
Media Release : Threat of deadly plant pathogen resurfaces at Kew Cottages Development.

Kew Cottages Coalition Media Release

Important Information Update.

www.kew.org.au

Release Date: 13 February 2020

Brian Walsh, President, Kew Cottages Coalition, today called on Heritage Victoria to halt work at the State Government site overlooking Yarra Bend Park in order to test for the deadly plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which appears to be the likely cause of the death a large rare tree, and which has been previously linked to construction works at Kew Cottages.

"Stopping the current works is necessary to prevent more damage to heritage listed trees", Mr. Walsh said.

One of the tallest heritage listed trees on the Kew Cottages site, a Canary Island Pine located immediately next to the Walker sales building , has now been assessed as being in "advanced decline" by Heritage Victoria.

Mr. Walsh said there is a National Threat Abatement Plan specifically designed to help control the deadly plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* .

Phytophthora cinnamomi, or 'dieback' as the pathogen is more commonly known was discovered to have infected the Kew Cottages development site in 2006 soon after construction works commenced, and a number of trees died.

"As a consequence," Mr. Walsh said, "Heritage Victoria insisted at the time that quarantine provisions were maintained around the infested site during housing construction works at Kew Cottages, wash down facilities were installed to reduce the chance of the reintroduction of the pathogen, and warning signs were erected on the site. "

"However, Walker appear to have removed all these environmental protection measures some years ago", Mr. Walsh said.

No *Phytophthora* protection measures appear to have been put in place for the new development works that started last week - despite a contractor being warned by the heritage watchdog last year for undertaking excavations on the site without a permit.

Indeed it appears that the unauthorised excavations last year were also undertaken without any quarantine provisions or wash down facilities, and the health of the Canary Island Pine adjacent to the Walker sales building began to deteriorate in the months soon after the excavations.

Mr. Walsh said, "It beggars belief that a nationally recognised threat abatement plan that has operated on a State Government major project for over a decade suddenly appears to have ceased without any warning to the public !"

The safest course of action for everyone concerned is for the Heritage watchdog and Boroondara Council to stop the current excavations, until they can get the expert advice that they need to ensure that the risks posed by the

pathogen have been properly addressed.

Unless excavations cease immediately more trees and plants may well die in the Main Drive Kew estate, Willsmere and Yarra Bend Park.

STOP PRESS
Important Information Update

The Kew Cottages Coalition will hold a Public Meeting to discuss this Major Development on the Kew Cottages Main Drive Parkland

Date: Wednesday 26th February 2020
Time: 7pm - 8.30pm

Kew Civic Centre
Cnr Cotham Road and Civic Drive, KEW
Victoria 3101
[Map](#)

For more information:

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10 Photographs including:

2019

- Tree 191 Dieback - 2 photographs show how the health of the Canary Island Pine adjacent to the Walker sales building began to rapidly deteriorate following unauthorised excavations on the site in 2019.
- The jpg files include the GPS coordinates of the hillside site on Main Drive, Kew, which is close to (ie: within ~ 50metres) both Willsmere and Yarra Bend Park (Wills Street Picnic Area)

2020

1. Feb 2020 The Canary Island Pine Tree 191 now appears to be dead (
2. Feb 2020 New excavations start on the site (7 jpg photographs in zip file showing excavations, pit locations, boring machine, and root detail)

4 attachments

CanaryIslandPine_Tree191Stage8_Dieback2019cu.JPG



2499K



Tree191dieback_Stage8_AfterUnauthorised2019Excavations.JPG
2850K



Canary Island Pine, Tree 191 Now appears dead Feb 2020.jpg
362K

 **MainDrive-NewExcavations2020.zip**
2672K