **Hanh Do**

With support from



<https://www.ssec.org.au>



<https://www.paddypallin.com.au>



<https://xtm.com.au>

S4P competitions are supported by the City of Parramatta and the World Environmental Education Congress Secretariat



<https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au>



<https://weecnetwork.org>

Design and layout by **Petur Farkas**

1. Purpose of this booklet

Trees, bush, bushland, forest, scrub.... Which word do you use?

The 2024 Speaking 4 the Planet online competition in Parramatta creates an opportunity for you to express your ideas about the importance of trees. You are invited to prepare and deliver punchy, quirky, creative, and pointed speeches that seek to influence the thoughts, emotions, and actions of viewers.

This information package is designed to help you prepare quality entries for the competition. It provides:

- Information on Speaking 4 the Planet and the competition category
- Judging criteria
- Links to relevant websites and articles.

You are strongly encouraged to research widely and build evidence-based and powerful messages.

2. Speaking 4 the planet: Changing the world, one presentation at a time

Speaking 4 the Planet (S4P) is an arts-based approach to sustainability education. It is a competition for secondary school students that invites students to express their views on matters related to the planet and the future – their future. S4P creates space and opportunities for young people to intertwine humanities and sciences, to philosophise about human actions, and to imagine a better world while standing deep in the science of the world they live in. Youth marches and student strikes are the very public faces of (climate change) protest. Speaking 4 the Planet is an equally powerful opportunity for students to speak up and advocate for a healthy future – for humans and all species.

S4P events inspire young people to think creatively, critically, independently, and courageously; they create space for students to ask challenging questions. S4P creates opportunities for youth voice not silence. The sustainability changes that the world needs won't occur by following existing dogma and practices. New thinking is required. Youthful thinking is required. Speaking 4 the Planet is founded on the belief that science provides the information we need to achieve sustainability, and the arts deliver the vehicles for transformation. Science provides the data; the arts change the world.

Here's a video prepared to support the nomination of S4P for an international Earth Prize. It tells you more about the initiative and demonstrates some of the skills of the students.

[Advocates 4 the Earth](#)

This 2024 S4P competition gives you a chance to step up and speak up about your concerns and fears, about your hopes and dreams and ideas, about the work that needs to be done to create a healthy, sustainable world. The competition moment also invites you to think about how you can help bring about such a world.

Here's [an article on the importance of speaking up](#)

And another article on the importance of public speaking: [Ideas, Inspirations and Incites - with Phil Smith - New Bush Telegraph](#)

Here are some links to great performances from previous S4P events.



[Mother Earth, Chloe. The winner of the first Performance Poetry category 2022.](#)



[Dance and art, Bayview Secondary College, Tasmania, in support of restoring Lake Pedder.](#)

