



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair)
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into West Belconnen supercell thunderstorm

Submission Number: 008

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [LA Committee - HCW](#)
Subject: No Action on Dangerous Trees, Major work Blocked
Date: Wednesday, 20 April 2022 4:15:58 PM

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To whom it may concern:

Thank you for your inquiry into the matter of poor communication and tardy (if not zero) response to vulnerable citizens in regard to dangerous trees.

I have lived at [REDACTED] since 1982 and in line with the somewhat embryonic green movement of that day, made a significant planting of trees for shade and health. I planted with a view to maximize passive solar heating through the North facing windows, and further positioned in consideration of safety and protection for the home and its residents.

Ironically, the tree of major concern (and which damaged our roof in the January superstorm) is an old growth "Yellow Box" (*Eucalyptus Melaleuca*) which predates the suburb.

It's a quite magnificent tree, but unlike its sister tree near the nature strip (same species, vintage and in a much safer position), it suffered an internal white ant attack (subsequently eradicated) and further significant damage to the outside of the trunk base from some other insect.

With serious concern I had it assessed by the City Services Conservator. It was deemed safe on 13th of October 2021 (please see attachment). The January 3 storm (three months later) demonstrated otherwise.

With photographic evidence of the roof damage and fallen branch I contacted Rebecca Vassarotti's office (environment and heritage).

After numerous call backs with no response (a clear lack of interest in community service) I was eventually advised the matter fell into Chris Steel's portfolio, that he'd been briefed, and that his office would contact me shortly.

Months later .. ZERO ..

I'm more than a little disgruntled at the ineptness, lack of interest and poor communications (within and across portfolio's) within ACT Labor.

Given the government's near criminal performance on an obviously life threatening situation (this tree would cut the house in half if it came down) I've subsequently elected to sell and move somewhere safer.

I would point out to the enquiry that heritage and conservation rulings in other jurisdictions are somewhat better based in reality, in particular that if a very large tree is within dangerous proximity to a small house (let alone termite damaged) that it be lawful to remove or major prune such that the safety and peace of mind of residents not be threatened.

I would also suggest that if Chris Steel's department is interested in resolving this matter, he contact me immediately to advise due process on any changes to the Act that may be pending.

Or at least have the decency to send out someone more capable to reassess the tree in the

light of the above mentioned failure.

And not at my cost as per some insistence I further gamble with the whimsical laziness of big-bureaucracy ACT Labor.

Kind Regards,
Stephen O'Neill