

### 13. THOMSON PARK - TREE REPLACEMENT

The Parks Manager sought approval to remove a number of trees from the shelter belt in Thomson Park and to undertake replacement plantings and associated landscape works in accordance with a concept landscape plan prepared for the playground area.

In his report to the Committee the Parks Manager outlined the consultation process which had taken place with the local community, together with the views of a number of local residents who were opposed to the removal of certain trees in the vicinity of the children's playground.

The Parks Manager identified the following as being the reasons for seeking approval to replant the old conifer shelter belts in Thomson Park:

- The trees are even aged, over-mature therefore the incidence of death, risk of breakage and wind-throw is higher than in younger, mixed aged stands and will naturally increase with age.
- There is a need to start replacing the old trees with new stock to provide for the future.
- The trees shade the playground badly, particularly during the winter months, making it cold, dark and generally discouraging use.
- The functional value of the conifers as a windbreak is decreasing, as the trunks of most of the trees are either clear or clad in dead branches up to three quarters of the height of the trees.
- Owing to progressive die back of the lower branches and the need to prune back healthy branches for safety reasons, much of the natural attractive crown form of the trees has been lost and they no longer mark an attractive contribution to the landscape of the park.
- The Rawhiti Park Management Plan adopted by the Council in 1988 identifies the need for the replacement of the older coniferous trees.

The Parks Manager sought approval to undertake the following works in autumn and winter 2000:

- **Group 1**  
Retain the trees in group one at this stage, except for the trees at the southern-most end, which will be felled to achieve a distance of 25 metres from the Marine Parade properties for safety reasons.
- **Group 2**  
Fell all of the trees in this group and carry out replacement planting and landscape works in accordance with the landscape plans.

- **Group 3**  
Fell all of the trees adjacent to the Bowhill Road properties except for those in the north east corner in the vicinity of the toilet block and carry out replacement planting.
- **Group 4**  
Retain all trees and carry out pruning for branch end weight reduction over whole playground area in vicinity of trees.
- **Group 5**  
Retain the whole group of trees except for two dead/dying macrocarpas. Prune to reduce end weight on lengthy branches and remove dead branches.
- **Group 6**  
Retain the whole group of trees and carry out pruning to reduce end weight on lengthy branches and remove dead branches.
- **Group 7**  
Retain whole group of trees and carry out any necessary pruning as above.

The Parks Manager's report was before the Burwood/Pegasus Community Board at its meeting on 27 March 2000. At that meeting the Board heard representations from two local residents who sought the retention of as many trees as possible. The deputation emphasised the immense aesthetic value of the trees which the community view as an intrinsic feature of the landscape of the whole foreshore. The deputation also stressed the intensity of the community's feelings for the retention of these trees.

After considering the staff report and the deputation's submissions, the Board decided to recommend to the Parks and Recreation Committee:

1. That the above proposed actions for groups 1 and 3 to 7 be endorsed, and that the group 3 trees be re-evaluated with a view to protecting all young macrocarpa trees.
2. That only the pine trees in group 2 be felled, with an appropriate maintenance regime being undertaken for the macrocarpa trees.
3. That replacement planting be undertaken without using poplars and eucalyptus trees, with attention being given to irrigation and maintenance.
4. That the management plan for Rawhiti Domain and Thomson Park be revised.
5. That the Board, Parks staff and residents identify trees that could be included in the City Plan as notable trees.

The Committee noted that the main difference between the Board recommendation and the staff recommendation related to the proposal for the group 3 trees, with the Board seeking the retention of the existing macrocarpa trees and the staff recommending their removal. The Board supported the removal of the pine trees in this section of the park. Note: Group 3 is the area adjacent to the children's playground on the Marine Parade boundary of the park.

After considering both viewpoints, the Committee concluded that the revised landscape plan represented a workable compromise between the original proposal put forward by the Parks Unit in 1999 and the approach advocated by the Community Board and the group of concerned residents. The Committee's decision was guided by the advice of two reputable arborists that removal of the group 3 trees was essential.

The Council Arborist advised that, based on past experience with replacement plantings in Thomson Park, the new trees would not flourish if the existing macrocarpa trees were retained. An assurance was given that a high quality planting and maintenance regime would be put in place to ensure the new plantings were given the best possible start.

The Committee did, however, support the representations relating to the replacement planting and the species of trees to be used and has requested the Parks Manager to arrange for the final planting plan to be referred to the community for comment.

The Committee **resolved**:

1. That the concept felling and landscape plan, including the replacement planting operations for Thomson Park proposed in the Parks Manager's report be endorsed.
2. That the final planting plan be referred to the local community for comment.