

PRESENTATION TO EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCILLORS – 12 MARCH 2019

RE : THE INURNMENT WALLS AT THE NAROOMA CEMETERY

Dear Mayor and Councillors

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you in regard to maintenance and upkeep of the Narooma Cemetery, but in particular and of more concern to me, the current state of the area surrounding the inurnment walls.

By way of background (and I will keep this as brief as possible) – some 14 years ago I had to arrange for my mother's ashes to be placed in the inurnment wall. At that time the garden at the existing walls was looking very overgrown and when I approached the shire depot at Narooma, I was told it was not a council garden and therefore the upkeep of it was not their responsibility. To say I was little surprised was an understatement. When I asked who did have responsibility, I was told that a Narooma resident (I have withheld his name) had put the garden in but that he had now also passed away.

Several months later I found the gentleman referred to above playing bowls, and I spoke to him. He told me that when his wife's ashes had to be placed he also spoke to staff at the Narooma Depot about his concerns with the overgrown garden beds around the walls - and he was told that yes, it was part of the inurnment wall area, but there was no funding nor resources to maintain it. He then arranged for a working bee to go out with him to begin the initial clean up.

Since 2004 I have been, in a sense, looking after the garden beds. Over the time I have had discussions and emails with staff at the Narooma Depot, initially to request gum trees in the original gardens to be removed (which have been done) simply because at the time the branches were extending over the walls themselves and I was concerned about damage if the branches were to break off in a storm or strong winds. Just before one Christmas I asked if I could get a load of mulch to spread over the beds and that was provided. Over the years I have planted and maintained shrubs, cut back (as best I can) the encroaching scrub from the bush side of the "fence" and tried to deal with ferociously growing privets.

*In 2008 I also had to have my father's ashes placed in the wall. I continued to keep the gardens as tidy as I could- sometimes with the assistance of friends. I would like to add that the garden (although it appeared not to be a Council responsibility) was being used as a place to deposit ashes (**refer photos December 2014**) and these have often just been emptied on top of and amongst the flowers and shrubs!! I can only assume, given that the original walls are too small to hold the new larger sized boxes that are returned from the crematorium, that this was indeed done by Council and not a private citizen .*

*In the early part of 2018 I was deciding whether or not it was all getting too much for me. The gums, vines and scrub on the bush side of the "fence" had become too big for me to keep away from the "fence" and off the garden beds (**refer photos May 2018**). As a last ditch effort, in about June 2018, I again asked if there could be an area of the bush cleared away from the "fence" line and for the overhanging gum trees (many of which were dead) to be cut down. By these trees being removed it would take away the problem of them falling ...and would also stop me nagging!! If an area could be cleared away from the "fence" it would also make the maintenance of the garden beds easier and the whole area look more presentable. At times, the concrete path on the "beach" side of the walls is inaccessible because of the overgrown branches and those wishing to get to Rows A&B would have difficulty in doing so.*

*On a visit in early August of last year, I was very happy and relieved to see that the tall trees along the fence line had been cut – stumps of about 4-5 feet were left. However nothing was taken away except the main trunks of the cut trees!! All the debris, branches, undergrowth and rubbish was left where it fell, including on the garden and "fence" (**refer to photos dated August 2018**). I was neither daunted nor disillusioned because I was of the belief that this would be stage 1 of the clean-up. But some 4 months later and still nothing had been done!! The trees, vines and bushes that were cut were shooting vigorously as were the privets and were already up over fence height. The "fence" that was partly knocked over and broken (not that that would have taken much) was still lying there (**refer photos December 2018**).*

*If possible, it is a bigger mess than before the clearing was done last year – simply because the job was never finished. It appears there has been no follow up, nor interest in completing the task. Also around the time the clearing work was done, three new inurnment walls were being erected. Unfortunately the small garden bed around these new walls has been left to grow very healthy weeds in amongst the left over builders' rubble (**refer photos February 2019**). The money and time spent in the initial clearing has been wasted, and served no purpose, as it now needs extensive work done again.*

All in all I am not sure that the presentation of the area, in general, around the inurnment walls at the Narooma Cemetery is one that Narooma (nor the Shire) could be proud of. The approach to the walls from the sealed road is almost covered by overgrown shrubs and trees.

I would hope the photos I have provided will assist you in appreciating my concerns.

Over the years I have been told that there needs to be a "barrier" of trees around the walls (particularly at the sealed road end) as they act as a "wind break". I understand that this could be a legitimate argument, however, I am not sure that the walls being overgrown is really what was meant. Surely of bigger concern would be the possibility of cars (which use that area regularly as a general commute to the "glasshouse" beach & other activities) doing damage to the walls as they are now very open to the access road and parking spaces.

I am sure that Council will always have competing funding priorities (and perhaps the upkeep of cemeteries is not seen as one) however, I would ask please, that some money be set aside for the completion of the inurnment wall surrounds and a plan be finalised for work to commence on cleaning up the area and for the ongoing upkeep. I understand it must also be difficult to justify allocating money for work to be done for people who don't have a voice however, with respect, I would think the majority of those people would have paid their dues over the years.

I would like to finish by saying that the mowing program and maintenance of the cemetery has vastly improved and it is usually well presented – it would be nice if the inurnment wall space was the same. In all this I appreciate the difficulty the crews must have when the areas are too overgrown for the mowers, and for them to do their job.

I am happy to continue to look after the gardens and intend to do so on each of my return visits, however, I feel that I am currently losing the battle to keep the area looking at least a little respectable. I would very much appreciate some ongoing assistance from Council – perhaps by way of additional funding to the Narooma Depot to allow them to undertake the maintenance programs that are required, not only within the town but also at the cemetery.

