**Penders Park/Callistemon FAQS**

**Why is Council taking out three of the four Callistemon trees?**

Council is building an all abilities playspace in the south east corner of Penders Park. This was identified in the Penders Park Master Plan and the location was heavily consulted on with the community. Throughout the consultation process it was clear the community wanted clear sightlines around the playground in order to be able to see their children playing. Not only are the Callistemons nearing their end of life, the Callistemons thick foliage would prevent parents being able to see their children playing. This is a community safety issue and was identified in the community led master plan.

 **What will this part of the park be used for?**

Council is building an all abilities play space. This will be a destination playground, attracting families and children from across Darebin. Its design means it will also be able to be used by children with mobility issues. The new all abilities playspace will feature a sensory play area, a discovery walk, new swing sets catering to children of all abilities, an accessible cubby house, a sand pit for fossil discovery, musical play elements, a dry creek bed, rocks and logs for nature play, and many more fun activities. New seating areas and community spaces will be created for everyone to enjoy.

 **How can Council say it cares about the climate emergency when it is cutting down healthy trees?**

Council takes the climate emergency seriously and considers rewilding Darebin a key priority. The planting scheme identified for the Penders Park renewal has considered the needs and gaps in biodiversity in Darebin and will address this. There will be an enormous net gain of trees, shrubs and grasses for the park making it a more attractive habitat for local wildlife than it is now.

The Callistemon viminalis species is typically a small tree that reaches a height of approximately 10 metres in its natural habitat, however is usually smaller in cultivation - the subject specimens in Penders Park are between 6-7m in height. The specimens are all mature and multi-stemmed at the base. Our arborist notes that included bark (ingrown bark tissue) was observed at the majority of the major stem and branch unions in the trees which significantly increases the probability of stem/branch failure.

Whilst there is no disputing the specimens are currently in good health, they are only likely to have useful life expectancy of less than 5 years given the species tendency for stem/branch failure.

 **How many more trees will be planted?**

In the playground area alone there will be 13 new native trees with a higher canopy that doesn’t obscure sightlines, as well as more than 500 new plants and shrubs in the garden beds.

Several mature trees will be planted in the next planting season to quickly make up for the loss of vegetation while works are ongoing. A mixture of indigenous and native plants including pollinators will be introduced to the park. Across the rest of Penders Park a further 40 new trees will be planted as part of the master plan implementation in future years.

**Why wasn’t the community told works would be beginning?**

Works were initially expected to begin in February however the contractor had another job postponed at the last minute and was able to bring the Penders Park works forward. Unfortunately, this wasn’t communicated internally between teams until after works began, and we are now informing the local community through a letter drop and boards at the park.

**Why can’t the playground be redesigned to avoid the Callistemons?**

This would likely be a costly exercise that would take weeks, if not months, and which could result in a playground that is of a lower quality than what has been strongly backed by the community throughout the two-year consultation on the master plan. The thousands of dollars it would cost to redesign the plan would be better spent on planting more trees across Darebin’s other parks and gardens. The south east location of Penders Park was chosen for the playground as it is close to the public toilets and disabled parking bays.

**How is Council protecting Penders Park heritage listing?**

Penders Park is heritage listed as its one of the oldest parks in Darebin. It was acquired in 1907 as new public open space was needed for Thornbury’s growing community.

The elements which are of heritage importance for Penders Park include the design of the park, the pathway layout, and its mature perimeter trees, including the mature Silky Oaks, Canary Island Palms and mature Ash trees, Casuarinas, White Popular and Conifers. The Callistemon trees are not of heritage significance to the park.

Appreciating the heritage design of Penders Park has been a key driver of the master plan, as outlined in the ‘Distinctive Identity’ design principle.

**Why does the map on page 20-21 of the Penders Park Master Plan show the Callistemon garden bed in the south east corner?**

This image is not a map of what the park will look like once complete, it is a high-level concept plan that doesn’t go to the detailed level of specific trees and plants. There will still be a garden bed in that location, however it does not specify what plants and trees will be included. The image identifies the south east corner as being the site of the new all ability playspace, as well as highlighting the connection to nature through increased planting in the area.

 **When will stage 2 of the playground be built?**

Stage two works are planned for 2020-21 and is subject to Council funding. These works will include additional play elements, new trees and garden beds and a new sheltered picnic and BBQ area.

**Will the old playground be demolished?**

Yes, it will. Following the completion of stage 2 of the playspace works, the old playground will be decommissioned and converted into an informal picnic area, as outlined in the master plan.

**Where can I see more information?**

For further information on the Penders Park Master Plan and the new all abilities playground, please go to [www.yoursaydarebin.com.au/penderspark](http://www.yoursaydarebin.com.au/penderspark)