

Blackburn and district Tree Preservation Society Inc.



NEWSLETTER No 241
March 2016

Whitehorse is Being Cleared of Trees by the Big Boys!

A new phase of tree and vegetation clearing has been occurring in Whitehorse over the past few years, in direct opposition to the seemingly futile attempts by the community and Whitehorse Council to keep our city 'Green and Leafy'! What makes this sad state of affairs worse is that currently developers and residents are not the main perpetrators of this tree and vegetation loss.

The main culprits have been (or will be) Whitehorse Council and State Government Authorities clearing large stands of trees and vegetation for 'public works', including shared use paths and railway crossing removals. These have been, or will be, carried out in Whitehorse with little consultation with the community, or prior knowledge of the potential impacts.

In addition recent VCAT decisions have gone against Whitehorse Council and community groups' endeavours to try and retain the city's tree canopy by preventing excessive tree loss on private property.

Here is a table highlighting the current sad state of affairs (including trees slated for removal on private land):

Location	Owner and/or Responsible Authority	Purpose	Number of Trees	Status of the Trees
Laburnum, Blackburn, Nunawading, Mitcham and Heatherdale	- State government - 2 Level Crossing Removal Authorities and Eastern Projects, VicRoads	Level Crossing Removals at Blackburn and Heatherdale & construction of the Box Hill to Ringwood Rail Trail	~ 260+ trees under threat! (Estimate only as information from Project Managers has not been divulged despite repeated requests)	Some trees already lost including 40+ near Heatherdale Station. Other losses imminent!
Central Road Nunawading	-Seventh Day Adventist owner/developer -VCAT decision in late 2015	Multi-building multi-storey retirement village development	100 trees – 80 of which are indigenous Eucalypts – remnants from rare Valley Heathy Forest	VCAT decision supports the removal of 100 trees. The trees will go!
Middleborough Rd. (Albion Rd. to Canterbury Rd., Box Hill)	Whitehorse Council	Installation of shared use path	58 trees , mostly native and some indigenous Eucalypts	All gone!
2 Walsham Road Blackburn	Private Developer and VCAT decision in February 2016	Sub-divide into 3 housing Lots and remove trees	32 trees mostly native and some indigenous	VCAT decision supports removal of 32 trees. The trees will go!

Threats to our natural landscape with the construction of the Box Hill to Ringwood Rail Trail (BHRRT)

The Tree Society committee is deeply concerned that the planned southern route of the BHRRT will threaten and permanently degrade the natural character and amenity of a number of suburbs with losses of many trees and associated vegetation in streetscapes and linear parks in Laburnum, Blackburn, Nunawading, Mitcham and Heatherdale.

The southern route will have a deleterious effect on linear and neighbourhood parks, informal pedestrian walkways and the loss of many trees (170+ from Laburnum to Nunawading and 50+ from Mitcham to Heatherdale). Already, over 40 mature Pine Trees have been removed west of the Heatherdale railway station. According to Whitehorse Council's scientifically based tree valuation calculation tool the amenity value for the 170+ trees slated for removal with the BHRRT southern route (Laburnum to Nunawading) and the associated Blackburn level crossing removal project amounts to \$1,100,000 to \$2,000,000!

An estimated value for the trees to be removed between Mitcham and Heatherdale has yet to be determined. However, most of the trees under threat are magnificent indigenous Eucalypts with high amenity, habitat and conservation values located in the reserve running between Brunswick Road and the railway line from Mitcham Road through to Purches Street. There are also 10 or so Eucalypts bordering Tennyson Street near Heatherdale Station that will be removed to make way for the shared path. Thus \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 would be a conservative valuation for the 50+ trees under threat for this section in addition to the losses resulting from the Heatherdale Road level crossing removal project.

The Tree Society has a long-standing policy of opposition to shared user commuter paths being installed within linear parks to the detriment of other park users, including pedestrians. Parks that will be negatively impacted by a commuter trail south of the railway line include the Laburnum Station Gardens, Elmore Walk (Blackburn), the Blackburn Station Gardens, Morton Park and Brunswick Road Reserve (Mitcham). The Tree Society has grave concerns that there will be substantial loss and/or damage to existing vegetation in these open spaces, including to important indigenous remnant trees of high amenity and habitat value.