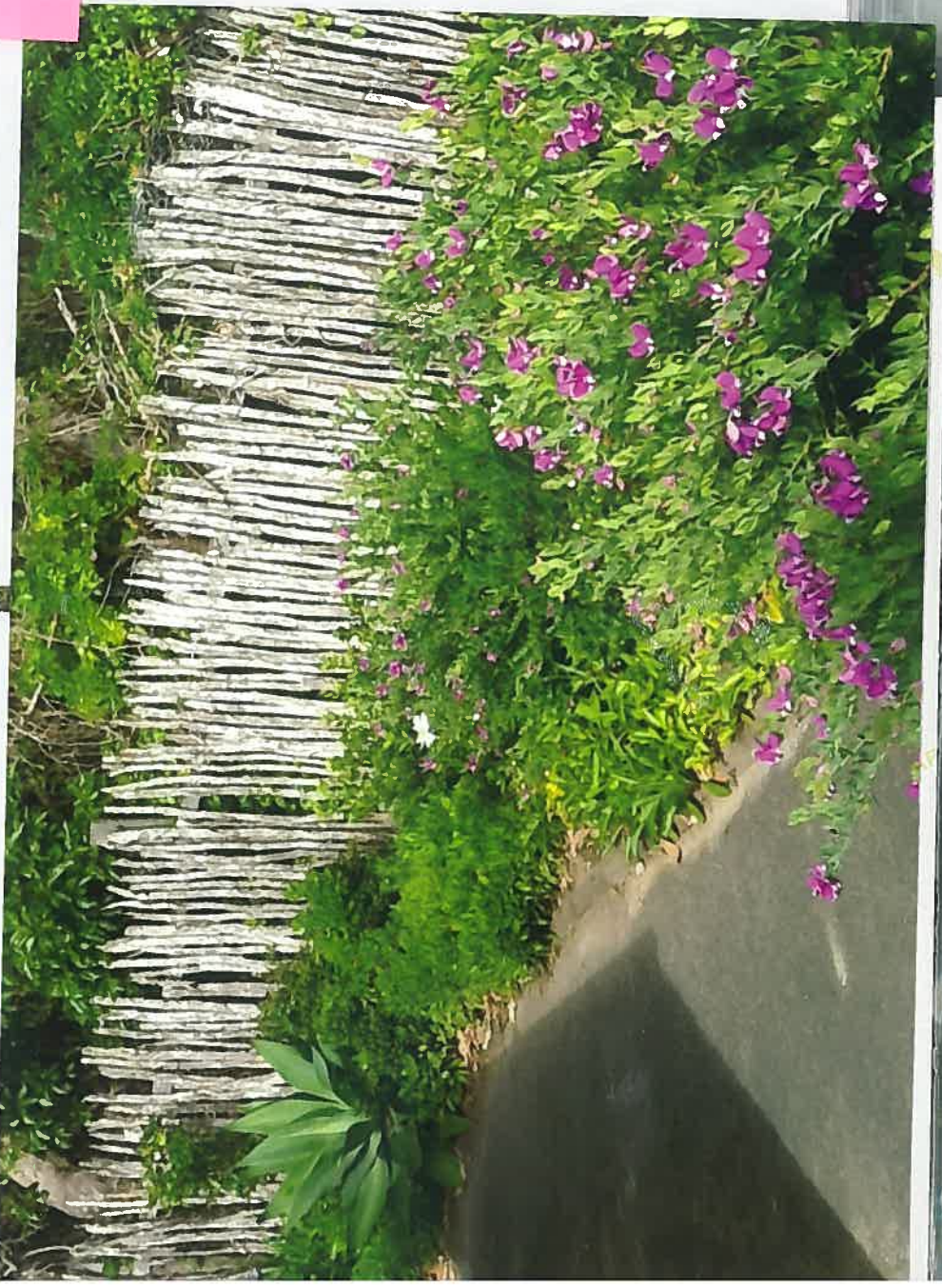
Thank you again for your time and I appreciate this opportunity to raise my concerns.

Deirdre Rodgers

12 March 2019

P.S. Since registering to speak with you and providing the subject of my concerns, I have been told (by friends in Narooma) that there appears to be a small area cleared close to the large white cross near the inurnment wall and that the weeds in the small garden bed adjacent to the three new walls appear to have been poisoned or removed.

