

**It's come to this
Street trees caged to prevent vandalism
Jamie First**

The green, leafy streets of Port Phillip are under threat.

The Council has gone to dramatic lengths to try to save the trees in its municipality, literally caging them in the hope of preventing theft and vandalism.

Mayor Amanda Stevens said between 80 and 100 saplings had been stolen or damaged each year from areas such as Alma Rd, the Elwood foreshore and the St Kilda Botanical Gardens.

“Since introducing barriers and placing signage on the trees, we have noticed a decrease in these thefts and acts of vandalism,” Cr Stevens said.

“It costs Council roughly \$500 to replace each tree, plus another \$500 to buy and install the guards.

“The types of trees typically stolen are pencil pines, like those near the St Kilda Cemetery ... We’ve also had to replace a large number of magnolias over the years ... on Grey St.”

Cr Stevens said of the 250 cages that have so far been fitted, all could be reused once the trees were well-established.

Despite having notes on the barriers that read: “This tree is under surveillance”, she said they were not monitored by cameras.

“The conditions of the trees are checked regularly throughout the week by Council officers.”