

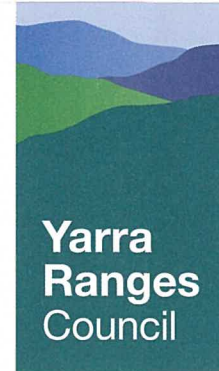
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5 January 2015

Coroner White
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Dear Coroner White

Thank you for your letter dated 17 October 2014 regarding the investigation into the death of James R Winchester, Court reference COR 2013 002555.

The Council thanks the Court for the five recommendations of the Inquest which have or will be implemented as recommended. Below are details of what has been undertaken so far and what is planned for the future.

Recommendation 1

That the Council consider sending information about tree safety and reporting risky trees to rate payers with annual rates notices.

The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

An information card about tree safety and how to contact Council will be sent to all residents in August 2015 when rates notices are sent to residents for the 2015/16 financial year.

Recommendation 2

That the Council continue their engagement with the community on the issue of tree safety and further consider the possibility of more advertising on local radio stations.

The Coroner's recommendation has and will continue to be implemented.

The Council has a range of modes for engaging with the community including Council's website, Council's community newsletter, telephone on hold messaging, press releases in local newspapers and occasional local radio interviews. Whilst the Council does not take out paid advertising on local radio stations, we will endeavour to include raising the awareness of risks with trees when invited to participate in local radio interviews. Compared to other engagement modes, Council's communications team have, however, advised that the two local radio stations have a limited audience and that other forms of engagement have a wider reach.

In November 2014 the following On Hold message was recorded for customers calling the Council:

Council arborists carry out safety inspections of trees along roadsides and in Council reserves.

Please let us know if you are concerned about a tree, for example if you notice:

- *Broken branches which are likely to fall on to the road, footpath or driveway, or*
- *Trees which are suddenly leaning, have recent cracks in the soil or have roots coming out of the ground, or*
- *Trees with recent cracks and splits through the trunk.*

We carry out works on a priority basis and urgent works are done as soon as can be arranged. Recommended works which are not urgent are usually scheduled for completion within several weeks.

If you notice any sudden changes or deterioration in a tree's condition, please call us on 1300 368 333.

A *Keeping an eye on trees* message was sent out on social media in October 2014. The graphic below shows the analytics of that release.



Yarra Ranges Council shared a link.
22 October

Have you ever been worried about the health of a tree within Yarra Ranges? Whether it be on a roadside, park or reserve, one of our Council arborists can carry out a safety inspection.

Keeping an eye on trees
www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au

If you are concerned about the health of a tree in one of our parks, reserves or on a roadside, please get in contact with us.

1,314 people reached

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The *Keeping an eye on trees* article was also published in the November 2014 e-newsletter version of Council's community newsletter – 'Yarra Ranges Local'.

The same article, retitled as *Tree Health Check*, was published in the November hard copy newsletter. There are three editions of the newsletter, Hills Edition, Valley Edition and Urban Edition, covering the whole Yarra Ranges community.

Recommendation 3

That the Council continue to consider options in relation to their website for reporting trees in order to make it more accessible and informative for the public.

The Coroner's recommendation has and will continue to be implemented.

Council's main Trees and Vegetation website page has been updated, with the top of the page concentrating on dangerous trees:

<http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Lists/Latest-news/Keeping-an-eye-on-trees>

A new page was added 21 November titled *Keeping an eye on trees*. The page has Council's contact details and an option to leave comments.

<http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Property/Trees-vegetation>

Both of the pages mentioned above have imagery of examples of damaged and dangerous trees to assist residents. In addition, functionality of Council's website has been expanded to help residents access these pages by enhancing the searching ability for key words related to trees.

Further enhancements will be undertaken during 2015 to provide more tree related information on Council's website.

Recommendation 4

That, as part of the Council's review of the Tree Management Plan, they consider simplifying parts of the plan to make them more accessible and readable.

The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

The update of Council's Tree Management Plan was previously expected to be completed in 2014 but is now expected to be completed in late 2015.

Council's Parks and Environment Department is currently undertaking an in depth Service Review of the Tree Management Service. The purpose of the review is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the service within the capacity that Council is able to resource and fund the service, having regard to community needs and identified risk levels.

The review is due to be completed by mid April 2015. The findings and recommendations from the review will inform the update of Council's Tree Management Plan. The Tree Management Plan's language will be simplified and made more accessible for the community.

The Winchester family will be kept informed about the progress of the update.

Recommendation 5

That the Council consider the possibility of placing advertising on their tree maintenance vehicles, this to inform the public about the work being undertaken and possible Council contact, if they have concerns about the health of a particular tree.

The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

It is expected that the design for branding Council's three (3) tree management works vehicles will be achieved during February/March 2015. Quotations will then be sought to provide and install the advertising. The concept is to have large and highly visible graphics, with a simple message on how to contact Council about tree related concerns.

Much of Council's tree work is undertaken by contractors. As these contractors do not work solely for Council, we will not be able to achieve large signage on these vehicles. Options will, however, be investigated for updating the removable magnetic signage that these contractors use which identifies that they are working on behalf of the Council.

Should you require any further information please contact Paul Mechelen, Coordinator Trees, on 9294 6157.

Yours sincerely



Glenn Patterson
Chief Executive Officer