

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

*18 October, 2016*

### **Stop the chainsaws!**

It is understood that approximately 100 healthy trees are to be felled on the site of the [Beaumaris Secondary College](#), turning what was once an area of enormous natural beauty into a blight on the landscape.

From next Monday 24 October the sound of chainsaws will announce the destruction of the majority of the trees on the current site.

And all this ... without any community consultation and conveniently coinciding with council elections, ensuring no councillors will step in and stop the devastation.

Following on the felling of over 85 trees on the neighbouring Beaumaris RSL site, the latest news has left the community and environmental groups reeling, and angry.

According to long-time local resident and President of the Beaumaris Conservation Society, Greg Mier, while the Vic Department of Education has released a plan of the site, it has been careful not to provide any detail about how many, or where, trees will be removed from the site.

“Even a last minute Vic School Building Authority information session for myself and other environmental groups on Friday left none of us any the wiser. In fact all requests for an arborist report and the landscape design plan were flatly refused.”

Detail of the approximate number of trees to be ripped down was leaked this past weekend when a message on the Bayside Community Hub Facebook from a Beaumaris resident (who was privy to more detailed site plans) indicated that vast numbers of trees - potentially 100 - were to be removed from the site.

These will include mature trees along the boundaries of the school, the bulk of which are well away from the actual footprint of the new school buildings. In fact these trees were shown on the Vic Education Department’s most recent site plans as being ‘retained’.

It is understood that an annual arborist’s report has provided the trees with a clean bill of health, bar one tree which has since been removed.

“Tellingly, even the recent gale force winds experienced in Melbourne had no effect whatsoever on the trees,” says Mr Mier.

It is also understood that the natural habitat of the rare Golden Whistler which nests in trees along the western corridor of the site will be destroyed if the trees are uprooted.

Home-owners in close proximity with Beaumaris Secondary College were 'informed' yesterday via a letter-drop of 'impending works' on the site but with scant mention of the removal of many trees.

A ropable Mr Mier says that with all the talk about community engagement, he can't understand why the haste to get the chainsaws into action and the continued refusal to provide detailed plans, given that actual construction will not commence until January 2018 at the earliest.

"We all want the school, but what the community is entitled to expect is transparency and effective community engagement on all aspects of the project. It is the local community that has supported this new school, and who will be affected by the removal of the trees.

"If the trees go we'll have to live with this ugliness for years come."

Former Bayside City councillor, Heather Stewart, says while most community members agree that the redevelopment of the school is a wonderful community benefit, the project 'does not need to turn into a trees-versus-redevelopment debate'.

"The Education Department could have brought the community along with it by releasing plans showing which trees need to be removed and why. They could have at the same time shown a well-developed replanting plan that would contribute a positive benefit to the school site."

She says it is understood that in one area on the site, succulents - rather than local indigenous flora - will be planted.

Local Balcombe Rd resident Shelley Durance has watched with despair as the stretch along Balcombe Rd near the school site has become denuded of beautiful mature trees to make way for apartments currently being built and housing blocks with minimal gardens.

"To lose mature trees along the boundary of the school site is a travesty and will alter the whole look of the area. The school trees are well loved by the locals and are part of the 'green lungs' of Beaumaris.

"To remove these trees will cost the Vic School Building Authority more money than leaving them there for the school and whole community to enjoy."

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