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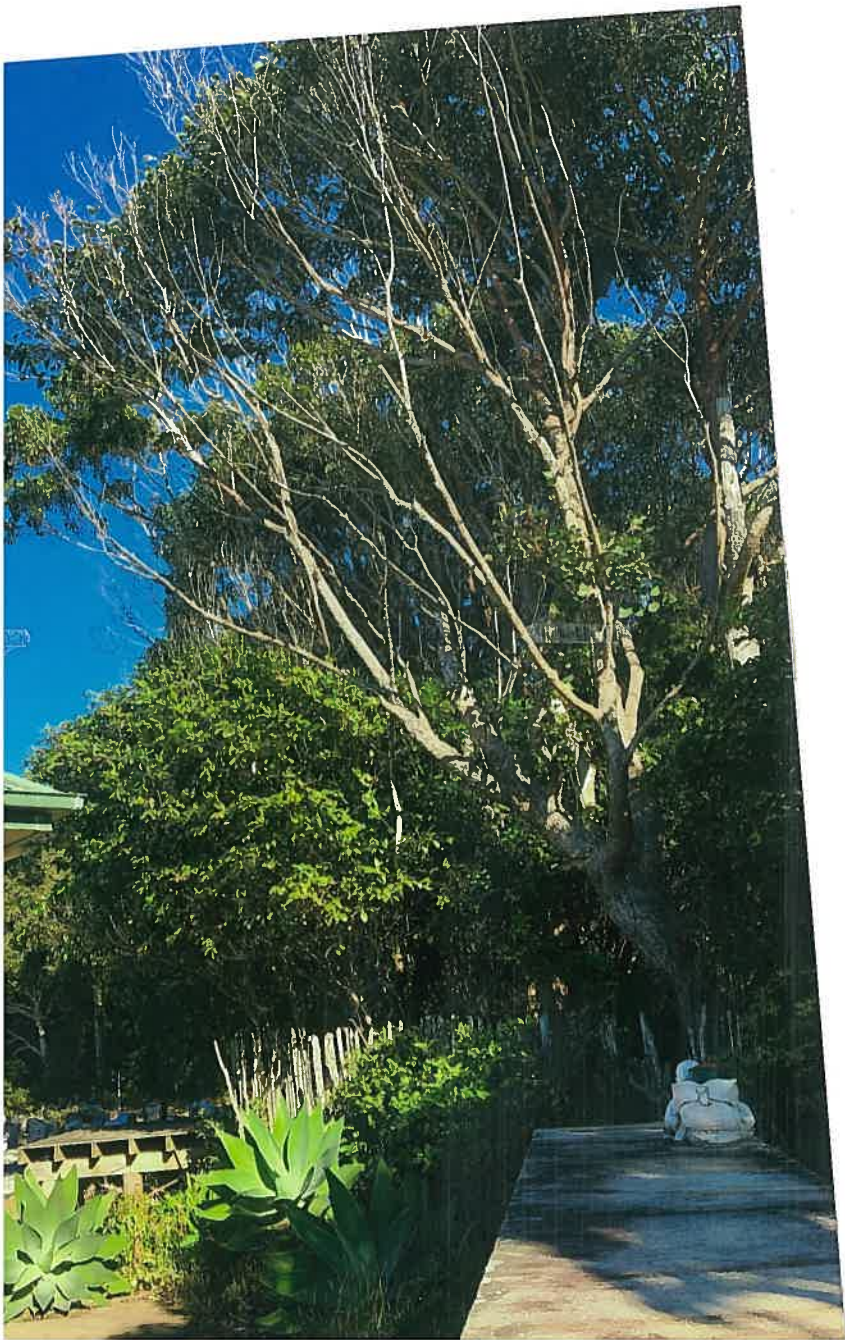
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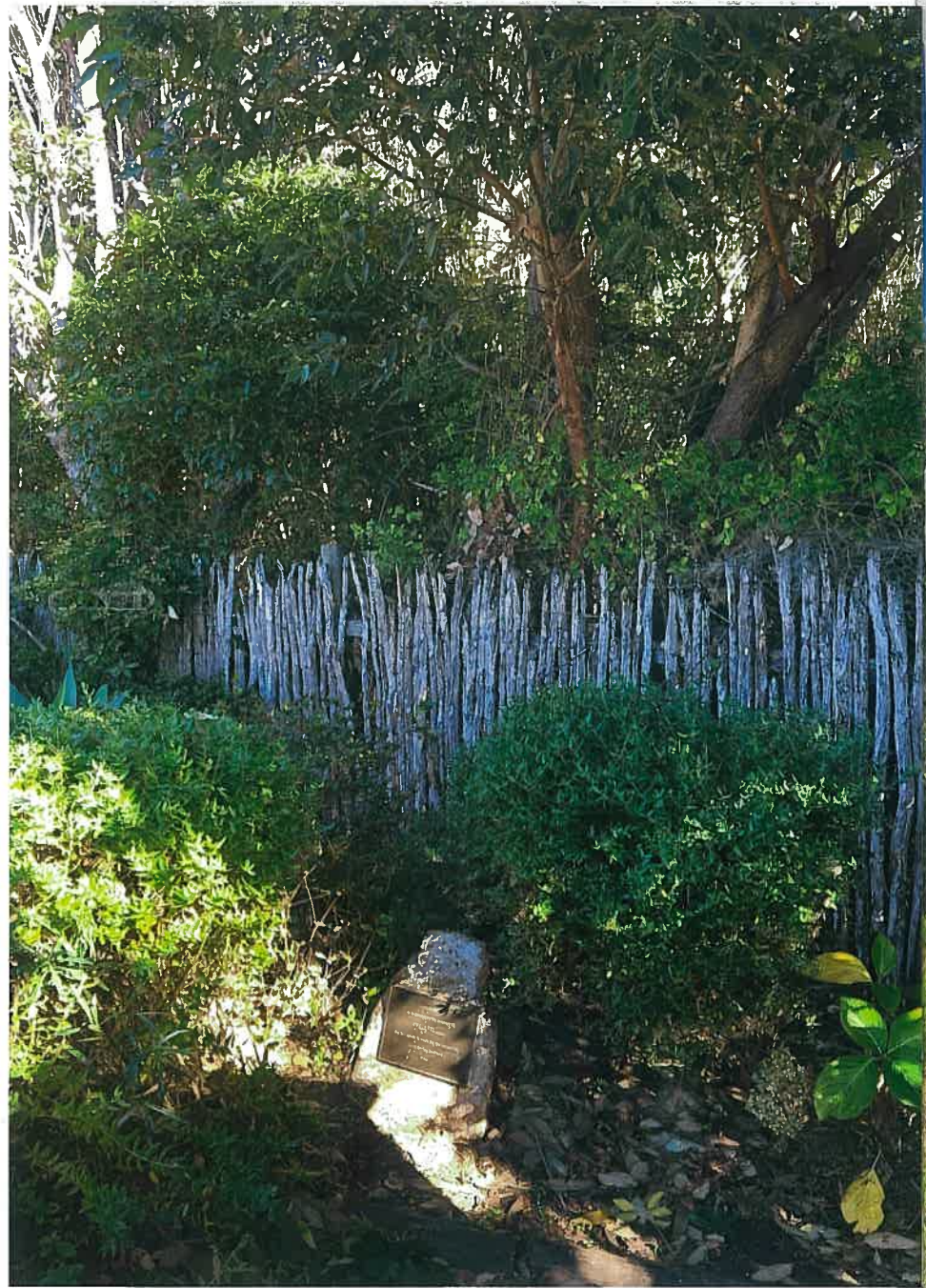
