



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

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [LA Committee - HCW](#)
Subject: Submission to Inquiry into the West Belconnen supercell thunderstorm
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Subject: Submission to Inquiry into the West Belconnen supercell thunderstorm
To: The Committee Chair, Mr Johnathan Davis MLA

Thank you for this chance to share my views on the January power outages.

I will use similar answers that I gave to a survey from EvoEnergy. They asked:
"It's now been over three months since the severe storm that caused extensive damage to property and infrastructure in North Canberra. Our records show that your property was one of **2,571** residents that experienced a prolonged power outage as a result of the 3 January 2022 storm and we'd appreciate your feedback on how we can improve the service we provide. To provide feedback please visit: rchtl.com/r/KfxX"

Evo's first question was

"Based on your experience, what can we do to improve the way we work with residents when there's a power outage at their property?"

Here's my answer.

Trim trees years sooner. The moderate-sized branch that took out this block of 24 houses for 7 days, that same tree had dropped a branch on that line to take out power previously. It had happened before from the same tree!

Meanwhile, in my back yard, [REDACTED] I have huge dead branches leaning north over the wires for this whole block of houses. This is an "accident waiting to happen" but you won't do anything. Contact me with your thoughts on this.

The other big-picture issue for EvoEnergy is you are 50% majority-owned by the Chinese Communist Party. What percentage of people in Canberra realise this? It is on wikipedia. Evo is 50% owned by Icon and 50% by Jemena. Jemena is 60% owned by State Grid from China which is the biggest utility company in the world. ie Chinese Communist Party. How fantastic for our security.

Evo's second question was

"What can we do to support the broader community when there's a power outage?"

I wrote:

I just bought a generator at Aldi for \$399, so that shows my thoughts. There should not be so many outages in the first place. Trim and prune trees years sooner than you do.

It is only a matter of time till people in Canberra are **killed** by falling tree branches that have been dangerous and too close to houses and streets for years.

On my nature strip in [REDACTED] I have what has become a huge Manifera Gum Tree (aka "Brittle Gum, aka "Widow maker")

In the same January storm, this tree dropped a large branch on the road. I'd reported this branch a year earlier as being dangerous and about to fall, but I never heard back from ACT govt. See photos below.

I reported it because you could see where the cockatoos were chewing where the branch joins the trunk. The cockatoos love Maniferas for this reason as the bark is soft, especially after a lot of rain. They chew away and then water gets into the join and then mould gets in and some rot and the branch falls.

This is now the third large branch that has fallen in this way off this tree. Three years ago a very large branch fell that blocked most of the road for 2 weeks. This fell on a perfectly still day. My wife saw it fall. I was raking the gutter under it just two days previously.

After two weeks the Northside tree maintenance team came to get the branch off the road and they poked the trunk with an iron bar and said "all good". Yes, till the next branch fell. I have a neighbour Stan two houses down, and for years he was the team leader of the Northside tree maintenance team, and he can't believe what happens (or doesn't happen) these days.

The ACT Government has been relying on the drought to do no tree maintenance. But now it is raining again, and the ground is soft, trees are growing massively and there are going to be a lot of dramas. The tree maintenance team is understaffed. They only have 8 staff for the whole of Belconnen. That went well in January, didn't it?

But nothing will happen about these trees. The government and EvoEnergy will say it's because of climate change.

The tree team leader said to me "the strong wind came from the south, which is unusual for Canberra storms."

That's why there was so much carnage – because the wind came from a different direction than usual, he said.

This is what passes for these days for "serving the public".

If tens of thousands of people in Canberra lose power for a week, because the wind came from the south, then what hope did the people in northern NSW have in January and February? Australia's infrastructure has all been sold off for a profit and not maintained. It's money before people.

Another one of the tree team leaders said to me "We're insured". At first I didn't follow what she was talking about. She was meaning if the tree crashes through my house in the night, then I'm covered.

But you can't bring back a human life, because that's where this negligence is headed.

Here are some photos of the branch that fell out the front, on my nature strip in January, that I'd reported a year earlier, but never heard back. This is the third branch to fall in recent years, though the other two were much, much bigger.

Here is the cut-up branch in my wheelbarrow.



Here is a close-up showing where the cockatoos chew and how water and rot and mould get in. Then it falls.

You can see the years of chewing on top and the mould and the rot just underneath the mould.

This is what happens. It's not rocket-science. It's basic.



Here is the branch put onto the nature strip.

Note the narrow triangle of bark it took off with it.



Here is a photo showing where the narrow triangle of bark came from.
If you zoom in and look up high, it is up very high above the 4th big branch. Near the 5th one.



Halfway up on the left is where a very big branch fell 3 years ago, on a perfectly still day. Just above that on the right you can see where another large branch fell. School kids walk up and down this street twice a day!

I asked Evo, in their first question above, to get back to me, but I've heard not a word. They asked for feedback – I gave it. I asked them to contact me – nothing.

Such is life in Australia, the Land of the Bureaucrat. I speak with some passion on this matter, not to be offensive to anyone, no point in that, but to point out the issue that is staring us in the face.

cheers David Fordyce

