

Ms Julie Hassan Gray,
Principal Property Officer, Property Services
Asset Services Directorate
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

27 November 2023

Email to: julie.hassangray@qfes.qld.gov.au; matthew.savage@qfes.qld.gov.au

**RE: REMOVAL of MATURE TREES - PROPOSED QFES FACILITY
Cnr MACARTHUR DRIVE & SHUTE HARBOUR ROAD, CANNONVALE**

Dear Ms Hassan Gray and Mr Savage,

Whitsunday Conservation Council (WCC) promotes the protection of “urban green canopy” including mature trees which are not only beneficial for their ability to negate rising temperatures, but which also provide food, shelter and nesting habitats for many native birds and animals.

We cannot begin to express our disgust that QFES, having given concerned residents the impression that the large gum tree close to the junction of McArthur Drive and Shute Harbour Road would be retained on the new Fire Station site, then felled it without even notifying residents that work was about to begin.

Notification is an integral part of the Ministerial Infrastructure Designation (MID) for this site – a document which QFES has tried its best to keep hidden from local residents, even those who took part in the initial consultation. Even if the community had been shown this document, we still would have reasonably assumed that the tree was to be retained – it is clearly visible in the artists impression of the finished project!



The argument made by QFES, that these few trees are unimportant in the general scheme of things, is ridiculous. All of the few remaining mature trees in an urban area are important to the environment, and this particular tree, with its resident colony of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, was especially so because residents liked having those birds in that tree to look at and enjoy. The tree was strong and

healthy and just of an age at which it was likely to develop hollows, thus making it even more important for the birds. QFES’s argument that it was unimportant because it had no hollows shows just how little store can be set by flora and fauna surveys undertaken on behalf of the proponent.

QFES apparently plans to revegetate the site and replant trees. Why? It can take up to 80 years for a tree to become mature, provide a shade canopy and acquire suitable nesting hollows. With a little thought and effort, the felling of this type of mature tree, which was located so close to the boundary of your site, could easily have been avoided and its presence incorporated into your design for the new facility. That would have been of benefit to the community and the environment, as well as to the now rather sullied reputation of QFES.

The real reason for the removal of the tree in the SW corner of the QFES block is now abundantly clear!

Once the trees had been butchered, the stumps were dug up, the contractor's TEMPORARY site office was placed in that corner of the block. So now we have a Portaloo right on top of where our glorious old tree used to be.

Shame on you QFES - you have no environmental credibility at all.

Unfortunately, our community is only made aware of these dreadful incidents as they occur, the damage is already done and irreversible. Consultation with the community is not a strong suit of Qld State Government Departments as a whole, but this was a particularly bad case of obfuscation on the part of QFES. Local residents were not kept in the loop, notification requirements in the MID were not followed and even the local council was not kept informed of changes to the plans for the site.

The MID for the site at 2-6 Banksia Court, Cannonvale states that there are no State or local regulations to protect the old trees on the site. That is unfortunately true – something which WCC is actively campaigning to change at a local level. WCC believes, however that a State Government Department should aspire to something better than simply not breaking any laws when it comes to environmental management and best practice.



Before and After.

A portable toilet in exchange for a beautiful old gum tree, which was home to a colony of Black Cockatoos. A fair exchange?



WCC asks whether, in the future, QFES will reconsider their tree protection policies and take every option and opportunity to preserve and protect the “urban green canopy” in any future infrastructure developments it undertakes.

Unfortunately, it is too late to remedy the destruction of what was a glorious, healthy gum providing habitat for our local fauna and ambiance for residents. And if left insitu, for your own QFES staff too!

Sincerely,



Faye C Chapman
Secretary
Whitsunday Conservation Council
0407 207 441

**Our mission is to conserve and protect the
unique, natural assets of the Whitsundays.**