WHITSUNDAY CONSERVATION COUNCIL
Caring for the future is in our nature

email: admin@whitsundayconservation.org.au
www.whitsundayconservation.org.au
Contact: Secretary 0407 207 441

MEDIA RELEASE: 27 August 2023

UNCONTROLLED URBAN TREE CLEARING HAS TO STOP!

Worried residents of Reef Court Cannonvale contacted Whitsunday Conservation Council (WCC) after discovering that a development plan existing on land directly behind their properties had been changed without any consultation with them. The change would remove all the trees along a section of Waite Creek, making this natural creek, a lined drain.

Photo: small section of a much larger area under threat of clear felling along the Waite Creek Cannonvale

Mature blue gums containing habitat hollows used by nesting birds and rainforest tree species are all under threat of removal.

Residents only became aware of this plan after investigating relevant proceedings in the Planning and Environment Court which included plans for a separate drain to be built on the opposite side of the creek on Whitsunday Regional Council (WRC) land and that the creek itself would not be used as a drain or modified.

This change to the plan, permitted by WRC, is an insult to our many community members, who over the last 20 years, have been left to rehabilitate several other denuded urban creeks, using grants and volunteer labour to gradually restore the protective lining of vegetation that has been removed in the past.

This is no easy task, and perfect re-creation of a natural habitat is never possible. Tree hollows, for example, will not form for at least 80 years, so the breeding habitat for native birds & animals will not return just because a few trees were planted in a nearby park. Cockatoos have been seen recently using the hollow *(opposite)* in a reportedly +200yo blue-gum on Waite Creek.

This ancient tree is due to be felled and is one of two mature bluegums (Eucalptus tereticornis) on Waite Creek with valuable nesting hollows. Both destined to be turned into woodchips.

Creeks and the vegetation that line them are natural filters that protect inshore water quality from the sediment, nutrients, chemicals and rubbish that comes from our urban areas. Vegetation along creeks provide wildlife corridors where they can safely move from fragmented patches of habitat to breed and find food.

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continues;

Without the ability to move freely, isolated wildlife gradually die out. WRC is way behind the times if it believes that turning our natural, vegetated creeks into unvegetated drains is an acceptable solution for a 'Reef Guardian Council'. This solution might save some money for council and/or developers, but at what cost to residents, the Great Barrier Reef, and the environment we live in?

Unfortunately, the clear felling of Waite Creek Cannonvale is only one of the many instances in our community which have already taken place or are planned. Residents are kept in the dark until it is too late and the damage done. Attempts to actively stop tree felling are met with threats to call the police and WRC hide behind landowners and developers' right to clear anything on their property.

This has to change!

As development and climate change gather pace, for the sake of the liveability of our suburbs and residential acreages and to maintain the biodiversity and beauty that the Whitsundays is known for; the State Government and WRC need to instigate urgent legislation and plans to protect these areas and maintain our beneficial green canopy, creek side and beachfront vegetation, and habitat corridors.

We cannot afford to lose anymore green canopy in our urban areas and adjacent residential acreages.

Especially not this +200-year-old, magnificent blue gum on Waite Creek.

Jacquie Sheils
President

For further information:
Contact: Secretary Faye Chapman
0407 207 441

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