The street trees in Laburnum Street will be impacted because of a 2.5 metre sealed shared path planned for the section between the Laburnum shops and Elmore Walk, mainly on the north side of Laburnum Street. The residents of Glen Ebor and Oliver Avenues and Cromwell Court, Blackburn, are already under siege. They fear for the future of the many mature trees within their back gardens bordering the railway reserve, as they will be damaged by commuter pathway construction works close to their northern boundaries, should the southern-shared path route be preferred. They are particularly concerned about the risk of moderate to severe damage to the roots of their trees that will invariably compromise their vigour, health and lifespan.

In addition the level crossing authority has permission to:

- Use a portion of Morton Park for construction access, associated works and reinstatement
- Use a portion of 131-173 Central Road (i.e. the Seventh Day Adventist campground site) for construction access, a construction compound, project parking, associated works and reinstatement.

Tree Society representatives have recently had meetings with the various project managers (i.e. two level crossing removal authorities and the BHRRT/shared path project team) and the Tree Society has recently attained 'stakeholder' status and now attends the monthly Stakeholder Liaison Group meetings.

However, after making a number of submissions on this issue (going back to early December 2015) as well as actively seeking further information on possible tree and vegetation impacts whilst demanding that these impacts be mitigated and finally requesting details of planting replacement programs, the following issues/demands that have been put to the relevant authorities have not been addressed:

1. Make public the numbers, species and locations of trees and shrubs that will be removed to make way for the rail trail on public and private land
2. Make public a landscape-planting plan (again with numbers, species and locations) to replace the vegetation and canopy loss as a consequence of the rail trail project. Ideally the replacement plantings would be within or close to the project site and be composed largely of indigenous species of local provenance
3. Make sure that no environmental weed species are included in the planting plan
4. Provide a schedule for the planting works and a management plan for their care in the short to medium

term.

In addition, on a number of occasions, we have requested copies of the Construction Environmental Management Plans (or CEMPs) from the two Level Crossing Removal Authority managers but apparently these plans have yet to be completed!

These plans '*...must include measures to minimize and manage impacts on vegetation...*'. However as the works, including substantial tree and vegetation removal, have already started, it would appear that the authorities are working independently of any such requirement to consider the vegetation under threat in terms of minimizing and managing impacts!

The Tree Society seeks your support in lobbying for the BHRRT to be routed north of the railway line between Laburnum and Nunawading and for the Brunswick Gardens in Mitcham to be spared from any pathway construction works that will be detrimental to the remnant trees located there.

Contact Details:

State MPs:

MLA for Box Hill (Laburnum, Blackburn and Nunawading):

Hon Robert Clark
24 Rutland Road
Box Hill Vic 3128
Phone: 9898 6606
robert.clark@parliament.vic.gov.au

MLA for Ringwood (Mitcham and Heatherdale):

Ms. Dee Ryall
44 New Street
Ringwood Vic 3134
Phone: 9870 7396
dee.ryall@parliament.vic.gov.au

MLC for the Eastern Metropolitan Region:

Shaun Leane
PO Box 4307
Knox City Centre, Vic 3152
Phone: 9887 0255
shaun.lean@parliament.vic.gov.au

City of Whitehorse Central Ward Councillors (Laburnum, Blackburn and Nunawading):

Cr Andrew Munroe
Locked Bag 2, Nunawading Delivery Centre Vic 3131
Phone: 9878 8235
andrew.munroe@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Cr Denise Massoud
PO Box 52, Forest Hill VIC 3131
Phone: 9878 4320
denise.massoud@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

City of Whitehorse Springfield Ward Councillors (Mitcham and Heatherdale):

The Mayor, Cr Philip Daw
PO Box 2152, Rangeview 3132
Phone: 9873 3108
philip.daw@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Cr Ben Stennett
PO Box 120, Nunawading 3131
Phone: 9872 3069
ben.stennett@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

A Snapshot for Tree and Vegetation Losses Proposed for the Blackburn Level Crossing Removal Project

