24 November 2017

Dear Resident/Property Owner,

**Re: Wye River Trees**

Council has noted several tree’s health declining in Wye River and investigated the matter which suggests these trees had been deliberately poisoned. Victoria Police is now investigating and taking the matter very seriously. If anyone has information regarding tree vandalism please contact the Apollo Bay Police on 52376750.

Council does not support the removal of mature trees at any time unless it is undertaken in line with legislative requirements under the Planning and Environment Act. Even in cases where exemptions may be in place for vegetation removal, consultation with Council should occur prior to removal. Significant penalties may apply to those found in breach of legislation.

The loss of trees after the fire has caused significant community heartache and those remaining should be appropriately managed and cared for the following reasons:

* Environmentally, the trees have an intrinsic value for the biodiversity of the area. They provide habitat for birds and marsupials and play a critical role in helping to replace trees lost through the fires. They also help to bind the soil and reduce the risk of landslips.
* Socially, the trees form a key part of the towns’ character. Not only do they provide shade during the summer months they also enhance the towns’ aesthetics. Some of the most stunning views are where the blue ocean is seen through the tree foliage.
* From a fire safety perspective, while large trees can pose a hazard they can also help protect properties from radiant heat and ember attack during fires.

Residents will soon be receiving a letter and factsheet from Council outlining some key fire ready activities to undertake on your property. The fact sheet is also at: [*Getting Fire Ready*](http://www.colacotway.vic.gov.au/My-property/Fire-and-emergencies/Getting-fire-ready) or www.colacotway.vic.gov.au/My-property/Fire-and-emergencies/Getting-fire-ready.

Council does not require or recommend the removal of mature trees. In the majority of cases, fine fuels are responsible for carrying burning embers and flames and providing an easy point of ignition for potential larger fires. Accordingly, the majority of works required by Council involves managing fine fuels (i.e. grass, twigs and leaves) around your property and near neighbouring assets.

Council understands that striking the balance between bushfire safety and native vegetation regeneration on your property may be difficult. We want to work with the whole community to achieve the best possible outcomes. If you have any questions about fire prevention please contact Council on (03) 5232 9400 and ask to speak with Tristan Crews (Fire Awareness Officer) regarding fire prevention activities.

Yours sincerely,

Stewart Anderson

**Colac Otway Shire, Manager Environment and Community Safety.**