

ATTACHMENT 2
MEMO TRACT CONSULTANTS ON TREE SELECTION

Attachment 2

Tract

MEMORANDUM

PROJECT NAME	
St Kilda Foreshore Connections	
TO	PAGES
City of Port Phillip	3
ATTENTION	DATE
[REDACTED]	29th April 2009
FROM	TOPIC
[REDACTED]	Tree selection issues
COPY	

The following text provides some background to the issue of existing tree removal and selection of new tree species. This is an overview only and it should be understood that there are a range of detailed design and technical requirements that go into a project of this kind but are not discussed here.

1. Existing trees

We view the design as an integrated package of works. While we respect the value of existing trees, they are still a functional part of the street and must contribute over the long term, to the function and appearance of the Cleve Plaza. We spent time looking at all existing trees within the Cleve Plaza site and made the decision to propose removal of all five trees for the following reasons:

North side Elms

- The two elms on the north side of the Plaza are poorly formed, immature specimens that show evidence of long term (salt laden) wind pruning and water stress.
- Mounded root development around the base of the trees creates a relatively large 'no walk/ride area that compromises the function of this area as a shared path.
- The trees do not contribute to the appearance of the Plaza and would not improve in future.
- The trees cannot be connected to the WSUD system being developed for the site. Tree pits will be a different appearance from WSUD pits (no grates).
- The surrounding footpath pavements will be reconstructed to slightly different levels than existing and with a reinforced concrete base and underground services will be changes in this location. This will require additional excavation that will affect existing tree roots and may result in the death or decline of the trees, or long term physical instability because of the restricted root system. The level of the footpath may be different (higher) from the surface surrounding the tree.
- Kerb lines are moving out at this point and trees will no longer be positioned behind the back of kerb.

South side Chinese Elms

- The two eastern trees have grown in locations that are restricted by verandas. As a result of location and pruning, they have poor canopy form and provide little shade or amenity.
- The trees cannot be connected to the WSUD system being developed for the site. Tree pits will be a different appearance from WSUD pits (no grates).
- Footpath spaces and proposed tree layouts are designed to maximize café table layouts. Retaining the Chinese Elms reduces table layout capacity as the trees are not positioned within the 'grid' and have tree pits that are not compatible with walking / seating.
- The surrounding footpath pavements will be reconstructed to slightly different levels than existing and with a reinforced concrete base and

TRACT CONSULTANTS PTY LTD
ABN 12 055 213 842
195 LENNOX STREET, RICHMOND
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA
PO BOX 181 RICHMOND
VICTORIA 3121 AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE 61 3 9429 6133
FACSIMILE 61 3 9429 5925

MELBOURNE SYDNEY BRISBANE
ASSOCIATED OFFICE PERTH

QUALITY ENDORSED COMPANY
ISO 9001 LIC NO 2092

Attachment 2

MEMORANDUM / FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL

underground services will be changes in this location. This will require additional excavation that will affect existing tree roots and may result in the death or decline of the trees, or long term physical instability because of the restricted root system. The level of the footpath may be different (higher) from the surface surrounding the tree.

- Kerb lines are moving out at this point and trees will no longer be positioned behind the back of kerb.
- The Chinese Elm (No 1 Fitzroy St area) is a reasonably attractive tree and in the current setting provides shade and visual impact within that location, however we came to the view that the tree had similar construction risks and ground level functional problems to the other Chinese Elms, and in isolation, was not likely to contribute to the overall, long term visual character of the Plaza

2. New planting

Planting is intended to contribute to Cleve Plaza and Fitzroy Street in a range of ways:

- The design is intended to identify this location as a key pedestrian and tourist setting. The use of palms, various paving treatments, feature lighting etc are designed to emphasize the special role of the place. Palms in selected settings, in combination with avenue plantings, are intended to become the visual symbol of Fitzroy Street.
- Cleve Plaza is designed to be a space which visually and functionally 'joins' Cleve Gardens, Catani Gardens, Fitzroy Street, Jacka Boulevard and Esplanade landscapes and becomes a part of each of those spaces. The 'free form' arrangement of trees is intended to allow the space to blend with its surroundings and not be allied to a single area such as Fitzroy Street.
- The arrangement of trees visually reinforces the role of the Plaza as a Shared Use Space with an unusual geometry, where pedestrians, cyclists and cars have equal status and where irregular pedestrian movement is expected. Trees are an important, large scale visual cue within a busy commercial setting.
- Palms are a direct reference to the design themes established by Carlo Catani in the 19th century, and by later projects that developed the foreshore and Esplanade areas as visual icons and as a representation of St Kilda as an 'exotic place' and community. Palms, for many people, symbolise the idea of an exotic beachside setting and leisure.
- Palms - Phoenix canariensis and Washingtonia robusta (majority) - are very hardy trees that are suited to the climate and beachside setting. They are already extensively planted in Catani Gardens and the Esplanade, can be purchased at mature heights and have relatively small, fibrous root systems that can be planted close to underground services. Tree canopies are relatively small and maintain a stable size. Washingtonia can be planted within the road space and still maintain clearances to tram wires and other infrastructure.
- Palms are proposed to be planted at varying heights to achieve a 'layered' canopy effect. This will create a textured and interesting appearance, patterns of shade and a visual scale that relates to pedestrians as well as motorists and long distance viewers. Additional shade, if required, will be provided by umbrellas and other architectural features that are expected to be a part of the Fitzroy Street commercial environment.
- Palms can be located in and around café seating areas to provide amenity and richness to the pedestrian environment. Groundcover planting within the Cleve Plaza site (southern edge) is proposed to be drought tolerant plants with dynamic forms that match the qualities of the palms.

The effect of adopting an alternative planting strategy

- Overhead and underground services and building verandas would be likely to severely restrict the location of broad canopy trees (as per existing conditions).
- Trees could not be planted within the road space and the form of the planting would be likely to return to a kerb edge situation which would appear similar to Fitzroy Street. As a result, the Plaza would be likely to lose visual definition as a special place.
- The current services design (currently being implemented) is based on the current landscape design. Changes to the landscape design approach would require re-documentation of much of the project, including WSUD components funded by Melbourne Water.

Regards,


Associate Landscape Architect
Tract Consultants Pty Ltd