TREE TRIMMING APPROVED FOR SACRED TREES AT TRAEGER PARK

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) has today issued an Authority Certificate to the Alice Springs Town Council to allow maintenance works to be undertaken on two dead trees at Traeger Park.

CEO of the AAPA, Dr Ben Scambary said “These trees and the land on which they stand have long been identified as features of a sacred site. The two trees were poisoned during or after the construction of the Traeger Park grandstand”.

Senior Central Arrernte custodians have said that “the poisoning of these significant trees has caused us great distress and sadness. The custodians said this needs to be understood, and that despite the poisoning these trees are still our sacred sites and are still important to us.”

They said “We recognise the need for public safety and have allowed these works to occur. However, we also ask for respect of our sacred sites”.

The conditions of the Authority Certificate allow the Alice Springs Town Council to address public safety concerns by undertaking trimming of the trees, and to install bracing of the trees, if required.

The Alice Springs Town Council had requested permission to remove the trees on the basis of safety concerns. However, an independent report commissioned by the AAPA concluded that the trees could be made safe without removing them altogether.

Dr Ben Scambary said “These trees are still sacred sites despite the malicious poisoning by unknown persons. The permitted works will ensure the ongoing enjoyment of the area by the public, whilst protecting the remaining integrity of these sacred sites”.

He said “It is important to send a clear message that deliberate damage to sacred trees will not result in their removal”.

“There are many sacred trees and sacred sites in Alice Springs, and their protection strongly contributes to the town’s unique character.”

“Town Council Aldermen have criticised custodians of sacred sites, and the AAPA in relation to the trees at Traeger Park. But it’s important to understand that Alice Springs is a vital and rich cultural landscape, and that the protection of sacred sites is required under the Sacred Sites Act” he said.

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The Alice Springs Town Council has recently raised concerns about sacred site protection and the cost of Authority Certificates. The AAPA does not make a profit from the services it provides, and only recovers the costs it incurs. In this case, the AAPA has waived all costs incurred by the Council in issuing the Authority Certificate for the Traeger Park trees.

“This is a positive outcome for the Traeger Park trees and shows that a practical balance can be achieved between public use and safety and preserving the integrity of sacred sites.”

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