

Risk assessment and removal of trees in Wye River and Separation Creek

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has been involved in the assessment of hazardous trees in the Wye River and Separation Creek townships, either in partnership with or on behalf of the Colac-Otway Shire council.

Recently, DELWP undertook risk assessment work to identify hazardous trees at Paddy's Path, which posed clear and present danger to path users. Following this assessment, 16 small trees were removed.

Prior to this, in February and March, DELWP engaged arborists to:

- undertake assessments to identify potentially hazardous trees posing an immediate threat to residents accessing properties, and to those using the roads or accessing other public areas, and
- treat hazardous trees identified in the assessment process as posing an immediate risk to members of the public trying to access their properties and to those using township roads or accessing public land.

The arborists that DELWP engaged to undertake the assessment and work in February and March in Wye River and Separation Creek were Shepherd Tree Management and Reynolds Tree Care.

Shepherd Tree Management Geelong completed an initial assessment on behalf of DELWP and Colac Otway Shire, but did not undertake the treatment work. During this initial assessment, some trees were marked with an 'X'. This marking did not indicate that the tree necessarily required removal; it was marked to bring attention to a particular feature of the tree, for example a tree hollow, or to indicate that a branch required removal.

DELWP then commissioned Reynolds Tree Care to review the assessment undertaken by Shepherd Tree Management and reassess risk to road users, public land visitors and to those requiring immediate access to private properties. This was undertaken to verify the initial risk assessment and ensure its currency, given the dynamic nature of tree risk. Reynolds Tree Care undertook risk mitigation works on the basis of its assessment.

Reynolds Tree Care conducted a Level 1 (ISA 2013) assessment of the trees. Trees were assessed for their potential to fall onto the road (in fire-affected areas, behind the temporary fenceline) and trees adjacent to the road were assessed for their potential to fall on adjacent properties and boundary fencelines. Only trees that were likely to have substantial failures or faults that had a high probability to cause significant damage to property or impede safe travel of the road were recorded.

These works were completed in early April following consultation with impacted landowners and resulted in 10 trees being marked for treatment on private property. Of these, five trees were removed, three pruned and two had no work required.

Below is a table outlining the summary of Reynolds Tree Care's assessment back in late January or early February. Following this assessment, Reynolds Tree Care had further discussion with individual landowners who requested for additional trees to be removed. Therefore, the private property figures in the table are indicative.

Table 1: Summary of tree assessments

Township	Pruning	Removal	No works	Number of trees
Separation Creek	2	23	1	26
Wye River	6	36	0	42
Private Property	3	5	2	10
Total	11	64	3	78