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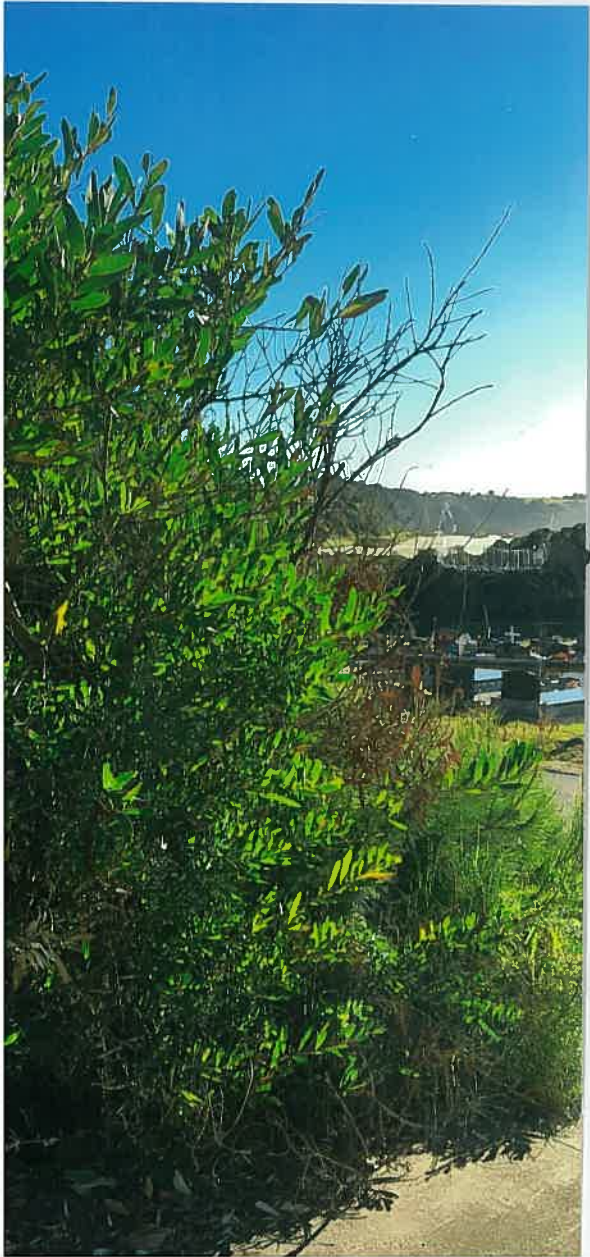
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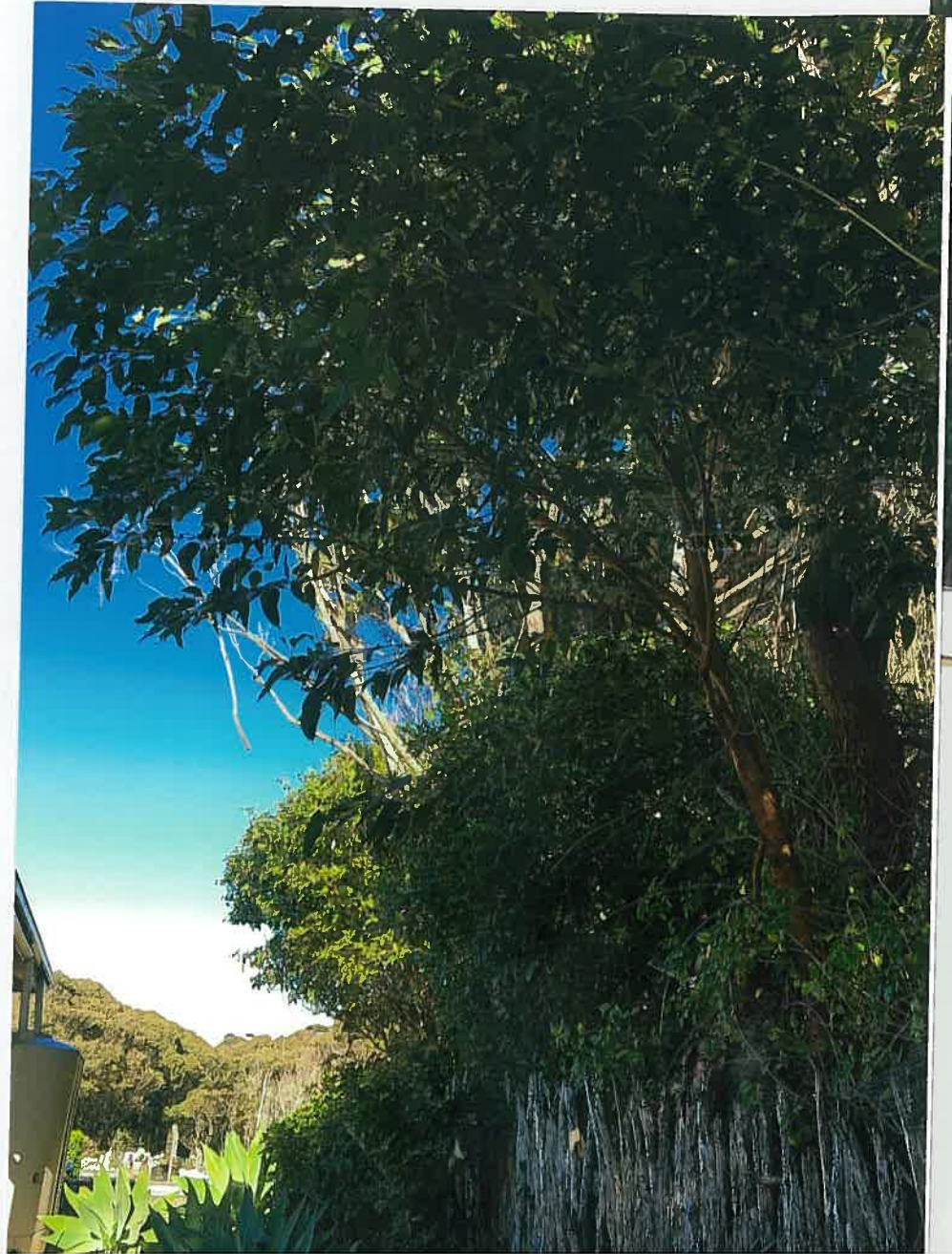