Get inspired by last year's contestants



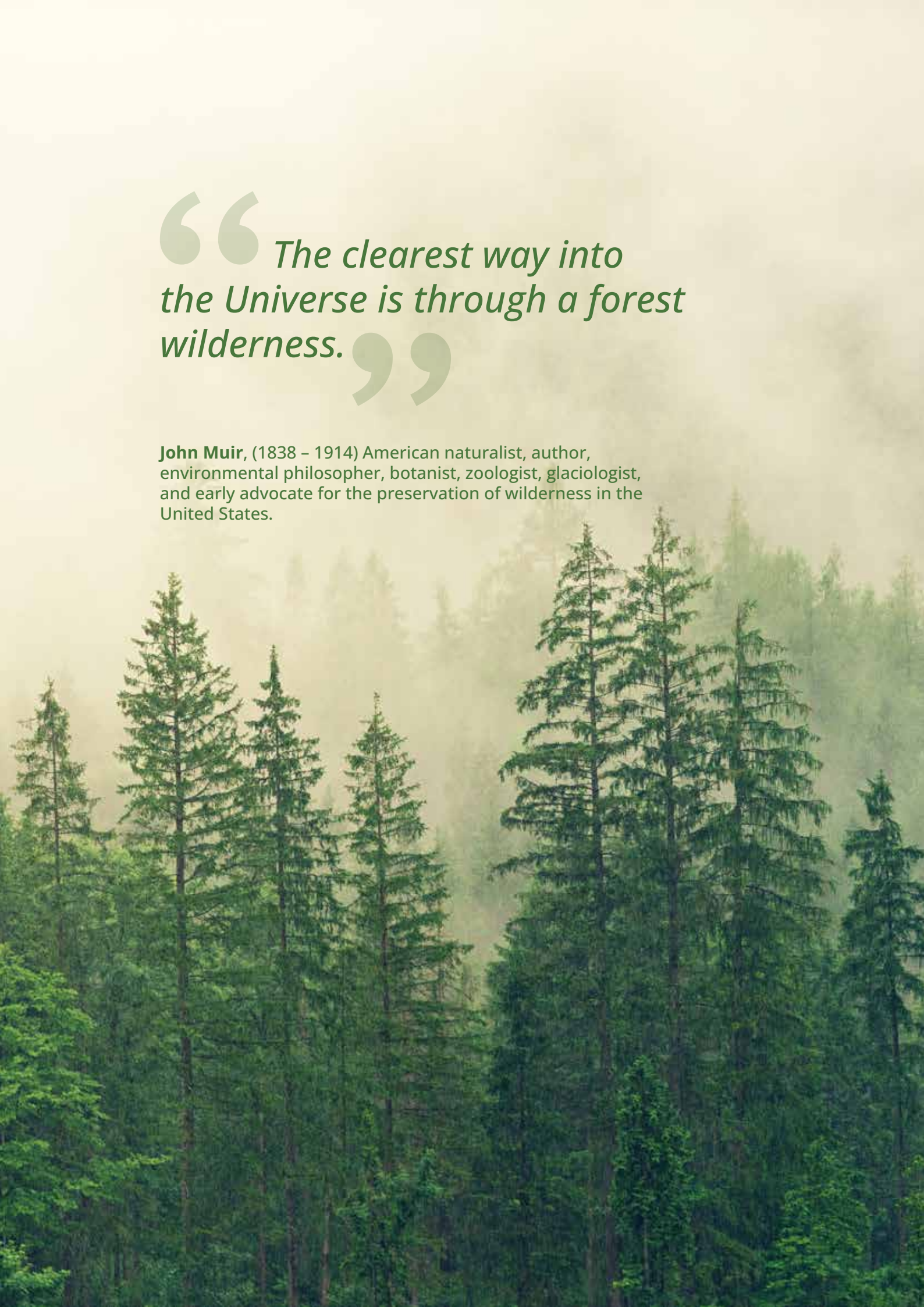
Roseanna
<https://youtube.com/shorts/dbyOtQ2mDoU?feature=share>



Anthony
<https://youtube.com/shorts/Kboj5Y85QU0?feature=share>



Ashwini
<https://youtu.be/hMMvHyZVsns>

A misty forest of tall evergreen trees, likely spruce or fir, with a soft, hazy atmosphere. The trees are densely packed and reach towards a pale, overcast sky. The overall tone is serene and natural.

“ *The clearest way into
the Universe is through a forest
wilderness.* ”

John Muir, (1838 - 1914) American naturalist, author,
environmental philosopher, botanist, zoologist, glaciologist,
and early advocate for the preservation of wilderness in the
United States.

3. Competition partners

CITY OF PARRAMATTA

Young people bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a sense of urgency to issues that affect their generation and beyond. Moreover, when youth are heard and valued, it builds their confidence and leadership skills, preparing them to be effective leaders and change-makers in the future. The voice of youth is essential for shaping the future, and that is why we are launching this speaking competition in partnership with Speaking 4 the Planet!

Let's talk about trees!

Trees play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy environment. They are vital for sustaining ecosystems and enhancing human well-being. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, and release oxygen, essential for life. They also help to regulate the climate by moderating temperatures, reducing the heat island effect in urban areas, and providing shade. Additionally, trees support biodiversity by offering habitat and food to numerous species, and they improve air quality by filtering pollutants. City of Parramatta has several tree planting and plant giveaway programs. We currently plant around 2700 trees per year and our goal is to increase our tree canopy to 40% by 2050.



