



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into West Belconnen supercell thunderstorm

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Inquiry into the West Belconnen supercell thunderstorm

Comments from Beth Rogers (unable to attend the hearing due to illness).

These suggestions relate to sections (b) and (e).

Please note I have no expertise in emergency management, these comments are just from general life experience.

(b) As mentioned in my initial statement, I felt that the communications from the power provider Evo Energy and the government were lacking and minimal. As a result we reacted with anger and frustration .

To improve on this, given it was holiday time, unplanned and coming into nighttime, I suggest some door knocking, a vehicle with a loudhailer, maybe a letterbox drop (probably hard to do so quickly) would be helpful, given we had no power and limited ability to get out of the neighborhood. A different tone in the communication would have been helpful, eg sorry for this inconvenience (although I know it is not your fault, not sure if there are legal ramifications), we are working as fast as possible but we will keep you updated- and follow through-this is important.

(e) Since storm events seem to occur frequently in December and January-mid summer, our holiday period, we need to have standby emergency teams on call to mitigate for such events. Now perhaps this is already in place. If so, perhaps there could be some general communication to advise the populace that this is the case. If you are not connected to emergency services, you would not know. Maybe such teams could take holidays in February/March. In relation to those with school children, they may have to stay in town at that time.

There has been much evidence over the years in relation to the timing of natural disasters, from the fires in 2002-03 to the fires of 2019. Many new immigrants to Canberra did not witness the 2003 fires, maybe an occasional timely reminder would be useful.

A summer awareness campaign relating to storms, similar to the bushfire preparation campaign (which was very good), could be useful. Have it really saturation level in local media and letterbox drops.

Contents could include:

- Secure house and cars-cover with blankets if you can't get it under cover. There is more street parking in new areas these days.
- Charge devices and have solar chargers, lights, keep them charged.
- Have the capability to store clean drinking water and boil water- even a small barbeque or a two-burner gas stove. See your local camping store. Warn the camping stores beforehand, so they can stock up.
- Get an esky for cold storage.
- In the event you can't or don't want to leave your home, eg if you are or are caring for frail aged people, young children etc- plan some strategies for safety.
- Check on neighbours.
- Have somewhere to evacuate to if necessary eg, family or friends.
- Advice on what to do if caught in a severe hailstorm. (This is very frightening; it sounds like someone is throwing big rocks at your car). Look for shelter, eg a carport. Don't be embarrassed about going onto someone else's property for a few minutes- this is important.
- If on the road, look for a bridge, or overpass. If near shops, look for a petrol station or undercover carpark.
- (This was the first time for me, in 45+ years of driving, it was terrifying, and it wasn't my car either!)

Sometimes the general populace just needs some hints and tips, or timely reminders about commonsense safety. But also, those we rely on to protect us from events- the government and government bodies, who we have given the responsibility to by voting for them in government, need to be proactive, and visible in their protection. We have the advantage of a small progressive jurisdiction, so should be able to enact these policies of storm management efficiently and effectively.

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