

## Selwyn District Council Proposed District Plans – Notable Trees Chapter

### Introduction

- 1.1 My full name is Christopher Michael Walsh
- 1.2 I hold a Certificate in Arboriculture (Merrist Wood, UK), National Certificate in Arboriculture, Trade Certificate in Horticulture and Amenity Turf Management and a National Certificate in Horticulture. I hold an ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) Tree Risk Assessment qualification and am a licenced Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) practitioner. I have worked in the arboricultural and horticultural industries for 30 years. I am the current President Elect of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and have been on the Board since 2016.
- 1.3 I am the owner and Managing Director of Treotech Specialist Treecare Ltd. My experience, with respect to Arboricultural Consultancy, includes providing technical support for Councils, detailed inspection and condition assessments of notable and protected trees, preparation of arboricultural implication reports for construction and provide technical advice with regard to tree and design conflicts, tree condition assessments and reports, resource consent applications and expert witness, transplant feasibility assessments, contract and financial management.
- 1.4 I have provided background evidence for Christchurch City Council as part of their District Plan Review, including expert witness on submissions.
- 1.5 I can confirm I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court of New Zealand Practice note 2014 and that I have complied with it when preparing my evidence.

### Summary of Evidence

- 2.1 I have been engaged by the Selwyn District Council to prepare expert evidence that addresses matters raised in specific submission points received on the Notable Trees Chapter of the Proposed Selwyn District Plan. I will also review any relevant expert submitter evidence subsequently lodged, attend the hearing and respond to any questions from the Hearings Panel.  
  
*DPR-0058- 001*
- 3.1 The Library committee of the Glentunnel Library request ongoing protection of a Kowhai, rhododendron and several azaleas that were gifted to the community from the Ilam Gardens. A site visit to Glentunnel Library was carried out on 27 July 2021 where a STEM evaluation was undertaken on a Kowhai, Magnolia and a Cherry tree (see [Attachment 1](#)). That evaluation found that whilst the trees are of value within the landscape and community

they did not reach the Proposed District Plan's STEM threshold score of 129<sup>1</sup> and therefore are not recommended to be included in TREE-SCHED2 – Notable Trees

- 3.2 The shrub species, whilst having provenance, are not covered in the STEM evaluation. Other methods of protection could be considered.

#### *DPR-0207-010*

- 4.1 Selwyn District Council's submission proposed a new definition of 'Qualified Arborist' to clarify the meaning of this term in the context of the Notable Tree provisions.
- 4.2 I agree with the definition that in relation to Notable Trees, means a person who:
- a. by possession of a recognised arboriculture degree, diploma or certificate and on the job experience, is familiar with the tasks, equipment and hazards involved in arboriculture operations; and
  - b. has demonstrated competency to Level 4 NZQA Certificate in Horticultural Services (Arboriculture) standard (or be of an equivalent arboriculture standard).
- 4.3 This definition is in alignment with other Councils. The Christchurch City Council definition of a Qualified Arborist as stated in CSS: Part 1 2019 section 3.0 is: "A person who is in possession of a recognised arboriculture degree, diploma or certificate, and on the job experience, is familiar with the equipment and hazards involved in arboriculture operations, has demonstrated proficiency in inspecting, analysing and treating hazardous trees and has demonstrated the ability to perform the tasks involved."
- 4.4 A further submission received from Marama Te Wai Ltd (DPR-0460.FS023 and FS026) requested the term 'competent' be added to the definition.
- 4.5 I disagree with this as competency is implicit in the definition. If the term was added a definition of the word 'competent' would be required as to what the Council deems competency to be and would require the contractors to provide evidence beyond their qualifications.

#### *DPR-0207-023*

- 5.1 Selwyn District Council's submission requests the removal of the phrase 'including likely future risk' from TREE-P1(1):
- Schedule trees where they are assessed as having significant values ..., unless:
- 1. the tree poses any unacceptable risk, including likely future risk, to the health and safety of people, property, buildings, strategic infrastructure or electricity distribution lines, taking into account potential mitigation measures and their costs;
- 5.2 I believe the phrase 'including likely future risk' should be removed as stated by the submitter. During time of inspection all identifiable risks and benefits are taken into account whilst collating values for trees to be included in the schedule.

