



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

Inquiry into West Belconnen supercell thunderstorm
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
1 July 2022

Asked by the Chair on 1 July 2022: Mr Billing took on notice the following question(s):

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In relation to:

THE CHAIR: How many trees across the ACT has Evoenergy identified in let us say the last 12 months or the last financial year, and in your last reporting period, subsequent reporting period, that you have identified as qualifying for the hazard tree register?

Mr Billing: I would take that on notice. I do not—

THE CHAIR: Well it might be an on notice question, but I would be also interested to know then—actually no, if you could explain to me the process of once you have identified a tree that goes on that hazard tree register, who do you call in the ACT government to let them know you have now classified this tree as a hazard?

Mr Billing: Yes, you got that detail, Alison?

Ms Davis: I do not think I have that specifically.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Davis: We could take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: It is all right. Because I would be interested in knowing—understanding more about the process. I would also be interested then in knowing how many—again, hazard trees that you had—not just that you have registered—

Mr Billing: Yes.

THE CHAIR: —but have all the ones that you have registered, have you informed the government that you have registered them?

Mr Billing: Yes.

THE CHAIR: And then I would also be interested in just getting a better—I would also understand in getting a figure, how many times have you been told by the government, even though you have identified tree as a register, we will not be removing or reducing its size. That would be an interesting figure to know as well.

Mr Billing: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Are you willing to take all of those on notice?

Mr Billing: Yes.

[EVOENERGY]: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Evoenergy have an on-ground field program and an annual aerial inspection program to look for vegetation encroaching on powerlines.

Each year, trees and branches falling on powerlines continue to be our most significant threat to electricity sparking bushfires and one of the lead causes of power interruptions in the ACT. These inspection programs identify vegetation encroachments so they can be prioritised and addressed to ensure we keep our network safe and reliable.

During these programs, where Evoenergy find trees too close to powerlines on private property, Evoenergy notifies residents requesting they have their trees trimmed. Where the trees are on Territory land, Evoenergy contacts the ACT Government's City Services Directorate.

Where a tree is in poor health, will require repeated remedial action to make it safe due to the height or proximity to powerlines, or poses a risk of falling onto powerlines Evoenergy will make a recommendation to have the tree removed as it poses a significant risk to network safety.

In 2021-22, Evoenergy made 6 urgent requests for the ACT Government to remove trees and 22 recommendations to remove trees.

Evoenergy makes an application under the ACT Tree Protection Act for the complete removal of a particular tree which poses a risk including the details of the specific circumstances to the ACT Government. If they agree it is the right course of action to remove the tree, it is removed and replaced. Evoenergy respect the judgement of ACT Government around whether the tree should or should not be removed. There have been zero recent incidents where the ACT Government has not taken Evoenergy's advice on tree removal.

Of the recommendations we made in 2021-22, Evoenergy have confirmation that 16 trees have been removed, including the 6 made under an urgent request.

Where a tree is not able to be removed, Evoenergy will recommend alternative action to ensure that the network can be safe and reliable.

Given there are thousands of trees across the ACT that may potentially impact powerlines, it is a difficult and time-consuming exercise. We are seeking a collaboration with the ACT Government to increase the inspection program as the trees are predominantly in Territory land or protected under the Tree Protection Act.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature:

Date:

Name: