

**Agenda Item 12.11 ‘On site display of approved permit to prune/remove/transplant trees’**

I am writing to support the proposal discussed in this agenda item, that residents seeking tree work be required to display a copy of their Vegetation Management Application (TVPA) **approval** at the front of their property prior to the commencement of any tree removal/pruning/transplant work and for some period after the work has been completed.

**Aim of Permit Display**

The aim of the permit display is to:

- i) inform residents about tree work approvals and allow them an opportunity to seek further information from Council; and
- ii) empower them to take action if illegal tree work is detected. The lack of a permit would flag that the work is being undertaken illegally and that Council should be immediately notified.

**Residents forced to seek information while tree work underway**

I would like to explain my reasons for supporting this resolution from the point of view of the many residents who have spoken to me over the years about wanting to protect trees in Willoughby. These are people who have encountered tree removals underway and have been at a loss to know whether the work has been sanctioned by Council or not. Council does not have the resources to detect every illegal tree removal in Willoughby LGA. It should be making it easier for residents to flag an illegal tree removal and thus to support Council’s efforts to maintain and grow our tree canopy.

The onus is currently on the resident witnessing a tree being cut down to talk with their neighbour or to the tree-loppers while the work is underway (usually over the whine of the chain-saw) to try to determine whether this is legal or illegal work. This can be an intimidating and/or dangerous process.

The only other option the concerned resident has is to call Council for advice. This can take some time (particularly if they are directed to the e-planning portal which has a page of disclaimer text to get through before you can even access the site). While they are running this information down, the tree is also usually coming down.

**No public advice about planned tree works**

Currently neighbours and the community are not publicly advised that a tree works approval is being sought or has been approved. It is true that TVPA applications are being sent to

Council and that, in time, they are being uploaded to the website. However, unless you happen to know about and subscribe to '[Planning Alerts](#)' (which is operated on a voluntary basis by the OpenAustralia Foundation Project) you will receive no notice that this tree work is being sought near you. Very few people in the community know that TVPAs can be viewed on the eplanning portal on Council's website; even fewer would be checking it with enough regularity to pick up applications in their own street.

### **Tree permit display is simple and cost effective**

The request that a permit be displayed on the fence or perimeter of the site for approved tree works is a simple and cost-effective measure to help the community safely determine whether tree work is being carried out legally or illegally. This is already required in relation to Development Applications. It could be introduced by adding suitable wording to the current TVPA form asking that the permit be displayed for a certain period. The permit could be weather-proofed by lamination or by sealing it inside a plastic bag. The displayed permit could also provide a phone number at Council where residents could seek further information and/or a Qcode which would take them to the Trees section of Council's website and more information.

### **Introduce with education program**

Any change will need to be accompanied by an education program covering the importance of our tree canopy; the unsustainable rate at which trees are being removed from private gardens; the reasons for the permit system; and links to a contact person and where more information can be sought online.

I am available to provide further detail in regard to my support for this proposal via the contact details provided below.

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Willoughby Environmental Citizen of the Year 2023

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