



**Item 7.1 Petition Response – Request for removal of Tree, Wordsworth Street, St Kilda**

A Petition containing 7 signatures was received from local residents and presented to a Council Meeting on 17 June 2020.

The Petition states the following: -

*We are petitioning for the removal of the tree at the rear of 83 Spenser Street St. Kilda, on Wordsworth Street.*

*The tree is a semi-mature *Lagunaria patersonii* (Norfolk Island Hibiscus).*

*We are in a unique situation as far as this tree is concerned because our property has 3 street frontages. Our only open usable space is our rear courtyard which is overshadowed by this tree.*

*Our concerns are not just medical but also that we cannot use our courtyard because for most months of the year it is covered in prickly tiny spores that get into our clothes our hair and the soles of our feet. We cannot hang out washing and we cannot leave our outdoor furniture out as the spores get stuck and remain in the material. Our grandson has asthma and we are afraid he could be affected by the spores.*

*I myself have itching associated with clothes that I put on when they have dried outside.*

*The spores are likened by some including your 2 different tree people who came to see us, to asbestos! They have to wear protective suits to trim these pests.*

*We received a call from one of your arborists who told us that the tree is a concern and that he would support our petition for the removal of the tree were the council to come to him for advice.*

*This is an urgent matter for us at this time when because we are in the age group most at risk were we to contract COVID-19, we are restricted from visiting our family and grandchild and the only place we can see them is in our courtyard which is unusable because of the tree.*

**Background**

Council has a process where all tree removal requests involve an inspection from an arborist prior to the formal assessment and decision from a Tree Removal Assessment Panel against our policy positions.

The Tree Removal Assessment Panel has considered this request and determined in accordance with our policy position to retain this specific tree. Our policy only supports the removal of trees where there is no other viable option. The benefits of trees are documented in our Greening Port Phillip strategy available on our website. The preferred course of action is to undertake pruning of the tree to ensure the tree does not overhang into the private property and limit the tree material falling into the courtyard during shedding season.

A community member can seek a review of the decision of the panel by the Service Manager or submit a petition for a Council determination, this petition is considered that appeal process.

There are approximately 1000 established *Lagunaria patersonii*, Norfolk Island Hibiscus across the City of Port Phillip, whilst this species of tree is no longer used as part of our



planting palette for greening projects anymore. The remaining trees contribute to City of Port Phillip's diverse range of trees and are noted for ongoing management within the strategy. While there is some suggestion this species can cause allergic reactions and skin irritation, there is no literature showing the trees are the direct cause of asthma symptoms to which is referred in this petition. If scientific evidence was developed, the City of Port Phillip would review its policy position relating to this particular tree species.

Council can determine to remove a tree if it feels it is appropriate to do so based on public safety. In doing so precedence for future removal requests of this species should be considered.

#### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

- Thanks the community for their petition and accepts this as an appeal of the Tree Removal Assessment Panel determination.
- Denies the request for tree removal consistent with our Greening Port Phillip Strategy.
- Endorses the pruning of the tree to limit the impact of tree material falling into the private property.

**TRIM FILE NO:** F20/1

**ATTACHMENTS** Nil