www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au

SUTHERLAND SHIRE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

SSEC is an independent, not-for-profit, community organisation actively involved in a wide range of projects aimed at maintaining the natural beauty and character of our Shire, surrounding waterways and parks. The Centre has been working in and with the community since 1991, and it has achieved some very significant gains for the environment in that time. SSEC projects includes plastics, koalas and wildlife corridors, youth advocacy, climate leadership, planning and fair trade. The Centre also works to support Council and local businesses to become more sustainable.



www.ssec.org.au

PADDY PALLIN

Paddy Pallin has supported S4P since its 2013 beginning. Paddy Pallin is the first outdoor and adventure company in Australia, and it's also the first outdoor business to support S4P to connect with the next generation of environmentalists. Paddy Pallin sells clothing and equipment to help you get outside and into nature. Paddy Pallin wants to help maintain the quality of the environment so there's something to enjoy when you get out there! Paddy Pallin is especially keen to protect trees and forests.



www.paddypallin.com.au

WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CONGRESS SECRETARIAT

The World EE Congress and network facilitate cooperation and exchange and learning among those who are committed to reflecting on the link between the environment and education. They also promote active, informed and responsible citizenship as a condition for a more peaceful, fair and ecological human society, more equitable access to natural resources, and increased harmony among human beings, other species and the planet.



www.weecnetwork.org

4. Target audiences

This competition is for high-school-aged youth (12-18). It has two age categories:

- Junior – Yrs 7, 8, 9.
- Senior – Yrs 10, 11, 12.

Each school may enter up to 2 students in each category. Speeches must be no longer than 4mins.

Teachers, please also note also that the links in the Resources section below can provide useful ideas for teaching.

5. Competition categories and criteria

There is only one category in this competition: speech. All speeches must focus on the competition topic, Trees, the Guardians of Life. And speakers must capture something about the local region.

SPEECH

Participants prepare and deliver a 4mins speech on the competition

Remember to include something about your local region in the speech.

The speech is an opportunity for you to suggest innovative ways to raise awareness, influence policies and behaviours, and to improve the integrity of forests and bushland in your area.

Speakers will need to state clearly the problems or issues being addressed. They will also need to make links between problems and solutions, and speakers should also use techniques of persuasion that can shift the way the audience thinks and feels about the issues. The time limit is important. Please avoid reading your speech. Be original. Be quirky if you can!

Here are some public speaking tips: [Public Speaking Tips - Speaking 4 the Planet](#)

Here's an article with good advice on public speaking Communication habits that can undermine women's power [The communication habits that can undermine women's power - Speaking 4 the Planet](#)

Here's an article that gives you [Tips on videoing yourself](#)



Judging criteria

A small panel of judges will use the following criteria to judge the speeches and find a winner. You should use them in your preparation.

On topic.

Within the time limit.

Idea:


- Originality of idea.
- How the idea is developed.
- Encourages audiences to think or act.

Content:

