



Notifiable Tree Report

Creswick V.I.C – Blue Atlas Cedar

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– Senior Arborist HSC)

(16th February 2026)

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1. Introduction

This Notifiable Tree Report has been prepared by Hepburn Shire Council Senior Arborist, **Matthew Daniel**, in accordance with the requirements of the **Tree Management Plan 2022** and the associated *Process for Notifiable Trees*.

On **9 February 2026**, at the Creswick Visitor Information Centre (VIC) the mature ***Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'** (commonly known as *Blue Atlas Cedar*) sustained the failure of a major branch leader due to a **gale-force wind event**. The tree was subsequently inspected, assessed and documented in councils tree inventory, then all storm-damaged debris was removed from site.

A follow-up arboriculture assessment determined that the loss of this leader has significantly compromised the **structural integrity** of the tree. Prior to failure, the canopy structure was dominated by a **trifurcation of co-dominant leaders**, comprising three competing primary branches or main stems. In addition, this is not an isolated event. It is the second bark inclusion branch tear out on this tree, meaning there is a history of this type of failure. Other Blue Atlas Cedars managed by HSC are also sustaining bark inclusion tear outs in recent storm events, suggesting age, defect and stressors have accumulated over time resulting in failures of this type.

This structural configuration represents a **major arboriculture defect** and should have been addressed through formative pruning during the nursery stage or early post-planting period, approximately **50–70 years ago**. The presence of **codominant leaders with bark inclusion** has resulted in inherently weak branch attachments between the leaders.

The bark inclusion has allowed the accumulation of organic matter and moisture within the unions (refer Figures 3–5). Over time, this has led to soil development and decay progression between the leaders, with visual indications of a **potential decay pocket** forming below the codominant union at the point of attachment to the main stem. The presence and extent of internal decay could be further confirmed through **sonic tomography**, a non-invasive diagnostic technology that utilises sound waves to produce detailed images of a tree's internal structure.

The tree is located at the entrance to the **Creswick Visitor Information Centre**, in close proximity to a pedestrian path, bench seating, and a public toilet block. These surrounding features significantly increase the **target value** of the tree when assessing *Risk of Harm* and *Consequence of Failure*. Given the elevated likelihood of injury to

people or damage to property in the event of further leader failure, the risk level has been assessed as **unacceptable** by the Senior Arborist.

A **second professional arboriculture opinion** has been sought to validate the risk assessment and to confirm the feasibility of potential retention options.

Incident Timeline

1. Storm Damage limb failure – Weekend of 7th February 2026
 2. Post storm assessment – 9th February 2026
 3. Debris cleanup up - 9th February 2026
 4. Senior Arborist risk assessment and Notifiable Tree report 16th February 2026
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2. Retention Options

Unfortunately, the viability of retention options for this tree is limited.

Option 1: Structural Pruning

The first option considered involves the removal of the remaining two codominant leaders to eliminate the defective bifurcated structure with major reduction of the top portion of the canopy. While this would address the fault by weight reduction of the primary branches, it would result in a **substantial reduction in canopy size and amenity value**. Additionally, due to the mature age and species characteristics of the Blue Atlas Cedar, **apical dominance could not be effectively reinstated** through regenerative growth.

Given the prominence of the site and the preferability for a feature tree that provides significant visual and landscape amenity, this option has been deemed **not viable** by the Senior Arborist.

Option 2: Cable Bracing

The second option involves the installation of a **cable brace system** between the two remaining primary branch leaders. This option may be considered appropriate for trees located in **low use or low-target environments**, where the consequences of failure are reduced.

Cable bracing systems aim to limit movement of branches attached to a defective union during wind events, thereby reducing stress on the attachment point. Bracing systems are designed either to prevent branch failure entirely or to allow a controlled failure, whereby the failing limb is retained within the canopy and subsequently removed by an arborist following a storm event.

In this case, movement at the union where bark inclusion is present places significant stress on the connecting wood between the leaders and on the attachment to the main stem. While a cable brace may reduce movement, its long-term success depends on **one leader possessing superior structural integrity and load-bearing capacity** to support a failing counterpart.

The primary concern with this Blue Atlas Cedar is that **both remaining leaders exhibit similar attachment characteristics and an equivalent estimated volume of holding wood**. As a result, in the event of a future gale force wind event, failure of one leader is likely and may precipitate the failure of both leaders simultaneously.

