



Save Wyong Trees Report 15/8/2019

Re: CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL DCP DRAFT CHAPTER XX: Tree and Vegetation Management

This draft was considered by Council on 12 August 2019. Save Wyong Trees have made numbers of submissions regarding best-practice in this area over a number of years.

The Draft presented for consideration, despite strong lobbying by SWT, other community groups and individuals as part of the community consultation process, contained a number of very concerning policies.

1. It proposed a totally unacceptable and negligent process which would allow residents to remove trees based on "evidence" provided by a contractor who has a financial interest in removing a tree. This is essentially the same policy that has operated in the old Wyong Shire with such disastrous outcomes for the tree canopy.
2. It proposed use of AQF3 arborists to make the required tree assessments. This is despite the fact that an AQF-3 Arborist is not trained in biodiversity issues, is not trained to provide written reports and has no significant training in the habitat of endangered native animals. Other Councils insist on AQF5 arborists.
3. The proposed process involved residents consulting an AQF3 arborist, retaining whatever evidence regarding tree removal was provided and going ahead with removal without prior consent of Council. We considered that a proactive policy would require evidence claiming to justify the removal of valuable natural assets be submitted to Council's AQF5 arborist for scrutiny BEFORE any proposed works commence.
4. Removal of the Significant Tree register that had operated in the old Gosford Shire
5. A recommendation that residents be encouraged rather than required to plant a suitable replacement plant.

The purpose of this chapter of the DCP is supposed to be to protect trees, not to facilitate easy removal by removing accountability and proper, independent assessment.

Save Wyong Trees suggested the following process:

The Tree Removal part of the Chapter must require:

- Applications to be made to Council including:
 - Payment of an application fee to cover Council's assessment costs
 - Substantial reasons for the proposed removal supported by appropriate expert opinion.



- Assessment by Council's own skilled Arborist qualified to at least AQF Level 5 to ensure:
 - Identification of the species of the tree
 - Risk assessment relative to the health and condition of the tree
 - Consideration of the impact on wildlife potentially dependent on the tree
 - Consideration of community amenity
 - Consideration of alternatives to removal.

Central Coast Council Tree Removal Policy must also:

- List reasons for removal of trees that Council considers as trivial or insufficient
- List trees that may be removed without Council permission.
- Impose substantial penalties for contravention of Policy
- Require the planting of replacement trees if removal
- Establish a Significant Tree Register across the whole region

Councillor Jillian Hogan moved a number of significant amendments:

1. That the draft Development Control Plan Chapter "XX"- Tree and Vegetation Management, as amended (Attachment 1), be further amended as follows:

- a. Replace all references to AQF3 with AQF5 qualifications***
- b. restore reference to the significant tree register and extend the register to the former Wyong shire geographic area***
- c. replace all references to "encouraging" replacement plantings to "requiring" replacement plantings.***

These were passed and are a win. However, it remains unclear whether the process for removing a tree will still permit removal, now with the recommendation of an AQF5 arborist, prior to oversight by a Council arborist.

We await the minutes and further assessment of the outcome.

Lots of people have been involved in this campaign over many years. In the past month, many have researched the details of the proposed policy and those adopted by other Councils, prepared documents, lobbied Councillors and presented our case.

Robyn Balcomb spoke with passion and clarity for SWT on the night, and Barb and John Gorman watched the proceedings in England!

Many thanks to all.

Cath Connor