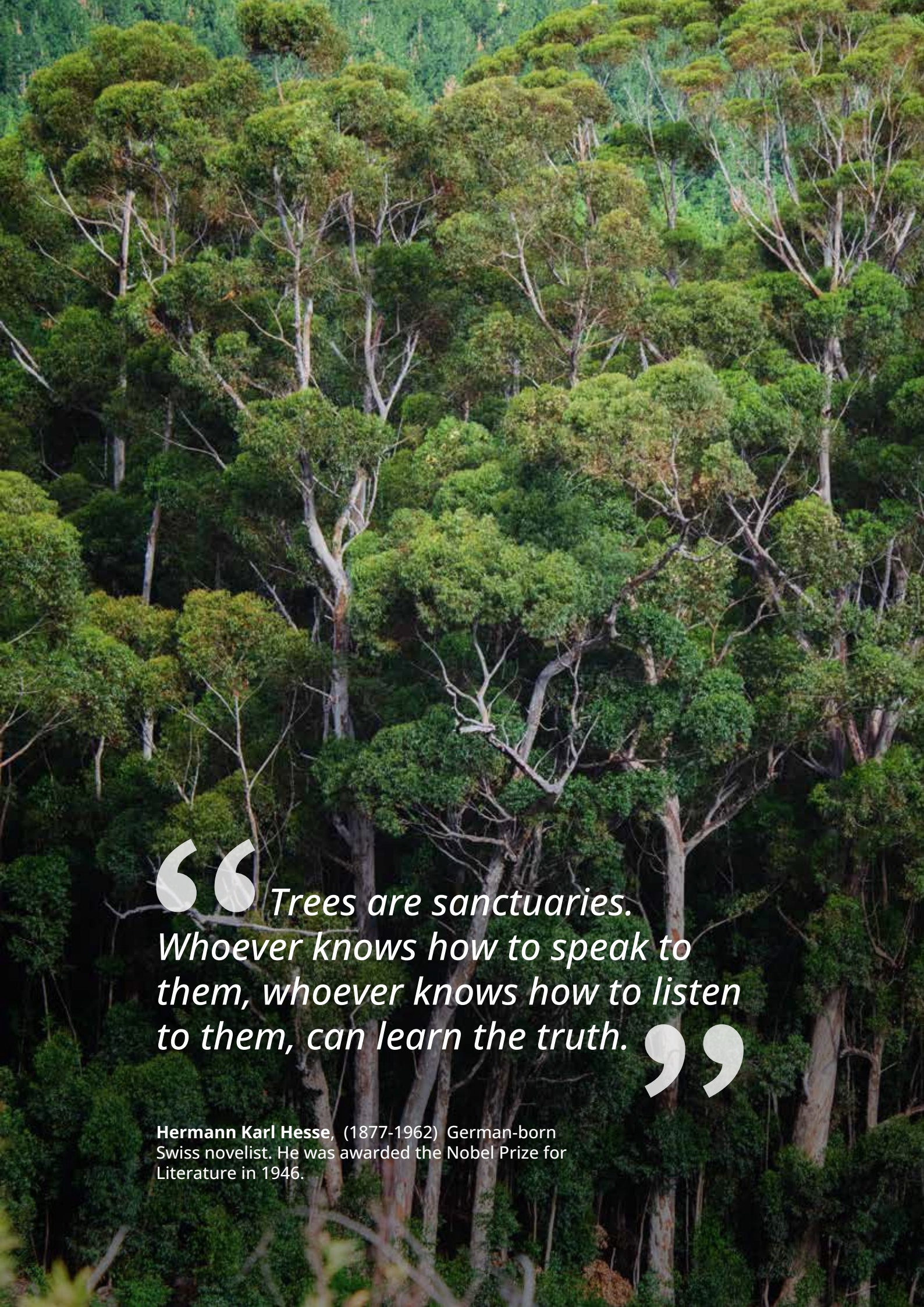
- Clear communication of problem and solution that the idea is trying to address.
- Structure: coherent, logical, clear.

Choice of style:

- Engaging.
- Persuasive techniques.
- Body language appropriate to the speech.



Use this S4P opportunity to speak through your words, your art, your performance and tell the world what you think about the importance of trees and bushland and forests. Also use this opportunity as a time of change for yourself.



*“ Trees are sanctuaries.
Whoever knows how to speak to
them, whoever knows how to listen
to them, can learn the truth. ”*

Hermann Karl Hesse, (1877-1962) German-born Swiss novelist. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946.

6. Prizes

Winners will be announced on the S4P website by the end of November 2024

Once again, Paddy Pallin, a competition partner, will provide very practical items for first prizes. In addition, the winner will receive a \$50 gift voucher donated by City of Parramatta Council.

All participants will receive a certificate.

7. Resources

All participants are urged to research the topic. This section contains some links to websites that will help in the preparation of submissions. Search for more.

Sustainable Development Goals

Protecting trees and bushland and forests and their habitats and species is the focus of Sustainable Development Goal #15, Life on Land. Check out this specific goal and all the others – they are all connected!

Find the SDGs here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Achieving the SDGs requires the partnership of governments, private sector, civil society and citizens alike to make sure we leave a better planet for future generations.



The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

City of Parramatta Council

Trees play an important role in the 'greening' of our City. They make our surroundings pleasant, provide relief from summer heat and reduce glare from pavement. They also increase the value of real estate, reduce stormwater runoff and improve the quality of the air we breathe. It is important to carefully manage this precious resource and to preserve the existing urban forest within our City.

Check your local council's tree policy and other policies related to the management of trees and bushland in your area: <https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/living/trees>

Also check local community organisations that look after bushland.

