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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into West Belconnen
supercell thunderstorm

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**Submission by
the Village of Hall and District Progress Association
to the Inquiry into the West Belconnen Supercell
Thunderstorm
of the
ACT Legislative Assembly Select Committee on
Health and Community Wellbeing**

May 2022



NAME OF INQUIRY:

Inquiry into the West Belconnen Supercell Thunderstorm by the ACT Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing.

SUBMISSION BY:

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EFFECTS OF THE SUPERCCELL THUNDERSTORM AND SUBSEQUENT THUNDERSTORM:

The supercell thunderstorm of 3 January and the subsequent thunderstorm of 18 January dumped torrential rain as well as hail on the village of Hall. In the case of the 18 January storm, some 60mm of rain fell in Hall village over a 90 minute period.

The greatest impact of this dramatic level of rainfall was the volume of storm water inundating the laneways and, due to the absence of storm water drainage infrastructure in Hall village, caused flooding into various residential properties, the destruction of the gravel laneways, and the coverage gravel and other rubble on parts of Gladstone, Loftus and Hoskins Streets.

REQUESTS BY THE HALL COMMUNITY FOLLOWING THE THUNDERSTORMS:

Following the 3 January and 18 January thunderstorms, a number of Hall village residents made *Fix-My-Street* requests for urgent action to address the need for storm water drainage infrastructure to prevent further inundation as well as to address the immediate safety concern of gravel and other rubble on Gladstone Street creating hazards for cyclists and motorists.

on 14 January 2022, the President of the Village of Hall and District Progress Association wrote to the Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services requesting urgent attention to arrange for the relevant ACT government authority to work with the Progress Association on the assessment, design and completion of appropriate works on storm water infrastructure.



ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

Officers from TCCS inspected the condition of the road and storm water network in Hall on 15 February but made no contact with the Progress Association who had raised the concerns.

Representatives of Stormwater Maintenance, City Presentation and Road Maintenance met on 4 March to discuss the best way of resolving the drainage issues in Hall village. In this meeting, it was decided that the best way of resolving the drainage issue was to regrade the unsealed lanes.

Between 2 and 8 March, Cord Civil regraded the gravel surface of Bootmakers, Cricketers, One Tree and Saddlers Lanes in Hall village.

On 1 April, Minister Steel responded to the Progress Association advising that the only action being taken on the storm water drainage in Hall was regrading of the unsealed laneways.

WHAT IS REQUESTED BY THE HALL PROGRESS ASSOCIATION:

The situation of residential storm water drainage and street drainage in Hall village is untenable causing flooding, safety hazards, erosion and potential property damage.

The action requested is:

- A thorough and comprehensive assessment must be undertaken by technically qualified and experienced personnel;
- The design of a storm water drainage and street drainage system to address the current and future needs of Hall village, cognisant of the increasing frequency and severity of storm events resulting from global climate change and consistent with the parameters of the Hall Master Plan (May 2002) and the Hall Precinct Code (October 2013);
- The allocation of adequate funding in the ACT government budget for the full completion of all required works for a storm water drainage and street drainage system including associated works on the laneways.

All steps must be taken in close cooperation and consultation with the Village of Hall and District Progress Association who will help ensure engagement with the residents and stakeholders of Hall village.



THE HISTORY OF STORM WATER DRAINAGE IN HALL VILLAGE:

Background

Almost all other communities in the ACT have been planned in their development over the last 111 years. Hall village, established in 1882, 29 years prior to the creation of the Federal Capital Territory, has evolved organically over the last 140 years with basic infrastructure lagging significantly behind development of the community.

For example, the electricity supply was connected to Hall village in 1948, 33 years after the establishment of Kingston Power Station supplying electricity to Canberra. The Canberra - Yass Road through Hall village, now Victoria Street in Hall, was proclaimed a state highway in 1935 and was officially named as the Barton Highway in August 1954 but was not fully sealed until 1960.

Establishment of Reticulated Water Supply, Sewerage and Storm Water Drainage in Hall Village

In 1967, a reticulated water supply was established in Hall village with all existing houses connected to the ACT water supply. Prior to 1967, houses in Hall village relied on rainwater tank collection and three wells located near Halls Creek.

The introduction of the reticulated water supply to Hall village created a new challenge. Hall village had no sewerage system with every individual house relying on their own septic tank. The increased availability of water soon resulted in overflowing septic tanks and, eleven years after the establishment of the reticulated water supply, a sewerage system linked to the Canberra network was brought into service in 1978.

