



# Briefing Note

Councillors  
CEO  
GM PP  
GM GC

1 April 2011

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**Subject:** Point Lonsdale Playground Moonah trees

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this briefing is to inform Councillors on the management of certain Moonah trees located at or near the Point Lonsdale playground, Point Lonsdale. These trees are identified as trees 196, 197, 198 (by a previous tagging process) and the garden bed Moonah near the bus shelter.

This briefing outlines officer action following Councillor request to review these trees for further possible management, professional advice received in relation to the trees, and an intended course of action.

**Background:**

In February 2011 a Councillor request was received to investigate the condition of a significant Moonah tree located in a brick planter box near the Point Lonsdale bus shelter and the adjoining play space, at Point Lonsdale, with a view to determining whether a prop or other similar management action was required for this tree. On appearance the tree has a distinct lean northwards and the surrounding brick planter box is damaged. At a similar time, officers were investigating the positioning of a new seat structure near trees 196, 197, and 198 that adjoin the playground on the western edge directly adjacent to the slide set and some 10-15 metres from the "planter box Moonah". These particular trees are spindly specimens. It was considered prudent that these trees be also included in any assessment.

Arboricultural assessments were carried out on all four trees by two separate arborists. Whilst there is some variances in the opinions received from two professionals in this field, in summary the advice is as follows:

- Planter Box Moonah – No evidence that tree root invasion or uplifting is the cause of the brickwork damage on the surrounding planter box and similarly there is no evidence of soil disturbance at the base of the tree trunk that might indicate movement of the tree, or instability. Overall this tree is a significant specimen and is relatively sound. If a prop were to be installed and the tree failed causing harm to people or property then from a liability perspective there is an implication that it was known that the tree would fail, which is not the case.
- Trees 196, 197, and 198 – Close inspection and various tests carried out on the trees showed that each had significant integrity issues, however each tree was perhaps significant to the others in terms of providing a level of support and protection from wind effects and overall stability. From a risk management point of view there is a case to remove all three trees, they are very unlikely to improve in form/structure, and they form a natural clump that can be removed with minimal effect on surrounding trees. Removal would provide an opportunity to plant replacement trees and improve the age and class distribution of trees in the area.

In relation to the planter box Moonah there is no evidence that the placing of a prop will add to the longevity of the tree and may in fact interfere with the normal growth processes of the tree. In relation to the other Moonahs inspected and reported on their current structure may well be a result of other tree removals in the past for the playground development and that has now increased the

trees exposure to conditions that they have not been required to tolerate before. As indicated above they are unlikely to improve in form or structure and will continue to represent a moderate to high risk, as is. The location of replacement trees in the playground area would need to have regard to the future risk management issues associated with them, and likewise similar issues arise regarding the placement of any further seating or playground equipment.

Removal of these trees on the basis of addressing risk management issues will require DSE approval, and any such approval could be conditional in terms of replacement plantings or future management of the area.

The removed trees can be “recycled” in a number of ways including, for example, using sections of the tree trunks as part of future landscaping near the area, or mulching the twig and leaf material for local use.

**Intended Action:**

- 1. Monitor the planter box Moonah through regular inspections and react accordingly.**
- 2. Seek DSE approval to remove trees 196, 197, and 198.**
- 3. Remove trees 196, 197, and 198 and plant replacement trees in the playground precinct or manage in accordance with any conditions established by DSE.**

**Foreshore and Caravan Parks Coordinator**