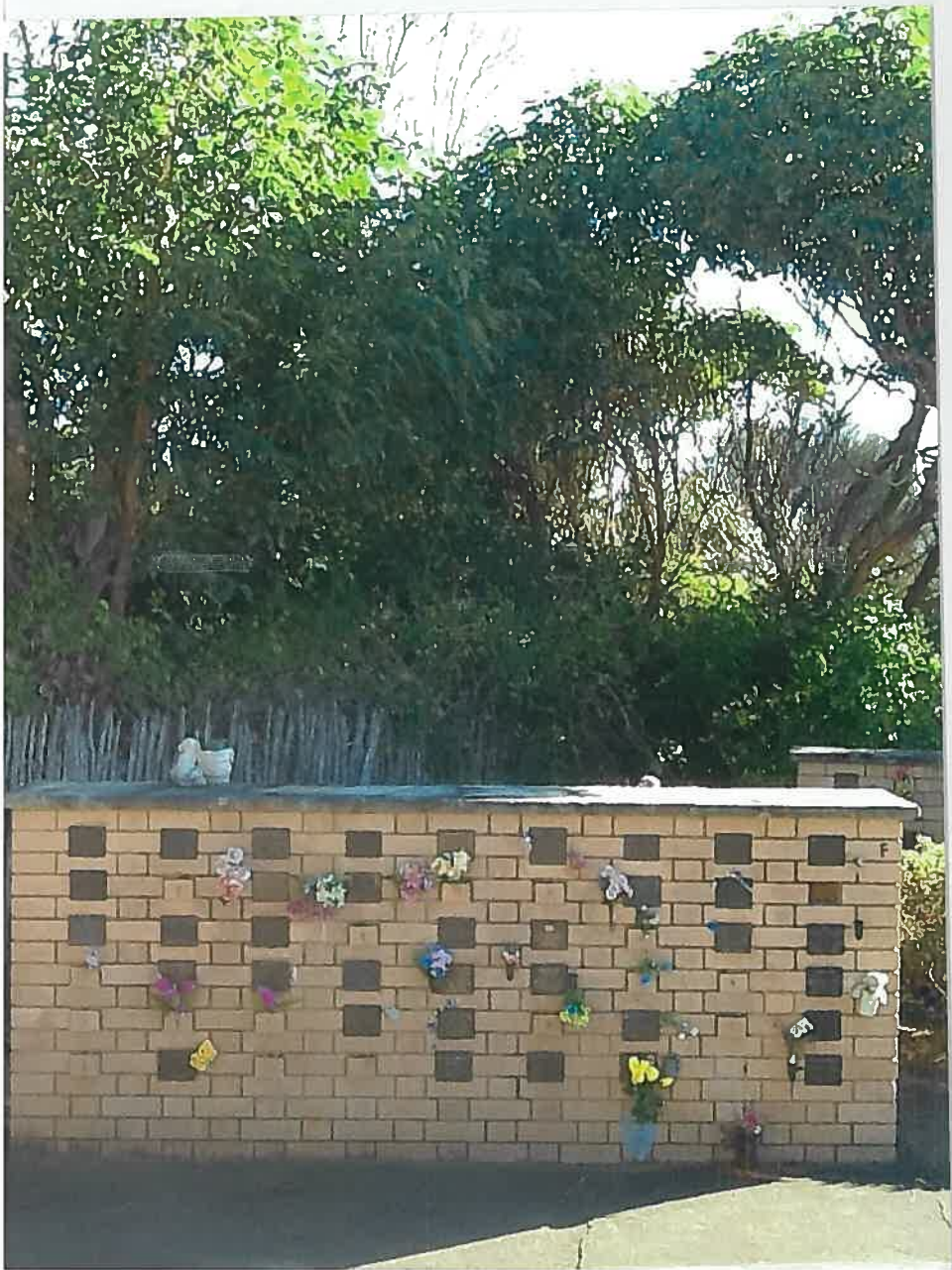
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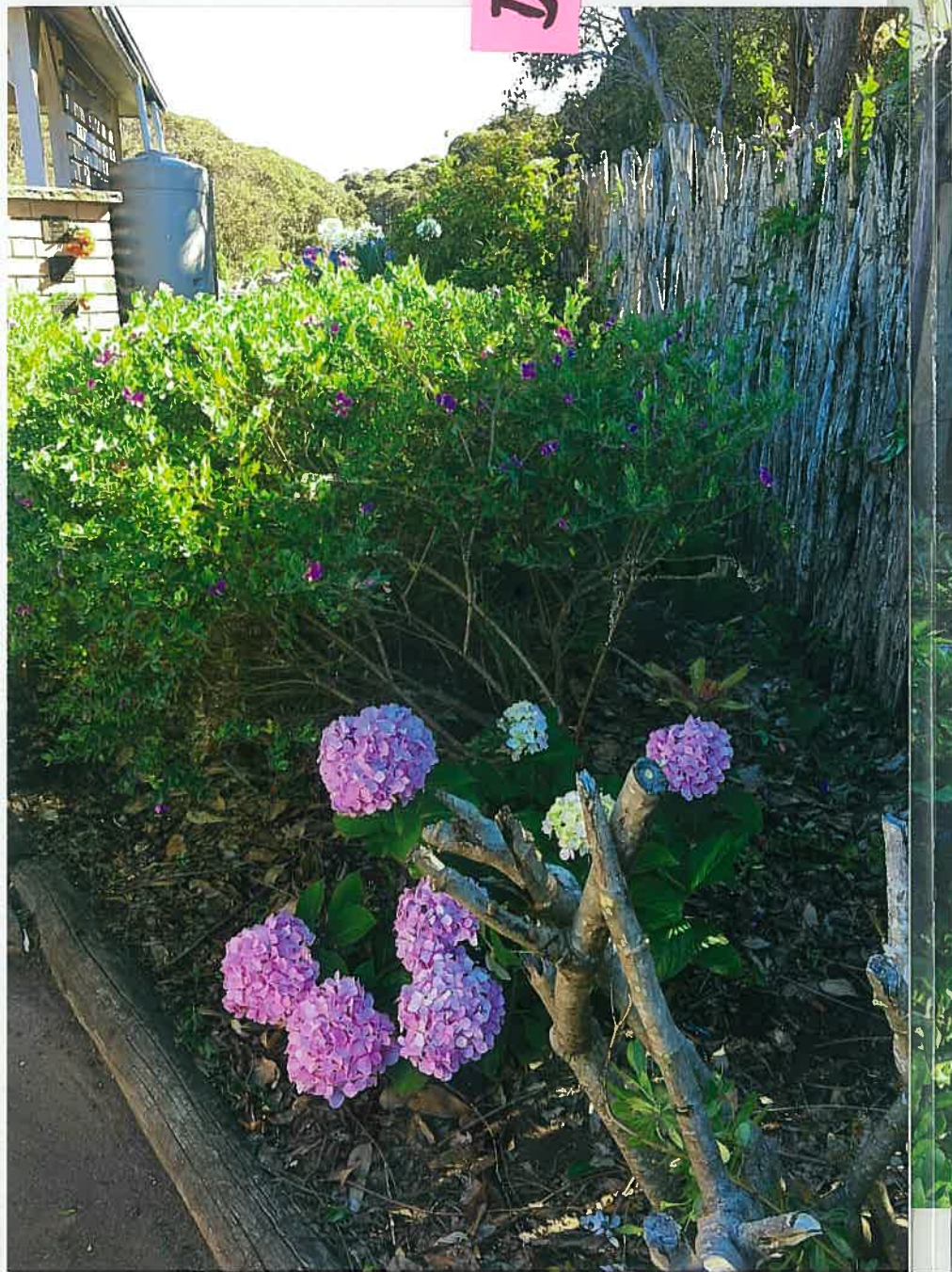
