

Burswood Park's blue tree 'will return', Labor vows, as racetrack works surge ahead



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A felled blue tree intended to spark community conversations about depression has become the latest flashpoint in the fight over the Cook government's planned Burswood racetrack, with the state vowing to replace it.

The tree was cut down late last week to make way for the \$217 million racetrack and 12,000-seat amphitheatre project, now known as Perth Park.

The blue tree was felled late last week.

Pictures taken by nearby residents and shared on the Save Burswood Park Facebook page last week show the blue tree lying on its side near a row of felled palm trees.

Significant site preparation work is under way, with construction of the racetrack and amphitheatre expected to begin later this year.

The Blue Tree Project was started in 2019 and encourages people to paint dead trees blue to prompt those struggling to seek help, and start conversations in the community about mental health.

The tree's removal came on the same day the WA Planning Commission released a development application for the final piece of the Perth Park project, near the Optus Stadium precinct.

Save Burswood Park co-convenor Robin Harvey turned to the Lord of the Rings to describe the state of the peninsula.

"Burswood Park now resembles a wasteland, just like the forests destroyed by Saruman and Sauron in Lord of the Rings," she said.

"The removal of the blue tree on the same day the development application was released is the final straw, and we say to Roger Cook and Rita Saffioti we are not OK."

A spokeswoman for Transport Minister Rita Saffioti said the project team reached out to the Blue Tree Project early to advise them the tree would need to be removed, and confirmed it would be replaced.

"The existing plaque is being retained, and the state government will work with the Blue Tree Project to identify a new tree within the precinct, to ensure this important cause continues to be promoted in the area," she said.

Work is under way at the site. *Save Burswood Park*

Save Perth Park has been highly critical of the planning processes behind the racetrack and amphitheatre project, and Harvey questioned how the government was pressing ahead with the works without approvals in place.

“Burswood Park now resembles a desert, yet the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage have only just opened public consultation on the development application for a significant portion of the motor racing track,” she said.

“As has been the case throughout this project, requirements for transparency, genuine consultation, and proper process have not been followed.”

The government spokeswoman said where the work had already begun, the Burwood Park Board had planning control and all required approvals were in place.

“The early works under way at Perth Park are occurring on a section of the site under the control of the Burswood Park Board that has all the relevant approvals in place,” she said.

“This early works contract was announced last year and began in February to prepare the site for major construction.

“A development application has been submitted for works on land to the north of Roger McKay Drive.

“This development application covers earth and drainage works, landscaping and public realm improvements, utilities upgrades, roadworks, and construction of a portion of the multi-use track.”

The final design of the racetrack, amphitheatre and accompanying infrastructure is due to be released within the next few months.

The state government is yet to announce any deviation from the original \$217.5 million price tag announced ahead of the March 2025 election, but a recent Infrastructure WA assessment gave no assurances it would remain at that cost.

The assessment, released last month, suggested the information provided to the agency was not enough to ascertain the veracity of \$217.5 million figure.