

19.2 NOTICE OF MOTION - TREE AND VEGETATION PRESERVATION APPLICATIONS

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: DEBRA JUST – GENERAL MANAGER

AUTHOR: DEBRA JUST – GENERAL MANAGER

MEETING DATE: 13 MARCH 2017

Purpose of Report

Councillor Coppock has indicated his intention to move the following Notice of Motion.

Motion

That the General Manager investigate notification and reporting processes associated with applications for tree removal under Council's Tree and Vegetation Preservation controls and report back to Council.

Background

It came to my attention that a significant gum tree was removed from a nearby property. I had not been notified and enquiries of my neighbours also highlighted that they had not been notified. In researching through Council's On-line Application Tracking portal I found that an application for removal of the tree had been approved but with no reasons given for the approval.

I consider it appropriate that the community be advised when significant trees in their area are being removed and the reasons why Council has approved of such tree removal.

General Manager's Comments

On 23 May 2016 Council considered a previous Notice of Motion and resolved to initiate a review of the vegetation controls. That motion read:

That Council Officers initiate a review of Council's various vegetation controls, guidelines, planning controls, management practices and publications to develop a single integrated approach to vegetation covering matters such as:

1. *Managing risks associated with trees in public parks and on private land.*
2. *Addressing situations where trees may have to be removed and replaced with more suitable new plantings.*
3. *Responding to changing weather patterns and related issues such as drought, increasingly severe storm events and urban heat island effect.*
4. *Developing guidelines to:*
 - *encourage the use of indigenous planting that are better suited to the local climate and soil conditions;*
 - *encourage a range of plantings from ground covers to large trees and thereby provide habitat for a range of birds and other species;*
 - *discourage the use of species that are not suited to certain situations;*
 - *discourage the use of invasive species.*
5. *Reviewing the list of unsuitable species that are exempt from the provisions of Tree Controls.*

Council Officers are currently reviewing the processes and procedures undertaken in the assessment and determination of applications for removal of trees and vegetation. Phase 1 of the review, which includes modifications to administration processes is to be completed and training sessions for assessing officers provided by the end of March.

A second phase focussing on quality and consistency of assessment and determination has commenced and is proposed to be completed by the end of June 2017. This second phase will include reviewing:

- Notification of applications;
- Assessment procedures and reporting including reasons for determination; and
- Information provided on Council's Website through On-line Application Tracking.

The objectives in undertaking the review are to ensure:

- Legislative requirements are appropriately addressed;
- Applications are assessed in a consistent manner;
- Public are appropriately informed and consulted; and
- Transparency in Council's decision making processes.

The Notice of Motion is consistent with the work currently being undertaken by staff.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council consider the Notice of Motion from Councillor Coppock.