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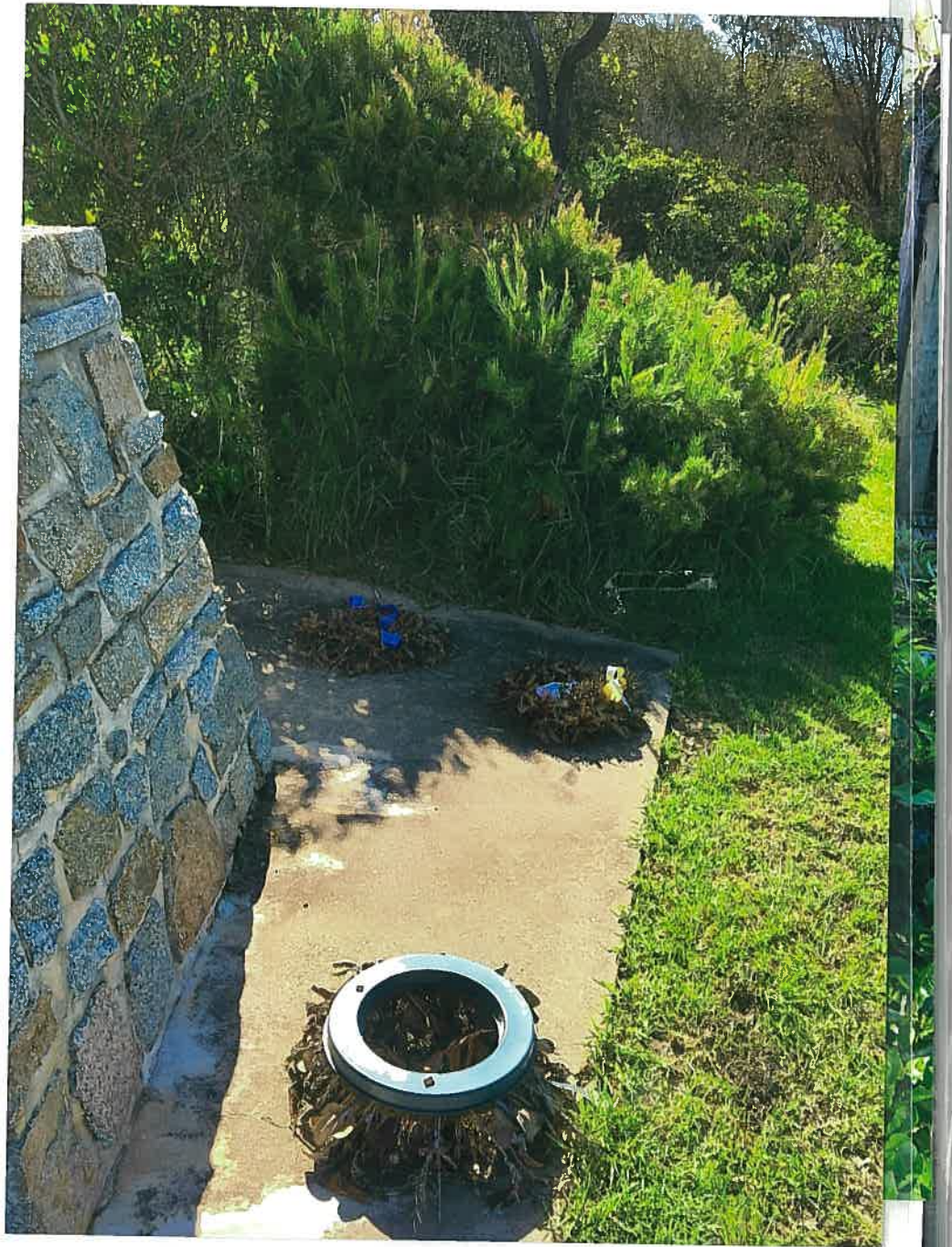
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