- The trees and vegetation beyond the car park at the western end of South Parade will be lost with the construction of the shared path.
- All of the trees and vegetation in the Blackburn Station Gardens (from the western end of the car park through to Blackburn Road) will be removed for the station forecourt and shared path works.
- The trees and indigenous plantings in the quiet, shady courtyard north of the library will all go to be replaced by drainage infrastructure and an access path to the southern shared path!
- All 19 trees bordering the tennis courts will go with the path works and grade separation (probably to be replaced by low shrubs).
- All 73 cypress pine trees located on Council land in Morton Park will be removed. These trees are historically significant and date back to the late 19th century and the vision of local businessman, land developer, entrepreneur and long-time Shire of Nunawading Councillor, Mr. T.R.B. Morton, in the creation of the 'Blackburn Model Village'. These ageing but still magnificent trees will be replaced by low shrubs and need to be saved!
- The authority is seeking permission from Council to further prune back Glen Ebor (plus Oliver and Cromwell) residents' trees within private gardens (i.e. branches that are on private property, not overhanging the rail reserve!) to allow for pile driving machinery access along the north side of the railway reserve. These trees are located in a Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) neighbourhood and are protected via the SLO provisions
- The Level Crossing Removal Authority has promised to assess any potential impacts on the Seventh Day Adventist land trees (30+ in number) bordering the rail reserve (these trees are located between Conservation Area #2 and the school oval).

As stated in the previous article the Authority has gained permission to:

- Use a portion of Morton Park for construction access, associated works and reinstatement
- Use a portion of 131-173 Central Road (i.e. the Seventh Day Adventist campground site) for construction access, a construction compound, project parking, associated works and reinstatement.

These impacts are substantial and will have a long-term deleterious effect on the natural landscape and amenity of Blackburn.

Development of the Junction Rd/Nunawading Parklands as a Major Community Park (Melway 48 F/6)

A number of local residents, accompanied by members of the Tree Society committee walked through the parklands in late 2015. They concluded that the 11-hectare open space represented an exciting opportunity for development as a major district park, primarily for passive recreational activities that would, with targeted, yet modest, financial input, create a major natural asset for the Whitehorse community.

A draft action plan was drawn up to help kick-start the development of the parklands in 2016 and, already, a number of actions have been achieved:

- Brian Duvoisin, a local resident and RE Gray Bushland Park Advisory Committee member, has canvassed local community interest in this initiative and has received overwhelming support from many members of the local community
- The Blackburn & District Environment Protection Fund (B&DEPF) has made a financial commitment of up to \$2,000 to fund a flora (remnant vegetation and weeds) and fauna survey for the site
- The Tree Society committee is currently working on an indicative development plan for the site to promote discussion and further action. This is based on landscape concept plans drawn up in the 2000s and concentrates on maximizing passive recreational activities – walking, jogging, recreational cycling, unstructured play, community stewardship via planting and associated activities, environment educational activities, fauna surveys, water quality assessments for the Koonung Creek, conducting informal concerts etc.

Friends of Junction Road/Nunawading Parklands along with Tree Society committee members extended an invitation to the City of Whitehorse Springfield Ward councillors; Mayor, Cr Philip Daw and Cr. Ben Stennett and Ms. Dee Ryall, the State MP for Ringwood to a 'walk and talk' activity in the parklands in March or April 2016 to discuss the development of the parklands as a major city park that encompasses a wide range of passive

recreational opportunities for Whitehorse citizens and define the strategies required to achieve this outcome.

The Society has also requested that Whitehorse Council consider committing funds in forthcoming Council budgets to initiate the planning phase for the development of the parklands.

