

Alex Jones
(address removed)

13/12/2007

Hon. David Templeman
Minister for the Environment
77 St Georges Terrace
Perth 6000

Dear Mr Templeman,

Re: 1. Herbicide Use
2. Tree removal
3. Underwood Avenue Bushland, EPA Appeals Process
4. South Perth City Council

Thank you for your responses Ref : 21-010983 and 21-011735

1. Herbicide Use

In regard to the widespread use of herbicides on public land as well as private, there appear to be considerable international reports including data that contradict the commonly held view in Australia that products such as glyphosate are not harmful to the soil, water and native flora. There is also considerable international information linking herbicides, including glyphosate, to many cancers and neurological diseases.

Locally there has been anecdotal evidence of dogs either dying or becoming very ill due to contact with herbicides. Those members of our community who are particularly sensitive to the spraying of herbicides by councils often suffer life-threatening effects and have to leave their homes for several weeks during spraying programmes. There is also growing concern that destroying ground cover in this way contaminates and impoverishes the soil and leads to further environmental and health problems. I will forward you several attachments for your information and hope that members of your department will investigate the large volume of international literature on the adverse effects of herbicides.

2. Tree Removal

As stated in my previous letters to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, the issue of tree removal is particularly relevant to the climate change debate as well as to other environmental problems such as salinity , urban run-off and a drying climate. Your department could contribute to the debate by investigating the impact of mature tree removal in terms of precise numbers of trees removed during the common 5-year restoration or tree replacement policies held by local governments and state authorities. We need to know how many trees have been removed over recent years, how old they were and approximately how much CO2 they were sequestering before removal.

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The Tree Benefits Estimator on the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD) web-site or similar estimators could assist our environmental managers to determine the extent of environmental damage that has occurred due to tree removal and the loss of the CO2 sequestration function of mature trees. Until this is done the removal of trees must not continue to be justified simply on the basis of their inappropriateness or for the protection of biodiversity because the risk of broader environmental damage is of paramount importance.

3. EPA Appeals Process

In 2003, I wrote to the State Ombudsman to complain about the Underwood Avenue Bushland appeals process and the then membership of the EPA.

The response from the Ombudsman was that unfortunately he did not have the "jurisdiction to investigate a complaint about a process specifically set up to deal with appeals which are determined by a Minister". Furthermore, he stated "the Ombudsman is prohibited under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act from dealing with complaints involving the actions of the Governor of Western Australia."

In 2007, I again lodged an appeal with the Appeals Convenor and recently had a meeting with him. Whilst I appreciated the opportunity to express my concerns to the Convenor regarding:

- the urgent need to protect what little natural bushland remains,
- the cumulative effects of clearing and loss of mature trees because of development and misguided tree-removal / replacement policies by local government and state authorities,

- the effects not only on biodiversity and loss of habitat but also on climate change and the inevitable contribution to general air pollution and increased CO2,

I was again perplexed to see the apparent lack of significant note-taking of our conversation. Our meeting lasted almost forty minutes. Such an important appeals process warrants a designated person to take minutes or to tape the conversation. It is difficult to imagine that even with the very best intentions of the Convenor, anything more than the general "vibe" of the conversation could have been recorded or reported on after our meeting. My understanding is that many appellants were interviewed during the week and many on an individual basis.

I have given much of my time to environmental matters over recent years and have made every possible attempt to thoroughly research the issues that I have raised. I have liaised with many people who similarly are extremely concerned about current and ongoing practices involving loss of wildlife habitat, loss of native and exotic trees, loss of shade, loss of water retention, and even the issue of the widespread use of herbicides leading to impoverishment of the soil and vegetation and posing life-threatening risks to our health.

It is only reasonable to expect that these issues raised by me, and many others in the community be given due consideration. Could you please advise me as to the correct procedures required by your department to ensure the integrity of the whole appeals process including the correct procedure for meetings with appellants.

4. South Perth City Council Tree Removal

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On the broader issue of the ongoing loss of mature trees, I will also separately forward you a copy of a presentation to South Perth City Council by Greg Benjamin, a resident of Carr Street, and Jonathan Epps, an expert arboriculturalist, who together and with the support of other residents, have to date managed to save the Carr Street Cape Lilac trees from destruction due to a misguided and ill informed council policy to remove all Cape Lilacs from the City of South Perth. As you will read, the City has already removed 400 of its 700 Cape Lilacs in a matter of just a few years. This is only one of many such cases of senseless tree loss throughout our suburbs and possibly throughout our continent. We need accountability for this wide-scale environmental loss and not dogma about the inappropriateness of certain trees.

As you are the Minister for the Environment, I think it appropriate that you, as well as the Ministers for Local Government and Planning and Infrastructure, should be involved in the preparation of a Model Tree Policy for the Protection of Mature Trees on Public Land in Urban Areas. Your exclusion may have been an oversight in the recommendation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs who investigated the issues raised in Petition 34, tabled on the 20th September 2006. As the promoter of that petition and on behalf of almost 1600 signatories, I would like you to become involved in that process to expedite the protection of our urban trees.

The Committee ignored the petition's request for a moratorium on tree removal and consequently the practice continues to the detriment of our environment and the health of our communities as air pollution increases and shade is lost; shade from trees of whatever species (even previously pollarded trees with safe, low , dense canopies) keeps our streetscapes and houses cooler, thereby reducing energy requirements and consequently reducing the production of green - house gasses. For decades these trees have provided wonderful shade for pedestrians and they should be maintained for their continued environmental and health benefits.

Please contact me for further information on the following telephone numbers:
(removed)

Yours sincerely,

Alex Jones
Save Our Trees

Monsanto Fined in France for 'False' Herbicide Ads
Agence France Presse, Jan 26, 2007
Straight to the Source

From Terra Daily.com

The US agrochemical giant Monsanto was fined 15,000 euros (19,000 dollars) in a French court Friday for misleading the public about the environmental impact of its flagship herbicide Roundup.

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A former chairman of Monsanto Agriculture France was found guilty of false advertising for presenting Roundup as biodegradable and claiming that it left the soil clean after use. Monsanto's French distributor Scotts France was also fined 15,000 euros.

Environmental and consumer rights campaigners brought the case in 2001 on the basis that glyphosate, Roundup's main ingredient, is classed as "dangerous for the environment" and "toxic for aquatic organisms" by the European Union.

Both defendants were ordered to pay damages of 5,000 euros to the Brittany Water and Rivers association and 3,000 euros to the CLCV consumers group.

The water association said the verdict, which is to be published in the influential Le Monde daily, "puts an end to Monsanto's lies" and was "excellent news for water protection".

A spokesman for Monsanto France, which plans to appeal, said the "verdict does not call into question the usefulness of the Roundup range of products".

"There is a relationship of trust between our products and their users and we believe that consumers will continue to use Roundup."

Attachments

Files:

Canadian_Journal_of_Health__PESTICIDES2005_1_.pdf (30k)

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