Given the elevated target value beneath the tree, such a failure would have the potential to result in a **catastrophic outcome**, posing an unacceptable risk to public safety. Accordingly, cable bracing is not considered a suitable long-term mitigation measure for this tree.

3. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the post storm assessment, the Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') located at the entrance to the Creswick Visitor Information Centre is confirmed to possess a **major and irreversible structural defect** associated with co-dominant leaders exhibiting bark inclusion and associated decay. The recent failure of a primary leader during a gale-force wind event has further compromised the overall structural stability of the tree and significantly increased the likelihood of additional failures.

The tree's location within a **high use public area**, in close proximity to pedestrian path, seating, toilet block and V.I.C building entrance, results in a **high target value**. When combined with the likelihood of further structural failure, the resulting **risk of harm is considered unacceptable** under the Tree Management Plan 2022 and contemporary arboriculture risk assessment principles.

All reasonable retention options have been investigated and found to be either impractical or insufficient to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. Structural weight reduction pruning would result in an unacceptable loss of amenity and would not

restore a stable, sustainable canopy form. The installation of a cable bracing system is not considered a viable long-term mitigation measure due to the similar structural deficiencies presents in both remaining co-dominant bark included leaders and the potential for catastrophic failure during future storm events.

A second professional arboriculture opinion has been sought to verify these findings and confirm that no reasonable alternatives exist to adequately mitigate risk while retaining the tree.

Considering the above, it is the professional opinion of the Senior Arborist that the Blue Atlas Cedar **cannot be safely retained** in its current location. **Removal of the tree is recommended** as the only viable option to eliminate the unacceptable level of risk to public safety.

Following removal, consideration should be given to the **replacement of the tree with a suitable feature species**, selected and managed to provide long-term amenity value while allowing for appropriate formative pruning during establishment to prevent the development of similar structural defects.

4. Process for Notifiable Trees – Tree Management Plan 2022

[tree-management-plan-2022.pdf](#)

Community Consultation

Council understands the importance of providing notification of tree removal works to affected residents. The high value placed on trees by the community means that issues relating to tree management can generate considerable public interest. As a consequence, a commitment to engaging and working with the community is essential to facilitate effective tree management. Particularly, notification of the timing and type of works is important for the success of tree management programs.

There are scenarios by which consultation isn't deemed necessary. Council Officers have developed some key criteria in order to differentiate between Notifiable vs. Non-Notifiable trees for the purposes of community consultation. Notifiable public trees are considered to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- amenity trees (greater than five metres tall and trunk diameter greater than 80cm);
- trees that represent more than 30% of the population of trees in any street/park
- habitat trees - living or dead;

- remnant indigenous vegetation;
- trees of ecological, historical or aesthetic significance
- trees of cultural or environmental significance; or
- rare or threatened trees.

Urban Road Reserves

a) Notification for Removal of a Non-Notifiable Tree

As part of the customer service process or at the time of tree removal works being undertaken in a road reserve in an Urban Zone, the resident immediately adjacent to the site is to be given written or verbal notice of the proposed action including arrangements for stump removal, reinstatement and tree replacement.

b) Notification for Removal of a Notifiable Tree

Community consultation and notifications public tree removal will be driven by the Community Engagement Policy 2021 and the associated Level of Engagement Matrix.

At a minimum, prior to the works being undertaken in a road reserve, residents immediately adjoining or adjacent to the site ("visually" affected by the trees removal) are to be given no less than fourteen (14) days written notice of details of the proposed action, including arrangements for stump removal, reinstatement and tree replacement if appropriate. When more than 30% of street trees are to be removed from a given street or location and their removal may impact upon the wider community, the following will apply:

- Resident and Ward Councillor notification will be undertaken as above.
- Signage, that explains the reason/s for tree removal and providing Council contact details for further information, will be erected no less than fourteen (14) days prior to the proposed works occurring. Size of signage will be a minimum A3.

Rural Road Reserves

Tree removals within the shires Rural Zones is usually undertaken in response to a hazardous or potentially hazardous situation. The tree or group of trees may be deemed to be hazardous or the trees location may pose a hazard to property or road users.

In this instance, notification of Council's intention to remove a tree or group of trees is not required.

