Tree poison mistake

ENVIRONMENT I HEATHER KENNETT

THREE mature willow trees near Hazelwood Park’s popular duck pond have been inadvertently poisoned by Burnside Council.

The trees were drilled and filled with herbicide by council field staff last winter without approval from senior management, as part of a broader remediation and revegetation of First Creek.

The council was only alerted to the poisoning after an anonymous complaint to councillor Leni Park. A council report on the matter, tabled at Burnside’s February 22 meeting, said the aim of the poisoning was to “remove exotic weed species trees” and replant the area with local River Red Gums, shrubs and reeds closer to the duck pond’s edge.

“Field staff were under the assumption that the removal of the trees and replanting of the duck pond and creek edges was a continuation of the revegetation work already well established on other sections of the creek,” the report said.

“After further investigation, it was found staff acted without appropriate authority regarding live tree removal. Consent was not sought and no consideration was given to the ornamental status that the trees had within the local area. “Given the serious nature of the incident, all field staff have been further educated on the protocols that should have been followed.”

Burnside said the poisoned trees would be removed entirely or heavily pruned and retained for habitat value for the ducks, turtles, frogs and birds that frequent the area. Six “advanced” natives would replace the poisoned trees.

“The incident also resulted in two ‘contrite and apologetic’ staff being disciplined. Burnside’s acting infrastructure general manager Simon Bradley said the cost of replacing the poisoned trees and notifying 600 nearby residents of the tree deaths and replacement would be “minimal”.

“The trees will be replaced using existing tree stock from our council nursery,” Mr Bradley said.

“The information sheets will be printed internally and it is expected that council depot staff would letterbox drop the information. “Any expenses are expected to be minimal.”

Hitting the highway for harmony

Picture: Keryn Stevens

GABRIELLE Viney will walk 18 kilometres from her home in Aberfoyle Park to school in Cumberland Park to raise $500 for African students.

The Cabra Dominican College Year 11 student will ask parents, teachers and friends to sponsor her and five others to do the walkathon on March 21 – with all money going to Cabra Primary School in Sudan. She said some children in Sudan walked that distance to school every day.

“A group of us decided to do this because it’s a challenge and ... for charity,” she said. “I feel like I’m doing something for someone else.”

The school’s deputy principal, Margie Barracina, nominated her in the Eastern Courier Messenger’s Harmony Day Hero contest.

The winner, to appear in the March 23 edition, will receive a family pass to one of two Urban Myth Theatre of Youth productions.

To nominate a Harmony Day Hero, email Alicia Melville-Smith, mlvsmith@mng.newsltd.com.au

Unley to keep ‘smelly’ robes

DEBATE I ALICIA MELVILLE-SMITH

UNLEY councillors are stuck with their “smelly” old robes after an attempt to buy new double blue outfits was lost on the chamber floor.

Councillors last week rejected a staff proposal to spend $3000 on new ceremonial robes in black or a more “fashionable” double blue.

Cr Jennie Boisvert, the first to talk against the motion, said the double-blue design was ridiculous. “We would be a laughing stock of the world if we show up in these double blue robes,” she said.

Cr Rob Schnell, who modelled the new robes, said the outfit was “fashionable”.

“We look drab in black, black is out,” he said. “People are what they wear. This is the only sensible option.”

Cr Rob Sangster said: “I think this is a great opportunity to throw our old, smelly gowns out.”

Councillors Mike Hudson, Michael Saies and John Koumi said the whole concept of robes was outdated.

“Why do we have to wear robes?” Cr Hudson said. “Why should we spend $3000 of the ratepayer’s money so we can prance around three times a year looking like pen-guins?”

Cr Koumi said: “If you want to get dressed up, you can be a performer in the musicals. The best decision is not to wear any damn robes at all.”

Councillors Saies and Anthony Lapidge suggested donating the $3000 to charity.

Councillors voted against replacing the robes, with Cr Schnell muttering: “Fine, keep your pongy robes.”

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