

23 November 2011

Mr A Robb
Chief Executive Officer
Bayside City Council
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Dear Mr Robb,

Re: Bayside Tree Strategy and Street and Park Tree Management Policy

Following the decision by Council (Ordinary Council Meeting, 11 October 2011) that the above be released for public comment, Beaumaris Conservation Society Inc. (BCS Inc.) submits the following for consideration.

1. Bayside Tree Strategy ('the Strategy')

BCS Inc. is in general agreement with issues analysis, vision and objectives of the Strategy but is concerned that unless improvements are made to the Bayside Community Plant Nursery in the form of increased space and resources, the stated purpose of the Strategy as '*a framework of actions to ensure that future public and private spaces within Bayside are well treed*' will be increasingly difficult to achieve.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Bayside Community Plant Nursery receive additional funding for expansion to ensure a plentiful supply of indigenous flora to meet Council, Commercial and Private demand throughout the year to ensure that Strategic Plan objectives are fully met.

2. Bayside Street and Park Tree Management Policy ('the Policy')

Overall, the Policy is a positive tool to guide decision-making concerning species selection, planting, pruning and removal of street and park trees in Bayside. There are aspects which require some attention based on the effect of the application of it in Beaumaris:

2.1 Objective 1 - Tree Maintenance Service Levels

Although the Policy states that pruning of trees is to be kept to a minimum, recent street tree pruning in Beaumaris has shown that this is not always the case.

Excessive zeal by contractors (or a misinterpretation of Council Policy) has resulted in an unnatural uniformity of appearance of trees in some instances and consequent damage to the traditional sense of character and identity of the Beaumaris area. Insisting upon removal of limbs and foliage of nature strip trees within 2.5 metres of ground level has left many trees resembling, to quote residents, "sticks with green tops" or "light poles". When queried by residents concerning the treatment of trees in front of their properties, contractors cited as their reason for such pruning the need to comply with *Bayside Tree Maintenance Program* requirements.

There is no mention of trees grown on nature strips in that Program, probably because they would normally present no similar hazards to areas that are included viz.,

(tree canopy clearance requirements in the City of Bayside are -

Footpaths - 2.5 metres to lowest foliage or limb

Driveways - 3.0 metres to lowest foliage or limb

Roadways - 3.5 metres at kerb, 4.5 metres over road to lowest foliage or limb').

RECOMMENDATION: Noting that, according to the Policy, *'every pruning cut causes damage to the tree and can make the tree more vulnerable to limb failure'*, and that it is unnatural to expect trees to comply with a perfect tree mould regardless of species, minimum tree canopy clearance requirements be reinforced to Council contractors prior to the commencement of pruning programs and that nature strip trees are not pruned unless overhanging footpaths, driveways or roadways to lower than prescribed heights or they affect visibility for motorists (whether this would include vehicles exiting from driveways as apparently claimed by contractors is very debatable).

2.2 Objective 2 - Protection of Trees

The Policy provides adequate safeguards against tree damage. BCS Inc. has no comment unless changes are considered necessary, for which a right to make comment is reserved.

RECOMMENDATION: Maintain controls, enforcement and education protocols as shown in the Policy to at least current levels.

2.3 Objective 3 - Service Levels for the Removal of Trees

The deference to private developers that trees will be removed if affected by that development (*dot point 6*) is unacceptable. In a recent VCAT decision ([Medeira vs Bayside City Council 25 May 2010](#)) it was determined that

'proposed developments can, and should, given the requirements of VPO3, take the existence of trees into account'.

To have the reverse view (deference towards development) enshrined in the Policy is wrong.

RECOMMENDATION: That dot point 6 be deleted from the Policy or reworded to the effect that private developers must ensure that trees in streets or parks adjoining, adjacent to or abutting such development are not adversely affected by it (although this may already be covered by Objective 2).

Further, the possible wholesale removal of a street of trees raises concerns about the negative impact on neighbourhood character, the environment and indigenous fauna.

RECOMMENDATION: Except in emergency situations, staged rather than wholesale removal of a street of trees be adopted. Further, that such removal be implemented, wherever possible, during the planting season, in order that replacement planting may occur without undue delay.

Also, the Policy is silent on the question of tree stump removal, which has been found not to occur at all or occurs a significant time after tree removal. Apart from trip hazards and regrowth possibilities, the sight of a stump where perhaps a majestic eucalypt once stood can be depressing. The sooner they are removed the better.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Policy require tree stump removal within a set period (e.g.14 days) after tree removal.

It has been noted that there is often a significant time lag between tree removal and replanting - in many cases replanting does not occur at all.

RECOMMENDATION: That, except in emergency situations, tree removals are scheduled during the replanting period in order that replacement trees can be planted without undue delay. (We believe that such a system has been adopted in the City of Kingston)

2.4 Objective 4 - Selection of Planting Sites and Species

An inadequate percentage of indigenous species (60%) is current Policy for VPO3 areas like Beaumaris despite a key objective of VPO3 being to:

"promote the regeneration and replanting of indigenous species in the Beaumaris and Black Rock areas"

To consider that only a little over half of tree species planted are to be indigenous is adequate compliance with this Objective, and makes a mockery of it.

With the push for medium density housing and building styles which afford little open space for the planting of canopy trees, the presence of indigenous vegetation in streets and parks has become of greater significance and importance to ensure that the distinctive treed nature of Beaumaris is, at least to the greatest extent possible, maintained. Needless to say, indigenous species are best suited to local climate and soil type and require less watering and fertilisation than non-indigenous species - a cost saving to ratepayers is an added benefit. Further, indigenous fauna are best served by indigenous habitat.

Also, it has been noted that park and nature strip tree planting has been limited to a small number of indigenous species in recent years. There are possibly 16 tree and at least 5 large shrub species that are [indigenous to Beaumaris](#). A wide choice, which does not seem to have been taken advantage of previously.

RECOMMENDATION: That trees planted in streets and parks in VPO3 areas be 100% indigenous to those areas unless it can be shown that extenuating circumstances apply, and that the choice of species be widened to help preserve and extend the natural informal character of the Beaumaris Treescape, and provide best habitat for local fauna.

2.5 Objective 5 - Removal of Trees Affected by Development

BCS Inc. is unable to support the inclusion of tree removal criteria cited in Objective 5 as it panders to the private development sector rather than considering the preservation of street and park trees as the primary objective. A clear contradiction of the leading statement of the objective:

"Bayside requires new developments to consider council owned or managed trees and adjust designs accordingly"

RECOMMENDATION: Delete Objective 5 wording after first sentence, or delete Objective 5 Altogether, as the intent is covered by Objective 2.

In conclusion, it is noted that annual monitoring, evaluation and review of the Policy is limited to the Environmental Sustainability and Open Space Department of Council. A more transparent system could be adopted so that residents could add input and gain more of a sense of

ownership of the process. A brief report detailing number and type of tree species and planting or removal location could be included.

The opportunity to make comment on the Bayside Tree Strategy and the Street and Park Tree Management Policy is much appreciated. BCS Inc. would be pleased to provide further information or explanation to justify the recommendations included in this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Morris
President
Beumaris Conservation Society Inc.

cc. Mayor and Councillors