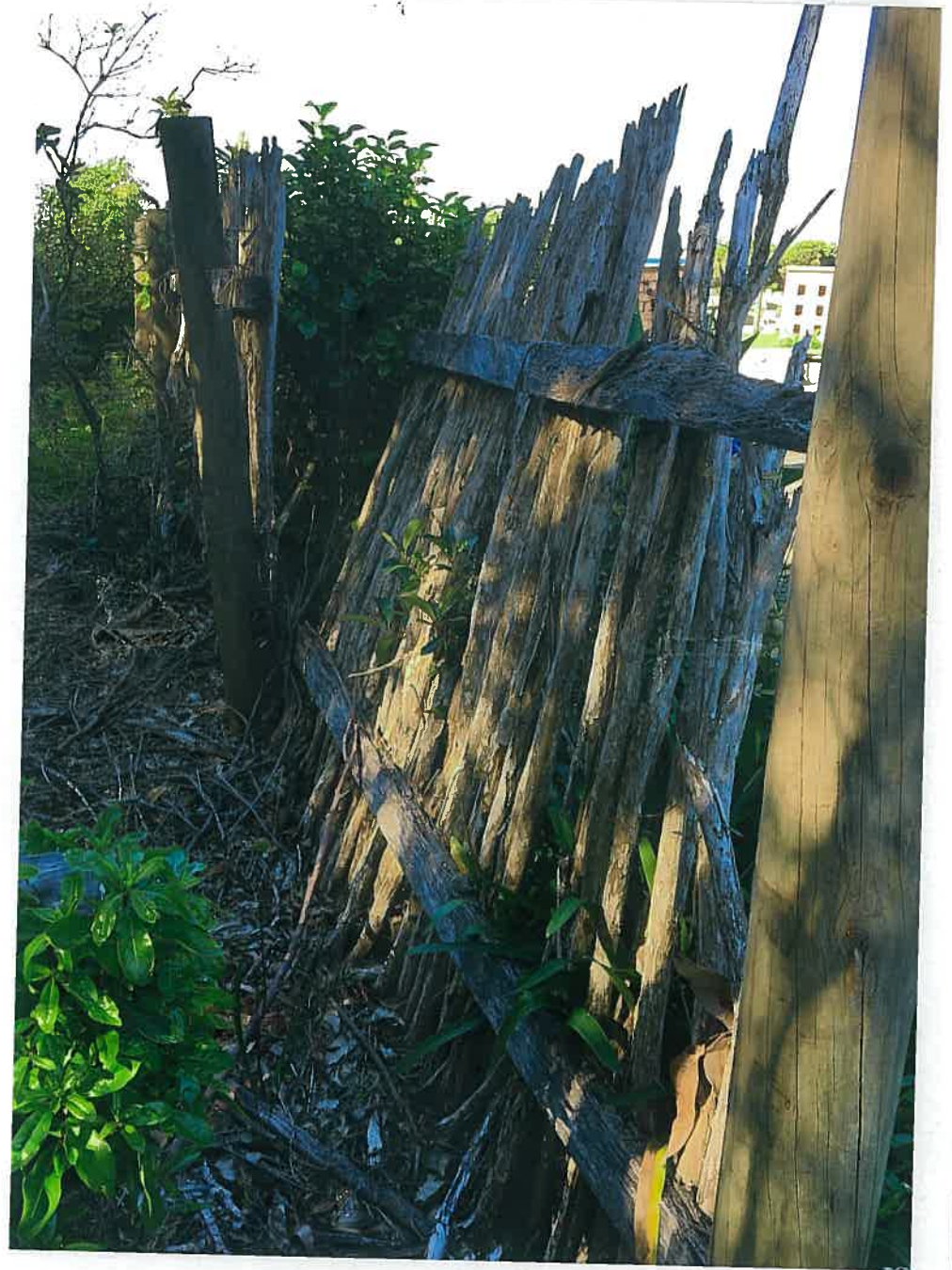
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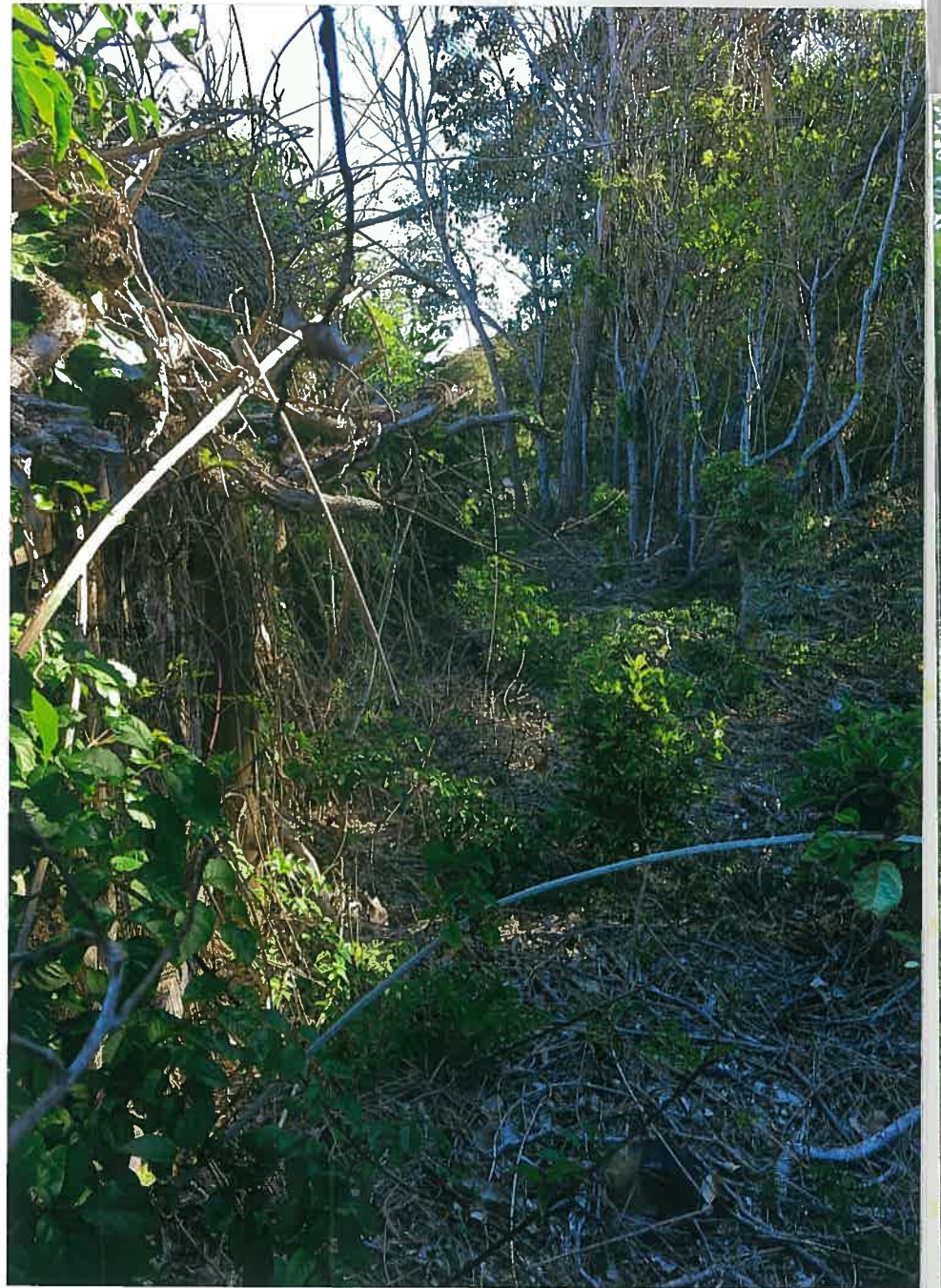


