

Mr David Powell
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2008-04-14

Dear Mr Powell,

Fees for Applications to Remove or Prune Native Vegetation

Beaumaris Conservation Society Inc. is concerned that the existence and imposition of application fees for Bayside City Council's approval of residents' proposals to remove or prune native vegetation on their private property, including vegetation indigenous to Beaumaris or Black Rock, is an unnecessary provision in relation to the protection of such vegetation, as the removal or pruning of such vegetation would remain an offence, and would continue to attract a prescribed maximum penalty, even if such fees were no longer charged.

The fees in question are the flat \$90.00 charged for [applications](#) in relation to [Schedule 3](#) of the Vegetation Protection Overlay in the Bayside Planning Scheme, and the minimum of \$60.00 for pruning, and \$120.00 for removal, charged for [applications](#) in relation to Bayside City Council's [Local Law No. 2](#) "Environment".

BCS Inc. considers that the real deterrent to unjustifiable removal or pruning of native vegetation is not the above fees, but the fact that it is unlawful to remove or prune such vegetation without Council approval, and that a conviction for offending, and the suffering of a financial penalty applies in the case of unauthorized removal or pruning. BCS Inc. notes that fees could still apply to declared vexatious or *non-bona-fide* applicants.

In cases where Bayside City Council decides that removal or pruning is justified, it is particularly inequitable that the owners of the vegetation, who wish to remove or prune it, find that the Council forces them to pay a fee to remove or prune plants for which no reason against removal or pruning exists.

There are obviously administrative costs associated with operating these controls, but it is the Council that has decided to operate the controls for the overall benefit of the municipality's environment, so it would appear to be proper for the Council to fund the system on behalf of the whole community rather than singling out property owners that already incur maintenance costs and forego some development opportunities by their possession of the native vegetation that Council correctly judges to be of benefit to the whole community.

The existence of the vegetation controls is an acknowledgement that the owners of the vegetation and its habitat provide a value to the community even though the community has not contributed to that value. It is inequitable that the owners are also required to pay for the administrative costs as well as the costs of retaining and managing their vegetation. Council should place more emphasis on encouraging indigenous planting.

The long term future of Beaumaris as a suburb with a high concentration of indigenous vegetation growing on private property is made less certain if property owners are made to feel that planting of native vegetation or large species of tree is more likely to see them faced with future charges than if they planted exotic vegetation or smaller species of tree. That feeling is soundly based given the present existence of such discriminatory fees, but it would no longer be a factor in residents' future planting decisions if such fees were dispensed with.

BCS Inc. asks Council to remove fees for the above applications for the reasons stated above.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Morris
Secretary
Beaumaris Conservation Society Inc.