

ATTACHMENTS

Supporting information for application to clear dead and dying Peppermint Trees from the corner of Queen and Albert Street Busselton.

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE CLEARING APPLICATION

Condition of the trees within the grounds of St. Mary's has been a concern for many years. In 2010 a replanting program was initiated to provide for succession of the older trees as they senesced.

In 2018 the trees at the front of St. Mary's Family Centre were dropping limbs in St. Mary's Carpark so a tree condition assessment was undertaken. At the time 3 trees were recommended for removal and four on the corner were recommended for thinning and removal of dead wood of overhanging limbs. The City became involved at this stage as some of the trees were on the road verge and some within the St. Mary's car park.

In 2019 the City had an independent structural assessment undertaken and this determined that all the trees could be retained a bit longer by pruning and removal of dead wood of overhanging limbs to reduce load on the trees and that the trees be monitored on a regular basis.

In 2021 it was noted the tree canopies were now getting very thin. A follow up tree assessment was undertaken (by an independent arborist) and recommendations made that five of the trees at the front of St. Marys Family Centre be removed. In addition to this a QTRA assessment of three of the trees that are located on the road verge was undertaken by City staff. The risk assessment identified that all of the trees on the City Road verge were considered to be high risk to people using the footpath underneath the trees and therefore should be removed.

As the trees on the boundary are old and likely have tree hollows the potential for Western Ringtail Possum using the trees is high and therefore the City engaged a fauna consultant to survey the trees and report on how this matter may be managed. The Fauna report is included as an attachment to this application.

The City and St. Mary's Parish Busselton will plant advanced trees to replace trees that are removed from the south side of the crossover to St. Mary's carpark on Queen Street. They will be planted at spacings that are appropriate for the amount of room in the verge and their canopies are expected to interconnect within 4-6 years. Removal of these trees will not significantly reduce the amount of canopy currently available to the possums as three of the trees are dead and one with very little leaf remaining. It is likely the possums are browsing leaves from other healthy trees nearby. If recommended, nesting boxes could be installed to provide alternative nesting areas while the new trees establish. The City will act on the advice of the fauna consultant to mitigate impacts to WRP. Preliminary WRP survey report by Greg Harewood attached.

The City has a Clearing Permit - **CPS8193/1**, obtained for road improvements into Busselton, which includes the area of trees on the corner of Queen and Albert Streets, which is valid to 28 July 2024. The approximate approval area is shown on the map below. As this area is required for road upgrades the City cannot replant trees in this location as the trees will interfere with sight lines on the corner. It is intended that the area remaining within the future road reserve and perhaps within the carpark of St. Mary's Family Centre will be revegetated with low shrubs i.e. <1m in

height. The vegetation planted here will be dense so that if WRP want to move between trees on the verge either side of the corner they can do so in relative safety under the shrubs.

Advice sought prior to applying

The City enquired with DWER Vegetation Protection Branch by phone regarding the need to apply and what information to supply with the application. DWER advised that a clearing permit would be required and to include a WRP survey and Management Plan and QTRA report to support the application.

The City met onsite with Ben Lullfitz, District Wildlife Officer, DBCA, to discuss the proposal and seek guidance on an acceptable way forward, particularly given the trees form habitat for the Critically Endangered Western Ringtail Possum. The DBCA response is included as an attachment with this application. A Section 40 authorisation may be required, however, a fauna spotter will be required to be onsite when the trees are removed. As indicated above a WRP survey and report has been prepared by a consulting zoologist and is submitted with the Clearing Permit application.