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Media Release

Auckland Council not standing up for trees

The Environmental Defence Society is disappointed that the re-drafted Auckland Unitary Plan, which is before the Auckland Plan Committee this week, fails to stand up for trees.

“The draft Auckland Unitary Plan proposed a range of measures for managing trees. Many of these are not found in the re-draft,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“The Resource Management Amendment Act (passed Tuesday night) introduces amendments to section 76 of the RMA which will negatively impact the ability of councils to manage trees using district rules.

“However, the amendments to section 76 of the RMA do not restrict the ability of councils to manage trees through regional rules for purposes which include maintaining indigenous biodiversity. The Ministry for the Environment has confirmed this interpretation.

“Auckland Council has failed to take advantage of the fact that the unitary plan contains both regional and district rules.

“Auckland, like most of New Zealand, has lost much of its biodiversity resource. Auckland’s growing population is putting additional pressure on this valuable resource and, while the compact city vision reduces the threat of urban sprawl to biodiversity, it is essential that intensification occurs in a way that allows urban trees to be retained to ensure Aucklanders quality of life is maintained and to provide stepping stones and corridors for indigenous biodiversity.

“We are very concerned that a failure to include adequate tree protection rules in the notified Unitary Plan will lead to a ‘chainsaw massacre’ while the submissions and hearings process is underway.

“EDS urges the Auckland Plan Committee to reconsider this issue during its 3 day workshop which is now underway,” Mr Taylor concluded.