

## Trees vandalised beyond repair

Vandals targeted 11 trees in Leongatha on the weekend. All were damaged beyond repair.

Seven Plum trees (*Prunus blireana*) were snapped at the Brown Street end of Peart St. These trees were planted in May this year. Four Chinese Redbuds (*Cercis chinensis*), planted in June 2013, were snapped in Trease St. The estimated cost of trees is \$100 per Plum tree and \$140 per Redbud, plus time spent looking after them by Council staff and residents.

Council estimates it will now cost the ratepayer in excess of \$2,000 to replace them as well as the ongoing care to get them established.

South Gippsland Shire Mayor, Cr Ray Argento, said tree vandalism was unlawful destruction, damage or injury to trees on public land. Examples include poisoning, ringbarking, pruning and removal.

Cr Argento encouraged anyone with information to contact Council or the Leongatha Police, who are currently investigating the incident.

“All reports are treated by Council as confidential,” Cr Argento explained. “An investigation could be undertaken and could result in penalties.”

The following information will help when reporting tree vandalism:

- Property address
- Persons involved, company, vehicle details including registration, photos taken
- Date and time of the incident
- What the person/s used; chainsaw, ladders, ropes, hand saws, any machinery/equipment used
- Details of the trees; how many, their location on the property (front yard/back yard, nature strip) tree species (if known), height/width

“This act of vandalism is deplorable,” Mr Argento said. “Council is terribly disappointed in the people who've done it and in the end, it all comes back to ratepayers who eventually pay and that is our greatest concern.”

*Photo captions:*

1. *One of four Chinese Redbuds vandalised beyond repair in Trease Street, Leongatha.*
2. *One of seven Plum trees vandalised beyond repair in Peart Street, Leongatha.*
3. *The seven damaged Plum trees highlight a path of destruction along Peart Street, Leongatha.*

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