

**Before the Independent Hearings Panel
At Wellington City Council**

Under Schedule 1 of the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of the Proposed Wellington City District Plan

**Statement of evidence of William Melville on behalf of Wellington City
Council (Arboriculture)**

Date: 6 April 2023

INTRODUCTION:

- 1 My full name is William Melville. I am employed as a Parks Services Manager.
- 2 I have prepared this statement of evidence on behalf of the Wellington City Council (the **Council**) in respect of technical related matters arising from the submissions and further submissions on the Proposed Wellington City District Plan (the **PDP**).
- 3 Specifically, this statement of evidence relates to the Notable Trees Chapter in Part 2 and Schedule 5 Notable Trees of the PDP.
- 4 I am authorised to provide this evidence on behalf of the Council.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 5 I hold the qualifications of Level 4 Advanced certificate in Arboriculture. Advanced Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) qualification and the International Society of Arboriculture Tree Risk Assessment Qualification.
- 6 I have worked for Wellington City Council for 9 years and 2 months, serving for 5 years as the Arboriculture Manager. Previously, I have worked in Arboriculture sector in New Zealand, the USA and UK.
- 7 I am a member of the International Society of Arboriculture, New Zealand urban Forest Research Initiative, and New Zealand Arboricultural Association (NZ Arb) where I served as President between 2018 and 2019.

Code of conduct

- 8 I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses set out in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2023. I have complied with the Code

of Conduct in preparing my evidence and will continue to comply with it while giving oral evidence. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. Except where I state I rely on the evidence of another person, I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise, and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from my expressed opinions.

1 INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PROPOSED PLAN

9 I have been involved in the PDP since 2020 specifically the Notable Trees Chapter.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

10 My statement of evidence addresses the following matters:

- I. Definitions Notable Trees Root Protection Area
- II. Inclusion of pest species trees
- III. TREE R1: Pruning to maintain health.
- IV. TREE- S2: Emergency Trimming or pruning work.
- V. Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society submission seeking policy direction to enable further surveys of notable trees and provide for the inclusion of additional trees in SCHED5 over the life of the plan

Definitions: Root Protection Area

11 I agree with Argosy Property Ltd and Jeremy Partridge's submissions on the change to the Root Protection Area and my advice was to use the 12x stem diameter calculation for the root protection area as part of the PDP. This formula is recommended by the New Zealand Arboricultural Association as the industries governing body.

- 12 Currently (other than notable trees) when working around Council owned trees or they required to be retained as part of a resource consent, officers require developers to adhere to AS 4970-2009 Protection of trees on development sites where the Root Protection Area is defined as 12x stem diameter. Aligning the Notable Trees definition of Root Protection area will increase consistency in tree management in development sites.
- 13 The use of a measurement that is obtainable at ground level leads to a better understanding of the root protection area in comparison to estimating half of tree height or assessing the dripline which can be affected by mechanical or environmental influences such pruning or shading of adjoining trees effecting canopy shape. The 12x stem diameter calculation mitigates other influences to give a better understanding of where roots may be encountered.

Inclusion of pest species trees

- 14 Notable Trees 306 and 112 are both *Syzygium smithii* and are the only species listed on the National Pest Plant Accord listed in SCHED6 of the PDP. *Syzygium smithii* is noted as not for sale or propagation by Greater Wellington Regional Council but is not listed in their Exclusion or Eradication programme currently. Wellington City Council has an active pest management programme and can respond if there is a change in this species designation.

TREE R1: Pruning trees to maintain health.

- 15 The permitted activities for trimming and pruning of notable trees allow an owner to carry out the necessary pruning to manage conflicts with common infrastructure and structures in an urban environment and include provisions for managing dead or diseased foliage. Pruning beyond this would need to be assessed as being beneficial for tree health by a technician arborist.

TREE- S2: Emergency Trimming or pruning work

- 16 Council offers a 24/7 on call service through our Park Ranger team who when notified about emergency tree work alert the Arboriculture team and are authorised to give permission for emergency works on Notable Trees

TREE S4 - Works within the root protection area.

- 17 While hydro excavation is not the preferred method of soil removal around tree roots due to the damage that high pressure water can cause to tree roots, in some instances where soil conditions do not allow for air excavation a combination of hydro excavation and hand digging may be required. Retaining hydro excavation allows a technician arborist to consider it as an option if air excavation is not practical or available in certain circumstances.

Provision to include trees in SCHED6 over the life of the plan

- 18 I support Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society seeking policy direction to enable further surveys of notable trees and provide for the inclusion of additional trees in SCHED6 over the life of the plan.
- 19 Out of 116 trees recommended for submission by arboriculture officers 48 have been included for consideration as part of the PDP and they are limited to trees on Council Property. Having an ongoing process for the public to nominate and list notable trees will allow for better representation of a diversity of species on both public and private property by allowing for continuous assessment and inclusion when there is interest in listing a tree rather than having to wait for a district plan review when resources may not be available to consult with landowners. Other common mechanisms used for protecting trees such as covenants, and noting as a condition of a resource consent are not as easily manageable or visible to the public taking away from the notable status of any specimen tree protected by these means.

Date: 03/04/2023

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "W. Melville". The letters are cursive and fluid.

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William Melville