Parks, Reserves and Other Council Managed Land

a) Notification for Removal of a Non- Notifiable Tree

No resident, management or Park Committee notification is required for the removal of non- notifiable trees in parks, reserves and other Council managed land.

b) Notification for Removal of a Notifiable Tree

Prior to the work being undertaken in parks, reserves or other Council managed land, any Park Committee, Friends of Group or residents immediately adjoining or adjacent to the site ("visually" affected by the trees removal) are to be given no less than 14 days written notice of details regarding the proposed works, including arrangements for stump removal, reinstatement & tree replacement.

When the extent of tree removal works are significant enough to have an impact upon the wider community, council will use appropriate media forums to publicise the works. Consultation and notification requirements will be driven by the Community Engagement Policy 2021 and the associated Level of Engagement Matrix.

5. Historic Tree Inspection Data

Assessment date	9 th November 2023
Inspection Zone	Zone 1
Genus	Cedrus
Botanical name	<i>Cedrus atlantica 'glauca'</i>
Common name	Blue Atlas Cedar
Origin	Exotic
Tree age	Mature – estimated 50-70 years based on height and DBH
DBH	90cm
Height	17 m
Width	22m
Health	Good
Structure	Fair
Useful Life Expectancy (ULE)	20+ years
Target Range	2
Failure Size	3 (250mm to 110mm diam)
Probability of failure	5 (1/10k to 1/ 100k)
Risk of Harm	< 1/1million
Works required	Retrieve hanger
Works priority	Low – (6-24 months)
Defects	Included bark
Contract Assessor	Mitch Kemp

6. Images of storm damage failure 9th February 2026

1.1 – Storm Damage – Leader failure



Figure 1 – indicates the Cedar tree and branch leader in the foreground. The Co – dominant leader failure due to extreme weather event 9th February 2026

1.2 – Branch Leader on ground



Figure 2 – indicates the branch leader on the ground

1.3 – Origin of branch leader

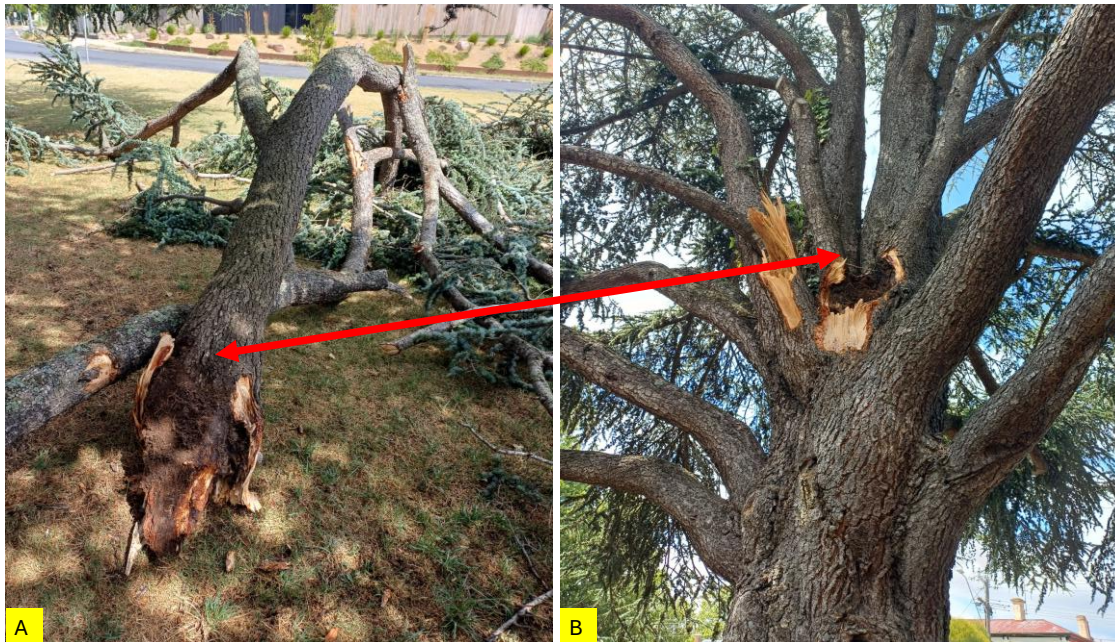


Figure 3 – A. indicates the union and branch collar with B. indicating the origin of the failed branch collar.