Songs of Trees

We have learned from ecological science and evolutionary science and studies of the physiology of plants that, when we walk into a forest, we're not walking into a place that is full of separate interacting individuals. That was the old view of ecology. Instead, we now know that we're walking into a living network, a place where every creature exists only through relationships with others. And so, for example, a tree is not just one species, one individual, but a tree is a living community. Every leaf on a tree has hundreds of species of bacteria and fungi living within its leaves. Without those other species, the leaf cannot function; it gets overrun by pathogens, it can't protect itself from drought.

The message here is to listen to the songs of trees.

<https://www.dailygood.org/story/3176/david-george-haskell-songs-of-trees-preeta-bansal/>

It's the Trees. Are we caretakers or undertakers?

<https://newbushtelegraph.org.au/ideas-inspirations-and-incites-with-phil-smith/>

We breathe out. They breathe in. They breathe out. We breathe in. Exchanging oxygen for carbon dioxide for oxygen. In out. In out.

We live in an intimate relationship with trees. We need to value that relationship and love those trees. David Attenborough has forever told us that, 'We depend upon the natural world for every mouthful of food we eat and every lungful of air we breathe.'

National Tree Day

<https://treeday.planetark.org>

Australia's largest tree planting and nature care event.

Schools Tree Day Friday 26 July

National Tree Day Sunday 28 July

Tropical Tree Day Sunday 1 December

<https://nationaltoday.com/national-tree-day/>

This link includes a history of national tree day.

Schools Tree Day Education Resources

<https://cool.org/schools-tree-day-education-resources>

Tree-Planting

<https://conservationvolunteers.com.au/plant-a-tree-this-national-tree-day/>

This site provides “five incredible reasons why the simple act of planting native trees is so much more than meets the eye.”

Mending an Ecosystem

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL-i_yNcFVY

Permaculture instructor Andrew Millison explains the process for repairing a degraded ecosystem. We begin with the metrics for assessing ecosystem health, and then go over the

steps to triggering biological activity and ecological succession.

Trees provide...

<https://www.co2australia.com.au/why-are-trees-important-to-the-environment/>

[Why Are Trees Important to the Environment?](#)

Most people recognise that trees play an essential role in the environment, but they perhaps undervalue the true extent of these incredible organisms’ benefits. Trees provide oxygen and limit carbon in the atmosphere. They reduce air pollution, provide food and shelter for wildlife, minimise erosion and maintain healthy soil, increase rainfall, and absorb sunlight as energy. Simply, trees are an essential component of life on Earth.

Trees and past civilizations

<https://newbushtelegraph.org.au/ideas-inspirations-and-incites-with-phil-smith/>

6 Ways Trees Benefit All of Us

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/build-healthy-cities/cities-stories/benefits-of-trees-forests/>

From a city park to a vast forest, trees deliver for us when we help them thrive.

Australia’s forests at a glance

https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/forests_at_a_glance.pdf

Australia has few native conifers, therefore 99% of our native forest area is broadleaf. In contrast, about 60% of plantations are exotic conifers. Native forests are dominated by eucalypt species (78%), followed by acacia species (10%) and melaleuca species (4%).

30 Australian tree statistics 2022

<https://treesdownunder.com.au/australian-tree-statistics/#:~:text=Native%20Trees%20and%20Canopies,is%20Australia%27s%20oldest%2Dknown%20tree.>

The country has a staggering 24,000 species of native plants and trees. Acacia, grevillea, emu bushes, and gum trees (eucalyptus) are among the most common Australian trees found in native forests. The King's Holly from Tasmania is Australia's oldest-known tree. May 17, 2022

The forests of Australia

<https://www.integratesustainability.com.au/2019/03/29/the-forests-of-australia/>

Forests extend across Australia's northern tropical regions, and down the east coast through sub-tropical regions to temperate cool-season wet and cold-wet zones in the south-east; they are also found in Mediterranean climate zones in the south-east and south-west.