Although a reticulated water supply and a sewerage system had been installed in Hall village between 1967 and 1978, nothing was done to establish a storm water drainage system within the community.

Following the issuing of the Village of Hall Policy Plan by the NCDC in 1981 (map attached), eight new housing blocks were sold and houses built on Alexandra and Palmer Streets north of Hoskins Street, as well as thirteen other blocks elsewhere in Hall village. None of these twenty-one new houses, nor any of the existing houses in Hall village, were connected to any form of storm water drainage system with storm water from the houses directed to the rear laneways or the streets.

Sealing of Streets and Establishment of Street Drainage in Hall Village

During the sealing of all streets in Hall village completed in the early 1990s and curbing and guttering of some of the streets, a street drainage system was established servicing some 55% of the street surface. However, no residential storm water drainage system was established and houses continued to be required to direct storm water to the rear laneways and streets.

Even today, those building in Hall village are told to direct storm water drainage to the rear laneways and streets as there is no system for the collection and drainage of residential storm water.



Some residents have arranged with the relevant ACT authorities to tie their storm water drainage into the street drainage system. However, the street drainage system still only services some 55% of the street surface and it is unknown if the existing street drainage system would have the capacity to meet the storm water drainage requirements of all residences in addition to street drainage if all houses were to tie into it.

As the Hall village has evolved, the construction of new houses and the extension and rebuild of older houses has seen significant increase in the size of dwellings, creating larger roof and hard, non-porous, surface areas. This evolution has also significantly increased the volume of residential storm water requiring drainage in Hall village.

ACT Government and Storm Water Drainage in Hall Village:

As identified above, although the ACT government has established a reticulated water supply, a sewerage system and some street drainage in Hall village, no overall residential storm water drainage system has ever been established.

The *Village of Hall Master Plan* of the ACT government dated May 2002 gave relatively limited attention to drainage and storm water with the focus on street drainage and the rural character of Hall village. Nevertheless, the Master Plan noted:

- Rear laneways should be designed so that overland flow is discouraged, and scouring avoided;
- Laneways should be managed to avoid build up of unauthorised deposits and landscape overgrowth;
- Existing open drainage ditches and grass swales should be restored to full function;
- Review major drainage paths to ensure efficient function;
- Review safety of deep drains on Gladstone Street and Loftus Street and resolve options for piping/ regrading;
- Maintain / restore swale drains;
- Review state of repair and establish an improvement program;
- Simple measures to improve drainage, reduce wash outs and maintain rural style appearance;
- Avoid deflecting additional overland flow onto private blocks.

In 2017, following community consultation the Village of Hall and District Progress Association further raised the concern of stormwater drainage and laneway destruction with the ACT government in a submission to the ACT government *Better Suburbs* process.

“The storm water infrastructure in Hall is aged and not working to sufficiently deal with rainwater. It is in a state that whenever there is rainfall there is considerable pooling of water and the north (uphill)/ south (downhill) laneways are considerably eroded. What we don't know is to what extent this is a maintenance issue or a debilitated infrastructure issue – or a combination of both.

The extent of pooling is directly relevant to the extent of rainfall. There are ad hoc and reactionary efforts made at various times as temporary measures in specific spots however it is clear that there is significantly larger underlying infrastructure issue.



It is submitted that this issue should be added to the agenda of the appropriate area. Both for an engineering or appropriate assessment and report and thereafter budget allocation for works”.

Numerous requests have been made by Hall residents for action on storm water drainage and the parlous condition of the laneways over many years, including through the *Fix-My-Street* platform. Sadly, other than some sporadic street drain clearance, there has been no action by the responsible area in the ACT government to address the fundamental issue of storm water drainage in Hall village.

Most recently, on 14 January 2022, the President of the Village of Hall and District Progress Association wrote to the Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services requesting urgent attention to arrange for the relevant ACT government authority to work with the Progress Association on the assessment, design and completion of appropriate works on storm water infrastructure. The response to that request is detailed above.

CONCLUSION:

Every community in the Canberra has basic infrastructure such as reticulated water supply, sewerage systems, electricity supply and storm water drainage.

In recent years, the ACT government has undertaken very significant works to improve storm water drainage in established areas throughout the Territory including the development of wetlands at considerable expense. In new developments extensive planning and approval processes ensure optimal systems of storm water drainage.

The ACT government has the same responsibility to ensure that the basic infrastructure of residential storm water drainage and street drainage is established and maintained in Hall village.



Saddlers Lane, Hall



Gravel washed onto Gladstone Street, Hall



Cricketers Lane, Hall