

6. PARKHAM RESERVE - EUCALYPTUS TREES

Officer responsible Parks Manager	Author Rod Whearty
Corporate Plan Output: Local Parks Tree Maintenance	

The purpose of this report is to submit a request from an adjoining property owner for the removal of four Eucalyptus trees from Parkham Reserve.

BACKGROUND

Parkham Reserve, which contains a stand of mature Eucalyptus, was vested in the Council following the subdivision of the Hide Family Estate in 1990. The large trees were the primary reason this particular piece of land was taken as reserve. Another contributing factor was the Eucalyptus were so large that it would have been virtually impossible to retain them in a subdivision where the developed sections were averaging only 650 square metres.

Given the significance of the trees, the Council negotiated and obtained additional reserve land around the trees for the purpose of creating an even greater distance between the Eucalyptus and the proposed residential properties. However, since 22 Parkham Drive has been developed, the residents of that property have complained regularly about litter from the Eucalyptus being deposited on their land and buildings. Of particular concern has been the seasonal deposits of flower parts which drift onto the property during the mid summer months. Although several of the gums have been felled over the past few years for tree health and safety reasons and the remaining trees pruned on several occasions to alleviate the problem, the complaints from the residents of No. 22 have continued.

THE TREES

All four remaining Eucalyptus are in a sound and healthy condition although two lean towards Mr Jack's property and two in the opposite direction. However, this is due to the trees growing out towards the light and not root instability. The combined group effect of these large trees makes a significant contribution to the landscape of the reserve and the neighbourhood.

The trunks of the Eucalyptus are centred at distances of 11.5 metres, 14.8 metres and 15.2 metres (two trees) from Mr Jack's boundary. The crowns of the trees do not encroach over the boundary terminating at least 4.5 metres inside the park side. This clearance has been achieved by past felling and pruning. Apart from periodic pruning to maintain the above clearance, there is little by way of further pruning that can be carried out without spoiling the existing form and character of the trees.

FLOWER LITTER PROBLEM

The main problem caused to Mr Jack's property is the deposits of flower parts which drift onto the property during the mid summer months. These fall over the whole property covering the ground and the roofs of the buildings. On roof tops the flowers tend to collect in acute roof angles and guttering causing water blockages. The flowers are also blown into the house when windows are open and taken in the soles of shoes. This particular problem occurs over period of approximately two months.

DISCUSSION

The Parks Unit receives many complaints of a similar nature when litter from trees in parks and streets fall on private properties. It has always been our policy to alleviate these problems as far as practicable and within the bounds of maintaining the trees concerned in an aesthetically pleasing and healthy condition. However, as ‘managers’ of the public “green estate” we also have to have regard for the landscape and general amenity values provided by significant trees in our parks and streets. Where these values are likely to be seriously diminished in order to provide a total debris free solution to the problems of the adjacent residents, we believe there is an obligation to the wider public and community to decline to carry out further work when this stage is reached. We believe we have reached this stage with the Eucalyptus on Parkham Reserve.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

As indicated above, no further pruning can be carried out to address the residents’ concerns, other than felling the trees. Given this scenario the Parks Unit recently consulted local residents to determine their views on the removal option.

The results were:

- 76 Retain the trees
- 53 Remove the trees
- 7 No preference either way

A significant number of the residents returning the questionnaire indicating their preferred option also attached a substantial number of written comments (separately circulated) supporting their particular view and expressing the significance of these particular trees to the local community.

CONCLUSION

The Parks Unit’s past position and our resistance to remove any healthy trees is well justified given the current level of feedback from the local community and the value they place on these particular trees.

However, in acknowledging the residents’ concerns, the Parks Unit is prepared to regularly remove recurring shoot growth from the lower portion of the trees and install a plastic protective mesh over the spouting on the resident’s house to prevent leaves and flower parts blocking the spouting.

The trees in question are mature specimens and the extent and size of their crowns should not increase significantly from this point on. The Parks Unit believes this is a reasonable compromise to a situation where the trees were clearly well-established prior to the development of the properties. Accordingly, the Parks Unit recommends that the trees be retained and that the offer to install mesh over the spouting at the Council’s cost be extended to the resident.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the existing eucalyptus trees in Parkham Reserve be retained while they remain in a healthy and stable condition.
 2. That protective mesh be installed on the residents spouting at the Council's cost if the resident wishes to take up the offer.

The above report was before the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board at its meeting on 30 May 2000. The Board decided to refer the report to this Committee with the recommendation that the Parks Manager's recommendation be adopted.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.