

Media Release

23 March 2021

IN REMEMBRANCE – Old fig trees destroyed in Anzac Park

Highlights:

- Two beloved fig trees have been removed from the Garden of Remembrance in Anzac Park.
- Community members would have preferred alternative solutions be investigated.
- There is currently no requirement for the community to be consulted about such decisions.
- NQCC and local tree advocates are seeking a better process for the future.

On Friday 19 March 2021, two majestic and well-loved fig trees (*Ficus benjamina*) were cut down and removed from the North Queensland Garden of Remembrance, to the dismay of Townsville locals.

According to a media release from Townsville City Council (TCC) just three days prior, “The two trees have outgrown the area they are planted in and are significantly impacting on the infrastructure in the Garden of Remembrance”.

These large trees, which attracted birds and provided shade for the Garden of Remembrance, were loved by locals. Their destruction has caused grief and outrage in the community, who feel that they were not appropriately warned or consulted. There were no signs placed near the trees in the days prior and little was done to bring attention to TCC’s media release. It also appears that the decision to destroy the trees was made without exploring alternative solutions to the problem, such as root-trimming or appropriate modifications to the infrastructure.

According to TCC’s media release, the process involved three levels of government - the Office of Australian War Graves, the Department of Environment and Science and Townsville City Council. There was no requirement on any of these parties to consult with the public, despite the impact of the decision on the community.

North Queensland Conservation Council and members of a Townsville Tree Advocacy group are calling for a change in the process by which such decisions are made, and for a policy that protects and values trees that hold significance within their community.



North Queensland Conservation Council

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As one local said on social media, “it is ironic that the site was selected because of its beauty, a shaded place for contemplation and remembrance, and an agency responsible for the environment and heritage has authorised the precinct's destruction rather than its protection”.

Responses have been sought from various representatives, yet many questions remain unanswered. Most importantly, what will be done in reparation? And how can the community be more involved in decision-making around our trees in the future?

Concerned community members are invited to attend a media event at 9am on Friday 26 March at the Garden of Remembrance, followed by a vigil for the two fig trees that have been removed.

CONTACTS

Crystal Falknau (NQCC): 0406 421 061

Bernadette Boscacci: 0429 066 748

Joanne Keune: 0447 011 483