Examples of possible actions would include:

- Initiate a community consultation process on the park's development
- Develop an indicative landscape concept plan
- Complete a land title search to determine/finalise land title boundaries
- Match the Blackburn & District Environment Protection Fund financial commitment to complete a flora and fauna survey of the parklands
- In 2016, create new, and augment existing, planting beds in the parklands immediately north and south of the intersection between Springvale and Junction Roads. The areas to be weeded, mulched and planted-out with indigenous shrubs, grasses, tufties and forbs under the existing remnant eucalypts. This signature activity would be organized by the Friends group, the Tree Society committee and Whitehorse Council and could occur at a widely-promoted park activity in late autumn 2016
- Conduct a parklands naming competition
- Explore opportunities for waterway works in conjunction with Melbourne Water e.g. wetlands creation (south east section), formalise the drainage line in the northern section adjacent to the path and ameliorate serious pathway erosion.
- Investigate other possible park developments e.g. building a car park off Junction Road south of the creek; installing one or more children's' adventure playgrounds, put in an enclosed dog exercise park, create an amphitheatre for open air events, build more walking tracks and footbridges over the creek and formalise the goat track path to the freeway footbridge (western side).

Watch this space for further developments of this exciting initiative!

Path Works and Sixty Trees Removed by Whitehorse Council on Middleborough Road between Albion and Canterbury Roads in Box Hill.

Whitehorse Council contacted the Tree Society committee in late October 2015 asking for feedback on a Council proposal to install a 3-metre wide concrete shared user path between Albion and Canterbury Roads Box Hill (adjacent to RHL Sparks Reserve).

Council insisted that the existing 2.4-metre wide asphalt path couldn't be repaired and the planned 'gold-plated' concrete construction would necessitate the removal of around 60 trees due to the path works' interference with tree root systems. This is in light of the fact that very few pedestrians and cyclists use the existing path along Middleborough Road in peak (or any other) times. The cost of the path works alone was in the order of \$200,000.

Tree Society committee members and Friends of Blackburn Creeklands made a site visit and inspected the trees adjacent to the existing asphalt path in late November 2015. The tree assessment and recommendations resulting from the site inspection were then compared with the results and recommendations from Council's arborist report and a submission subsequently forwarded to Council.

Major points stated in the Tree Society submission Included:

- 8 trees had already been removed
- The Tree Society agreed with the arborist on the recommended fate for 49 trees on the land under consideration, 21 of which are to be retained and 28 removed. A major caveat placed on the trees scheduled for removal is that they be replaced with similar indigenous canopy tree species in a more satisfactory position resulting in no net loss of canopy or depletion of natural landscape/habitat values for the area.
- The Tree Society recommended that 22 trees be retained, in contrast to comments in the arborist's report. These trees included 6 indigenous Eucalypts and 18 native Eucalypts, all healthy mature trees worthy of retention ratings of fair to excellent and useful life expectancies greater than 5 years. The Tree Society believed that its compromise position would be treated favourably by Council, but how wrong we were!

In the spirit of conciliation the Tree Society committee requested that on-site meetings be organized with the arborist, Council officers and Councillors to negotiate a resolution to this issue that would be agreeable to all parties. A number of meetings were held with arguments for and against the tree removals. However Council

officers and Councillors remained intransigent - the 3 metre-wide concrete 'landing strip' would be built and 50+ trees would be removed to make way for it!

As a last ditch attempt to save the 22 trees in dispute Tree Society representatives met with senior Whitehorse Council officers (Engineering and Environmental Services Dept.) along with Cr Denise Massoud on Friday 15 January 2016 at the Council offices. We reminded them that Council is spending \$200,000 of ratepayer's funds to create the path and 10s of thousands more on tree removal, road closure and other associated costs. The amenity value of the 22 trees we wanted retained was ~ \$130,000 and there would be a considerable cost for any proposed landscape works after works completion.

We reckoned that the 22 trees could be saved with modest modifications in the path width and depth, construction material, application of root damage mitigation strategies and amendments to path location. Many arguments from Council officers and Cr Massoud were put to the Tree Society reps as to why Council could not compromise - none of which held any currency for us.

So, Council refused to give any ground and the project commenced with the removal of over 50 trees in the third week of January 2016. Despite the best efforts of the Tree Society committee, members and friends the battle to save the trees along Middleborough Road was finally lost! The doomed trees were colourfully decorated and signs, crosses and wrappings were the order of the day. On the morning of the mass tree removal a hardy band of angry volunteers put up more protest signs, balloons and streamers to add to the 'wrapping' of the trees and application of crosses and 'RIP' signs placed over the weekend - and took numerous photos.

