



**Tree Consultants & Contractors**  
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30 June 2012

Lotus Oaks Pty. Ltd.  
c/- Watsons Mornington  
Attention Ross Morcombe  
5 Main Street, PO Box 171, VIC 3931  
P: (03) 5975 4644

Dear Sir,

**re: Copse of Sugar Gums, Westbrook Homestead Road, Wyndhamvale**

### **Introduction**

I am informed it is proposed to undertake residential construction on the land around the Westbrook Homestead and Ballan Road, Wyndhamvale. A copse of trees as shown in the accompanying aerial image on page 3 is present in an otherwise relatively treeless landscape. Galbraith and Associates has been requested by Watsons to assess this clump of trees and to advise as to whether it is worthwhile for retention in any re-development of the site.

### **The Trees**

The trees consist of Sugar Gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*), a species endemic to South Australia but widely planted in Victoria, particularly west and north-west of Melbourne. It is no longer popular as a planting species but was widely established 60-100 years ago for the purposes of producing shelterbelts, fire wood, fence posts and its ability to re-sprout or coppice after lopping.

This copse of trees is likely to be of the order of 80 years of age. The dominant height is approximately 13m which is substantially smaller than their expected mature height in the eastern suburbs where they can be expected to grow to double that. The reason for the somewhat small size is very likely related to the low rainfall, shallow soils and relatively low soil water volume availability between field capacity and wilting point of the basaltic soil.

The trees in this copse are over mature and past their best. Many have substantial die-back and trunk decay. Having said that the copse can be managed responsibly and safely for many years to come and provide a very attractive feature for the site. Basically all that is required is:

- the removal of the dead and trees in advanced decline which is of the order of 20% of the total number of existing trees
- hazard reduction pruning for the remainder including the removal of major dead branches, the removal of dangerous branches where necessary and the weight reduction pruning of other branches where necessary
- Leave old stubs and the more vertical dead spars where safe to do so as these are important habitat features for the many birds I observed in the copse on my assessment
- Undertake replacement planting, preferably with indigenous trees such as local provenance eucalypts, sheokes, wattles etc.. Such planting would encourage native birds.
- The decision as to which trees are to be removed and retained should be done mainly by an arborist experienced in the long term management of Sugar Gums for amenity and wildlife habitat purposes but in concert with a landscape architect.
- The most efficacious method for the hazard reduction pruning is with the use of an elevated platform. The hazard reduction works should be undertaken according to the Australian Pruning Standard 4373:2007 and under the supervision of an arborist experienced in the long term management of Sugar Gums for amenity and wildlife habitat purposes.
- The replacement planting programme and removal of existing weeds such as African Boxthorn should be undertaken under the supervision of a landscape architect.
- Further tree culling and tree surgery treatments are likely to be required every 7-10 years







An attractive highly valuable resource to maintain



High value specimen tree





Many of the dead spars as shown in the above two images, particularly the more vertically oriented, can be retained as perches for birds. The trees which are arrowed are examples of those which should be removed and replaced.



Remove the arrowed lopped tree

GALBRAITH & ASSOCIATES

Rob Galbraith  
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