

Item 14 - LMM 28/07/2020 - Save the Birdwood Park heritage figs

MOTION

That City of Newcastle:

1. Notes that following a successful community petition, with more than 1,100 signatures of concerned local residents, the NSW Government has halted their decision to chop down 4 heritage fig trees in the local heritage precinct Birdwood Park to make way for an unnecessary \$1.4 million, gold-plated slip lane on the corner of King Street and Stewart Avenue, Newcastle West;
2. Supports the retention of the south west corner of Birdwood park and that our approved *West End Stage 1 Public Domain Plan*, adopted by Council following extensive community consultation, has no proposal for the removal of any heritage listed fig trees, and that the existing trees are fully incorporated into future upgrades of the west end streetscape as a very positive element of our proposed upgrades;
3. Thanks the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Andrew Constance MP, for assisting City of Newcastle to protect these important trees;
4. Protects the heritage fig trees in Birdwood Park in perpetuity and calls on the NSW Government to abandon their project to create an unnecessary slip lane on the corner of King Street and Stewart Avenue.

BACKGROUND:

A community petition signed by more than 1,100 people has seen the decision to chop down heritage listed fig trees in Birdwood Park temporarily halted.

Transport for NSW were set to remove four Heritage-listed fig trees to deliver a \$1.4million turning lane. The trees form part of the Newcastle City Centre Heritage Conservation Area and are listed items (I161: Fig Trees and I509 Birdwood Park).

Despite consultants engaged by Transport for NSW deeming the removal of these trees as having a "negligible to low impact upon the heritage significance of the conservation area", City of Newcastle Heritage experts believe that the proposed works are likely to affect the heritage significance of the local heritage item and the heritage conservation area in a manner that is more than minor or inconsequential.

Birdwood Park is a shadow of its former self. The Park was decimated previously by State road authorities for the construction of King Street in the 1970s.

The remainder of the Park has been preserved as an important part of the West End's Heritage and has been protected as part of the City Centre Heritage Conservation Area. These trees are important parts of our City. They provide shade and habitat, and they are beloved by the community.

A \$1.4 million gold-plated slip lane is not needed at this intersection, and these trees should be protected in perpetuity.

ATTACHMENTS

- Correspondence to the Hon. Andrew Constance MP, asking the NSW Government to re-consider chopping down heritage listed fig trees in Birdwood Park.



LORD MAYOR NUATALI NELMES
CITY OF NEWCASTLE
CITY HALL
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

13 July 2020

The Hon. Andrew Constance MP
Minister for Transport and Roads
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Minister

I write to you with strong concerns about the Transport for NSW project 'Traffic flow improvements planned for Stewart Avenue and King Street, Intersection, Newcastle', which is set to begin imminently.

The project proposes the removal of three existing fig trees which have been determined to be of local heritage significance, located with the Newcastle City Centre Heritage Conservation Area, listed as '1161: Fig trees' and '1509: Birdwood Park', respectively.

Despite consultants engaged by Transport for NSW deeming the removal of these trees as having a 'negligible to low impact upon the heritage significance of the conservation area', our City of Newcastle Heritage experts believe that the proposed works are likely to affect the heritage significance of the local heritage item and the heritage conservation area in a manner that is more than minor or inconsequential.

For your reference, I have attached the approved City of Newcastle (CN) *West End Stage 1 Public Domain Plan*. I attach this plan because it has been adopted by the elected Council, after considerable consultation with the community.

You will see that nowhere in this plan, is the removal of these heritage figs proposed. In fact, the document shows that CN's plans to improve the West End public domain of the City, involve the retention of this beautiful trees, and their incorporation into our future plans as a very positive element of our proposed upgrades.

The plan's 'Site History' (p.8-9) also indicates the passion that Novocastrians have for the protection and retention of these heritage figs, dating back to the 1970s.

While I understand that these tree are located on Transport for NSW (TfNSW) Land and that that TfNSW are able to complete this work without the consent of City of Newcastle (CN), I respectfully ask you to please pause this project, and explore an option that will allow for the retention of these important trees.

With the project set to begin imminently, I ask for your urgent re-consideration of this matter.

I look forward to you assisting us to retain these important heritage trees.

Yours sincerely

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes
City of Newcastle

cc. The Hon. Don Harwin MLC, Minister for the Arts (with responsibility for Heritage)
Kate Washington MP, Shadow Minister for the Environment and Heritage
Tim Crakanthorp MP, Member for Newcastle
Natalie Perfremment, Project Manager, TfNSW