1.4 – North and south side of canopy



Figure 4 - A. indicates the North side of the tree where the tear out occurred, with the visible failed union and broken branch. Red arrow indicates the remaining co – dominant leaders and where the bark inclusion is located B. indicates the South side of the tree (Adjacent to path to facility) with bark inclusion between retained co – dominant leaders.

1.5 – Bark Inclusion tear out close up

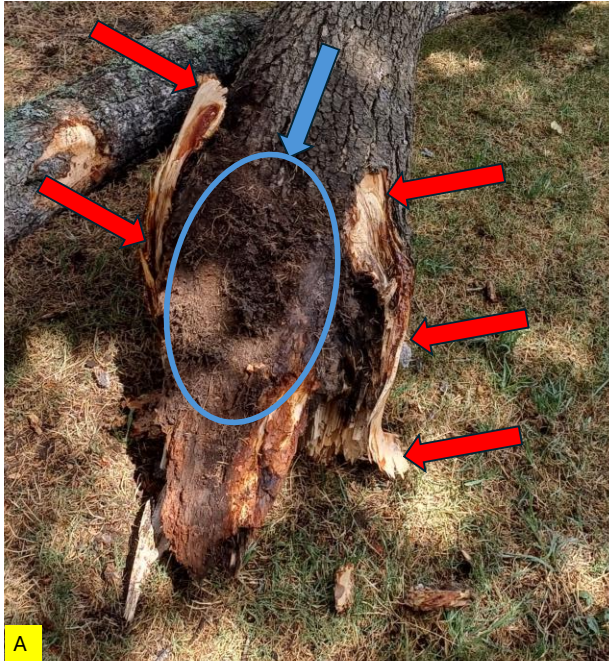


Figure 5 – Indicates the branch leader collar. Red arrows indicate the narrow holding wood (Light colour) that was attaching the branch to the other co-dominant leaders. The blue arrow and circle indicate the bark inclusion area. Canopy Roots can be seen growing in debris forming humic material collecting in the union and holding moisture in the area. This part of the union was not attached to the other co-dominant leaders. This is the causative factor of the failure. The bark inclusion reduced the structural integrity and the damaging wind gusts provided the forces required to make the union fail.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Notifiable Tree	Notifiable public trees are considered to meet one or more of the following criteria: • amenity trees (greater than five meters tall and trunk diameter greater than 80cm); • trees that represent more than 30% of the population of trees in any street/park • habitat trees - living or dead; • remnant indigenous vegetation; • trees of ecological, historical or aesthetic significance • trees of cultural or environmental significance; or • rare or threatened trees.
Co – dominance	Co-dominant branches are two or more adjacent stems that grow from the same point on the trunk, often forming a "V" or "U" shape.
Co – dominant Branch	Two or more first order structural branches or lower order branches of similar dimensions arising from about the same position from a trunk or stem.
Branch Tear out	Dislodging of a branch from its point of attachment where it is torn away from the branch collar snapping the branch tail causing a laceration, usually to the underside of the branch union of the branch or trunk to which it was attached forming a tear out wound.

Bifurcate	The process of the division of roots or branches at one end into two parts.
Trifurcation	Tree Trifurcation refers to the tree having three branches that occur at the junction where a branch meets the trunk of a tree
Cabel Brace	Systems of cables and ropes, traditionally using metal wires but generally replaced by polypropylene, used to support and prolong the life of trees in part or full; systems are susceptible to failure due to evident weaknesses in branch unions. Examples of such proprietary systems are Cobra, and Yale nylon webbing.
Target	People or property likely to be harmed or damaged, respectively, by being struck by a failed or collapsed tree in full or part.
Sonic Tomography	Sonic tomography is a non-invasive technique that uses sound waves to create 2D or 3D images of a tree's internal structure, helping detect decay, cavities, and structural weaknesses.
Branch Union	Place of common juncture for two or more branches where each annual growth increment overlaps around and below the union and successive layers are embedded further into the trunk or supporting branch. At this intersection a distinct ring may form on the larger supporting branch around the smaller branch forming a branch collar, or may be absent if the two or more branches were codominant and of equal size having arisen at the same time and had grown at similar rates in competition with each other.

Canopy Roots

Adventitious fine roots formed within the crown of some rainforest trees utilising moist humic soil in branch crotches and hollows or along or around the trunk, which benefit from nutrients leached from the crown.

Unlike other aerial roots these roots do not try to grow to the ground (Thomas 2000, pp. 88–89).