Thanks to Michael, Mary, Chris, Sally, John, Graeme, Anne, David M, Ann and Anthea for your help and support on behalf of these trees and the Tree Society committee. And thanks also to all who have emailed and texted their support and best wishes for this campaign.

We now need to advocate for a first-class, high-quality indigenous planting replacement program as soon as possible.

In a nutshell Whitehorse City Council (aka 'the Developer') wanted to install a shared path ~ 300 metres in length (aka 'the Development') in a treed location that required the destruction of over 50 trees without (at that stage) any detailed plans of reparation of the natural amenity for this location and with very little community consultation (apart from 'this is what we are doing!' leaflets and small on-site signs).

This is the sort of scenario that Council (and the Tree Society) commonly encounters with greedy, insensitive developers that usually ends up at VCAT. It's a 'do as I say, not as I do!' scenario with Whitehorse Council.

Shame!

Whitehorse Tree Study

Whitehorse Council has engaged planning consultants, Planisphere, to undertake a citywide tree study that examines the existing vegetation controls and options for protecting trees in Whitehorse into the future. The focus of the Study will be on trees and vegetation on private residential property where local vegetation controls do not currently apply, i.e. most of Whitehorse!

Some analysis and evaluation of precincts with existing tree and vegetation controls will also occur. The Study will be completed in June 2016. Throughout the course of the Study, there will be a number of opportunities for stakeholders and community members to have an input. It will include workshops with relevant stakeholders and interested community groups in February 2016, as well as a public exhibition process in April/May 2016, when the wider community will have the opportunity to provide input to the consultants.

The first community workshops on the Whitehorse Tree Study were conducted in early February 2016 and were well attended by the Whitehorse community. Most of the attendees lamented the continued and unrelenting 'moonscaping' of residential blocks in non-protected suburbs with subsequent over-development of the land (e.g. via multi-unit developments or the building of 'McMansions') that precludes any meaningful planting or replacement of canopy trees and other vegetation to soften the landscape.

For further information please contact Vanessa Mogg, Strategic Planner, City of Whitehorse, Tel.: 9262 6180 or email: vanessa.mogg@whitehorse.vic.gov.au.

The Tree Society's First 50 Years History Project

The 50-year history of the Tree Society has slowed because Alice Berry, our editorial consultant, became the proud mother of Tom in late December, so has been busy with more important duties!

We hope to get back on track this month and have the history completed for launching on World Environment Day, Sunday 5 June 2016.

Here is another prophetic Tree Society newsletter article from September 1966:

The earth's 3,000 million people are consuming enough oxygen for 43,000 million people according to the Director of the Biotechnical Academy at Lauffen near Salzburg in Austria. Industrialization accounts for the excess.

On a 600 mile drive, a car uses as much oxygen as a human being needs for a whole year – to burn a ton of coal takes the normal yearly ration of ten persons. Forests and green belts, Nature's dispensers of oxygen, are fast disappearing in industrial regions, where they are most necessary. Although some countries are re-planting trees on a large scale, they are usually far from towns and industrial centres.

Blackburn & District Environment Protection Fund Sponsors the Whitehorse Indigenous Gardens Awards for 2016

Nominations for the Whitehorse Sustainability Awards 2016 closed on 29 February 2016 and award winners will be announced during the Sustainability Awards night held at the Whitehorse Centre on Wednesday 13 April 2016.

The Blackburn and District Environment Protection Fund sponsors the Indigenous Garden Awards, a new award category for this year, with prizes of up to \$300 worth of indigenous plants sourced from local indigenous plant nurseries. All Whitehorse residents whose gardens contain a significant palette of indigenous plants were encouraged to nominate along with community groups, including schools, service and scouts/guides organisations and local businesses.