Deforestation in Australia

Australia is the top country among developed countries which has the highest rate of deforestation. More than 135,000 trees are bulldozed on the shores everyday that's 57 times of the area of Sydney Harbour destroyed every 365 days. The urgency of saving trees in Australia. [Why do we need to save trees in Australia? | Why do we need to save trees in Australia? | WWF Australia](#)

Australia has a long history of forest clearing. [Australia spends billions planting trees – then wipes out carbon gains by bulldozing them | Deforestation | The Guardian](#)

Tree myths

<https://forestrynews.blogs.govdelivery.com/2020/03/23/common-tree-myths-and-why-you-shouldnt-believe/#:~:text=Myth%20%231%3A%20A%20tree%27s%20root,as%20the%20tree%20grows%20taller.>

Losing tree cover

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/jan/04/its-slipped-off-the-radar-why-are-there-fewer-street-trees-in-the-australian-bush?fbclid=IwAR2KkP2o5XucJ5IfaL9KOZWdHgkSYiTgtd33vyfj786_-6w2Uii8xXN4aMU

'It's slipped off the radar': why are there fewer street trees in regional towns across Australia? Beyond the tree-lined high streets, many regional towns are lacking tree cover and experts say the reliance on cars could be to blame.

Sydney kids, no matter where they live, must have trees to climb

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/sydney-kids-no-matter-where-they-live-must-have-trees-to-climb-20240104-p5ev7o.html>

As Sydney moves to higher density living – and we need to – there must be a focus on green spaces. While more of us live in apartments and townhouses, we must make sure there are appropriate options for generations of screen-focused kids to spend time outside, even in a warming climate.

"But tell me," Yusuf/Cat Stevens asked, "where do the children play?"



Tree Canopy Indicator

Video included in the document from NSW State Government

<https://www.movementandplace.nsw.gov.au/place-and-network/built-environment-indicators/tree-canopy>

Lots more!

Trees: [5 reasons we need trees for a healthy planet - Earth Day](#)

Trees' values: [The Importance of Trees - Learn Value and Benefit of Trees \(savatree.com\)](#)

More trees' values [22 Benefits of Trees - TreePeople](#)

The power of one tree: [The Power of One Tree - The Very Air We Breathe | USDA](#)

Trees can live long. One tree need other trees. Do trees need people? [Do Trees Need People? · Idaho Forests Products Commission](#)

Native trees in Australia: [Why Trees? | Carbon Positive Australia](#)

Impacts on one of the oldest tree of Australia: [Scientists rush to save Australia's loneliest tree — the 'ice age gum' — from the brink of extinction - ABC News](#)

Tree protection laws in Australian states and territories: [Microsoft Word - Urban Trees_Lensink.docx \(treenet.org\)](#)

Ways to save trees in Australia: [10 ways to help save trees in Australia | 10 ways to help save trees in Australia | WWF Australia](#)

10 facts to fall in love with forests

- 1) Forests are home to over 80 percent of land animals and plants and cover 31 percent of the world's total land area.
- 2) A tree can sequester up to 150 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year. The world's forests store an estimated 296 gigatonnes of carbon in both above- and below-ground biomass.
- 3) Trees are important for creating sustainable cities: in urban areas, they can cool the air by up to 8 degrees, reducing air conditioning needs by 30 percent. Urban trees are also excellent air filters, removing harmful pollutants and fine particulates.
- 4) Wood fuel provides 40 percent of today's global renewable energy supply – as much as solar, hydroelectric and wind power combined.
- 5) Forest products contribute to reducing and replacing polluting and carbon intensive materials.
- 6) Using wood for construction saves about 40 percent of carbon emissions in comparison to concrete, and about 30 percent in comparison to steel.
- 7) More than 25 percent of the medicines we use originate in rainforest plants. Yet only 1 percent of rainforest plants have been studied for medicinal properties.
- 8) More than one third of our biggest cities, including New York, Bogota, Tokyo and Barcelona, get a significant proportion of their high-quality drinking water from protected forests.
- 9) The tallest tree in the world is called Hyperion. It's a coast redwood from California that is an incredible 115.61 metres tall. The largest tree in the world by volume is a giant sequoia called General Sherman which has a trunk 10 metres round and contains an estimated 1486 cubic metres of wood.
- 10) A large oak tree can transpire 151,000 litres of water in a year. On average, 40 percent of rainfall over land originates from evapotranspiration from plants.

Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)