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<sup>1</sup> Kowhai total score 108; Cherry total score 114; Magnolia total score 114

*DPR-0207-024*

- 6.1 Selwyn District Council's submission proposes that TREE-P4.3 be amended and the term 'sunlight access' be removed as this could lead to unnecessary pruning or modification of trees where works are not required.
- 6.2 I agree to the removal of this term as any thinning (to allow sunlight access) will be covered in: TREE-P4.2 - Will maintain or improve the health of the tree

*DPR-0207-025*

- 7.1 Selwyn District Council's submission proposes the removal of the use of a hydro vac as a method hand digging or trenchless means under TREE-REQ2.2 b.
- 7.2 I agree with the removal of this method for trenching as it is in-line with other Councils. Hydro excavation has caused severe and irreparable damage to trees and is not permitted for excavation within the vicinity of trees/vegetation without approval in some Councils. Christchurch City Council states in CSS: Part 1 2019 section 22.5.4 hydro excavation is not to be used.
- 7.3 Selwyn District Council's submission also proposes the removal of TREE-REQ2.2-c-ii 'has an area of less than 1m<sup>2</sup>' as it is considered that an entry point within the root protection area, even if less than 1m<sup>2</sup>, has the potential to damage the root system of the tree.
- 7.4 I agree with the removal of this requirement as in my opinion no threshold is appropriate – any soil disturbance within the Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) is a restricted discretionary activity and would require Tree Protection Management Plan.

*DPR-0207- 026 – 030*

- 8.1 Selwyn District Council proposes to amend the definition of the Tree Protection Zone to: 'a circle taken from the centre of the trunk with a radius equal to 12 times the diameter of the trunk measured at 1.4m'.
- 8.2 I agree with this proposal as it is consistent with the Australian Standard AS 4970 – 2009 Protection of trees on development sites. This standard is accepted and supported by NZArb which is the arboricultural industries governing body.

*DPR-0407-007*

- 9.1 Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc propose to amend TREE-REQ1 to add clauses that requires that before pruning of a tree or group of trees occurs, the trees or trees are assessed by a suitably qualified ecologist and a clause the requires that any ecologists recommendations be included in the Tree Protection Management Plan.
- 9.2 I disagree with this submission as this would become overly onerous on the applicants and the management of indigenous ecosystems are better addressed through the Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity Chapter of the Proposed District Plan.

*DPR-0407-008*

- 10.1 Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc submitted that in TREE-SCHED1 – Notable Tree Assessment an added criteria be added to 5. Notable Scientific of:

d. Suitability as habitat for indigenous fauna

- 10.2 I do not believe a new criteria (d) need be added to 5. Notable Scientific. Arborists competent in carrying out STEM assessments will consider habitats as part of 1. Condition – Health; (d) Function as is documented in the book - STEM A Standard Tree Evaluation Method by Ron Flook.

*DPR-0441-089*

- 11.1 Trustpower submitted that while they supported in part TREE-REQ1 – Pruning of a scheduled notable tree, amendments are required to include consideration of regionally significant infrastructure as it is not provided for elsewhere. Their submission notes that branches of notable trees physically interfere with the efficient operation of renewable electricity generation and have the potential to cause danger to both people and property. Trustpower seek specific amendments to TREE-REQ1.3 so that regionally significant infrastructure is exempt from TREE-REQ1.3
- 11.2 Pruning in the top two thirds of any tree can compromise the tree's health, vitality and aesthetics, and affect the reasons why the tree is identified as a Notable Tree that merits listing in the Proposed Selwyn District Plan in the first place. Any pruning required in this part of the tree that does not meet TREE-REQ1 should be required to go through the normal consenting process, regardless of who is carrying out the work.



C M Walsh

2/08/2021