The Fund is sponsored by the Blackburn & District Tree Preservation Society. Tree Society members can directly support worthwhile projects like this by donating to the Blackburn & District Environment Protection Fund:

- The fund's web-site address is <http://blackburnenviro.wordpress.com/>
- Donations can be made to the fund by:
 - Completing and sending a cheque to the fund at the following address:
BDEPF, PO Box 210, Blackburn, VIC 3130
 - Making an on-line donation at <http://www.givenow.com.au/cause1518>

2 Walsham Road, Blackburn: VCAT over-rides Whitehorse Council and the wishes of the Community and allows for subdivision and removal of 32 trees from the site.

The VCAT Hearing scheduled in November was well attended by local residents, committee members of the BVRG and Tree Society and legal representatives for Whitehorse Council.

The many speakers making presentations opposing this development argued persuasively for a more limited development of the site in keeping with the landscape character of the area and the provisions of the Neighbourhood Residential Zone 1 ('Bush Environment') and Significant Landscape Overlay 2 that apply to the neighbourhood.

However this was all to no avail - the VCAT Order published in February 2016 allows for the developer to subdivide the site into 3 Lots and remove 32 trees (which represents about a third of the total trees on site). Yet another decision that results in the diminution of the Whitehorse tree canopy by the 'death of a thousand cuts'!

Tree Society opposes the granting of a Planning Permit for the construction of a Long Day Childcare Centre at 199 Canterbury Road Blackburn

Tree Society Life Member and former committee member Dianne Tribe managed an extensive community response in opposition to this development at a VCAT Hearing in early February 2016.

Dianne also made a robust submission and persuasive presentation on behalf of the Tree Society.

The Tree Society objected to the removal of mature, significant trees and vegetation from the site and argued that the trees to be retained would be negatively impacted by the overdevelopment of the site. The proposed development and associated non-porous surface areas represented real and continuing threats to the viability of the trees to be retained in addition to those trees the proponent plans to plant on the site.

Other community members opposed the development on a number of grounds including the unsuitability of building a childcare centre in a Neighbourhood Residential Zone 1 ('Bush Environment')/Significant Landscape Overlay 2 locale with associated natural landscape impacts, parking issues, traffic safety issues relating to Canterbury Road, negative effects on the neighbourhood (noise, traffic, general amenity etc.) and negative impacts on the Masons Road Retarding Basin Reserve wildlife corridor.

The VCAT decision is pending.

VCAT Decision supports the Seventh Day Adventist Retirement Village Development

The VCAT Panel decided in favour of the retirement village development in October 2015 with minor caveats. Overall this will mean the destruction of more than 100 trees, 80 of which are indigenous, along with associated remnant vegetation.

The Tree Society committee was critical of the Panel's findings (released in May 2015) in a submission we made in August, for making two major errors in fact, which were:

- The total number of trees on site was not 726 as stated in the VCAT report, but in the range of 630-640 according to a number of arboricultural assessments of the site going back to 2005-6.
- The report, on two occasions, states that 600 trees are contained within the three Landscape Conservation Areas on site when in fact there are 342 trees of which 299 are indigenous and 43 are exotic or native trees. 299 indigenous trees of Very High conservation significance represents barely half the number quoted in the VCAT Order.

The VCAT final report did little to address these critical mistakes that artificially inflate the numbers of trees to be retained.

These inaccuracies reflect very poorly on the veracity of VCAT.

Tree Society Meeting Times

The Tree Society committee meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 2-4 p.m. in February, March, May, July, September and November.

General meetings are scheduled for June and October.

The AGM is held (as always) in November.

The location is Bungalook Nursery in Fulton Road Blackburn South.

Tree Society members and the general public are most welcome to attend all Tree Society meetings.

Tree Society Website and Email Address

Please refer to <http://www.bdtps.wordpress.com> for the latest information on Tree Society activities.

The Tree Society committee can be contacted on <mailto:bdtpsociety@gmail.com> for any tree-related matter within Whitehorse.

BLACKBURN & DISTRICT TREE PRESERVATION SOCIETY INC.

Aims to: • **Promote and improve the natural environment in the City of Whitehorse**

- **Promote an understanding of indigenous plants and the natural environment**
- **Disseminate information to members**

COMMITTEE

Secretary	Ann Clayton	9878 6585
Treasurer	Mary Crouch	9894 3025
Members	Les Smith	9874 2641
	David Berry	9890 7915