



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES  
Ms Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Mark Parton MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

### Inquiry into Urban Forest Bill 2022

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# **Threats To The Urban Forest**

Rod Pitcher

Submission to the Inquiry into Urban Forest Bill 2022  
Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services

Rod Pitcher

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# Threats to the Urban Forest

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## Abstract

This submission discusses the threats to Canberra's Urban Forest due to increased suburban development and growth of the urban area.

## Introduction

Urban development and the increasing urban growth are two major factors which appear to be restricting and reducing the size of Canberra's Urban Forest. Both these factors are acting to reduce and restrict the growth of the Urban Forest as well as having other undesirable effects in the environment of the Territory.

Other challenges to the Urban Forest include vandalism, poisoning, infrastructure upgrades and maintenance and transmission networks.

## Suburban Building

Increasingly, new buildings in suburban areas are made up of very large dwellings or two or more dwellings on a block where there was previously one smaller house surrounded by plenty of open space. Since these new development take up more of the area of the site, they reduce the open space available for tree planting.

Also, existing tree are often removed to allow more space for the new buildings. From my local observations, it is often plain that the building site has less trees after completion of the building than before building started.

A question arises: Is this tree removal approved or illegal? Or is it a matter not considered under current regulations? The answer to these question, and the confusion which they must sometimes incur should be made clear in the Urban Forest Bill 2022.

Any application to remove or severely cut-back trees, should be very carefully examined for it's impact on the environment of the local area.

This activity also needs to be better policed and enforced so that threats to trees, their removal or damage to the point of killing them, are uncovered, revealed and dealt with before any permanent damage is done to the trees and the environment rather than after, when it is too late.

Even if some new trees are planted they will take many years to grow to a sufficient size to replace the trees which were removed during building, leaving the local area with less tree cover and environmentally much poorer during that growing time.

The urban growth is very quickly taking over open land in the Territory, and hence removing available space for planting and growing trees and also areas where trees are already growing. The building of new houses and other facilities such as shopping centres and roads in these new areas, is guaranteed to degrade the environment by removing many trees which previously grew on the open land.

Nowak *et al* (2022) discuss the influence of urban development on Urban Forests in some detail. They come to the conclusion that: "One of the dominant factors affecting tree cover is urban development. (P.14).

Veachi, *et al*, (2017) come to the similar conclusion that urban expansion is a major threat to Urban Forests.

## The Development Problem

Increasing development in the Territory is making homes for many new residents, but will those residents enjoy as pleasing an environment, especially the Urban Forest,

as we longer-term residents? Simply put, will future residents of the ACT enjoy a better or more degraded environment, as far as trees and the Urban Forest, are concerned than we have now?

The increase in population of the ACT is always seen as economically important and attractive by the Government, but is that economic gain worth the degradation of the environment in which the new residents and the already established citizens will be forced to live?

The best way to give the issue of the development of housing and take-over of open land a positive answer is to reduce and better control new developments in Canberra and to expand the Urban Forest instead. The results will depend on the provisions for such control and its effective application and utilization in the Urban Forest Bill 2022 and how well the rules are enforced.

Canberra was once proudly known to its citizens and tourists as The Bush Capital because of its abundant open spaces and enormous number of trees. How long will we be able too rejoice in that name if developers are allowed to fill the land with buildings at the cost of reducing the number of trees and open spaces?

### **Conclusions**

The Urban Forest Bill 2022 must address, and provide the means of prevention for, the problems generated by suburban development and urban growth. It must provide means of reducing their deleterious effects on the Urban Forest and the general environment of the ACT. The responses must be adequate and effective in helping to maintain the Urban Forest and in reducing the loss of any of it to such causes.

It must also provide some incentives and encouragement to ordinary people to do their part in retaining, maintaining and increasing the size of the Urban Forest.

The Urban Forest Bill 2022, and the ensuing Act, must provide strong active protection from these and other threat to our Urban Forest, lest it disappear completely, to the extreme detriment of the environment of the Territory. and the lives of its residents.

### **References**

- Nowak DJ, Greenfield EJ, and Ellis, A. (2022) ‘Assessing Urban Forest Threats across the Conterminous United States’. *Journal of Forestry*, 2022, 1–17 .
- Veatch, V. Moilanen, A. Di Minin, E. (2017) ‘Threats from urban expansion, agricultural transformation and forest loss on global conservation priority areas’. *PLOS ONE* November 28, 2017