

SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. My full name is **Andrew Richard Benson**. I am an urban tree ecophysiologicalist at The Tree Consultancy Company in Auckland.
2. I have prepared evidence on behalf of the Christchurch City Council (**Council**) in respect of my input into, and the matters arising from the submissions and further submissions on, Plan Change 14 (**PC14**) to the Christchurch District Plan (**District Plan**).
3. Specifically, my evidence is in regard to the protection of Significant and Qualifying Matter Trees listed within the District Plan, and an appropriate setback from those trees to provide an optimum level of protection from residential development.
4. My evidence is based on a Technical Report which I prepared for the Council in June 2022. I was asked by the Council to provide expert advice on three possible setbacks from trees, being the dripline; a standard 10 m setback; and a trunk diameter TPZ method, wherein the setback is a circle with a radius equivalent to 15 times the tree's trunk diameter at 1.4 m.
5. My recommendation to the Council in the Technical Report was that the trunk diameter-defined method would provide the optimum level of protection to trees from construction impacts associated with residential development. The trunk diameter TPZ method aligns with current accepted arboricultural best practice from Australia, the United Kingdom, the USA, and the International Society of Arboriculture.
6. With the exception of Riccarton Bush, I have recommended that the trunk diameter TPZ method replace the dripline method that is contained within the current version of the District Plan for the protection of Significant Trees. I have also recommended, in my evidence, that the trunk diameter TPZ method also apply to the protection of street trees, with a minimum setback distance of 3 m.
7. For trees in Riccarton Bush, I have recommended a minimum setback distance of 15 m from the predator-proof fence, which is equivalent to the maximum TPZ radius proposed by PC14, and the maximum TPZ radius proposed by arboricultural best practice standards in the UK and Australia. The current setback from Riccarton Bush contained in the current District Plan is 10 m.

8. On the 2nd of October, 2023, I participated in Expert Conferencing with Professor David Norton, the Riccarton Bush Society's nominated expert, regarding the proposed setback from Riccarton Bush. Professor Norton and I reached agreement that 15 m was an appropriate setback.
9. I have also recommended that the rules relating to the protection of Significant and Qualifying Matter Trees include a provision that requires expert input from a Technician Arborist, being a person holding a minimum qualification equivalent to an NZQA Level 6 Diploma in arboriculture as well as relevant technical arboricultural experience. The requirement for a Technician Arborist to provide input into other arboricultural matters appears elsewhere in the District Plan and other Council policy and technical documents.
10. In summary, by adopting my recommendations, an optimum level of protection from construction impacts will be afforded to Christchurch's Significant, Qualifying Matter, and Street Trees.

Date: 16 April 2024

Andrew R. Benson (Ph.D., BSc, FdSc)