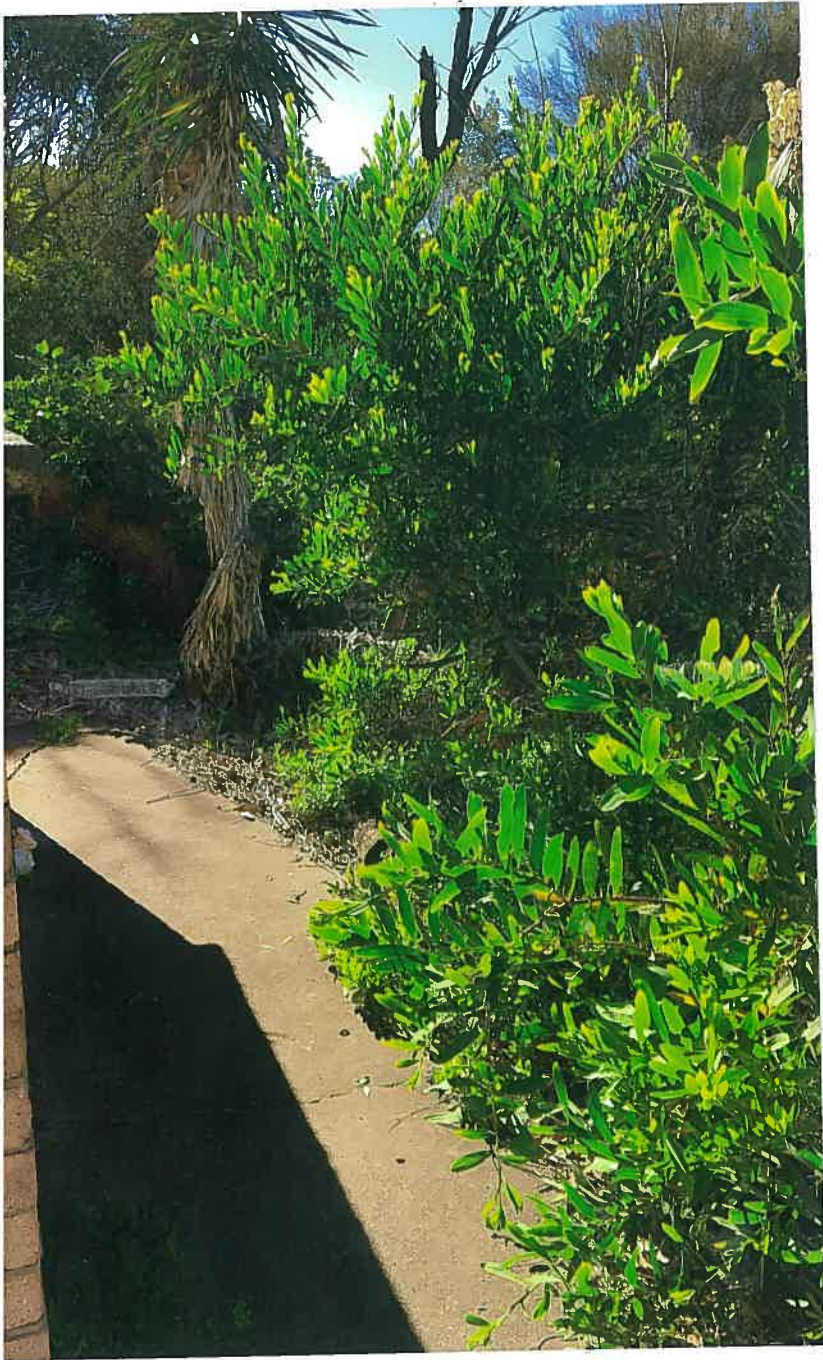
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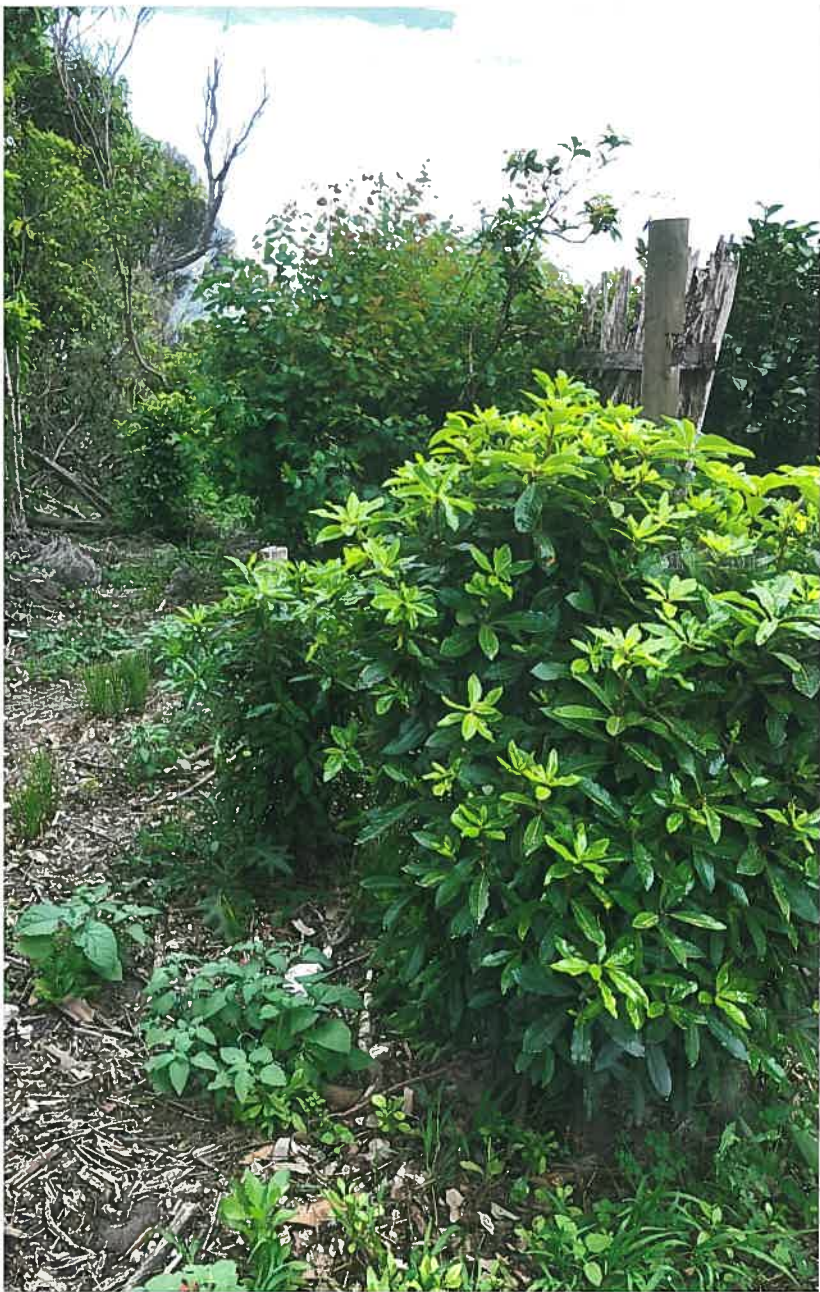
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