

Alexandra Jones
(Address removed)

28th May 2007

Honourable Members
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Perth WA 6000

RE: Petition for the Protection of Mature Trees on Public Land in Urban Areas

I would like to remind Honourable Members of my previous letters dated the 17th and 28th February 2007. I would also like to advise the Committee that over recent months there has been considerable community concern about tree loss resulting from development, various tree replacement policies and poisoning due to the use of chemical herbicides. Further signatures have been received in support of the petition since my previous correspondence. These are attached for your reference (Attachment F) together with related news articles and letters from various sources (Attachments A to E).

In addition to the broader concern about environmental damage and loss of amenity, there is serious concern about the toxicity of the chemical products used in the control of weeds and in the outrageous cases of wilful tree-poisoning such as the Minim Cove Rottnest Island tree (Attachment E).

I would also like to draw to the Committee's attention that, as exemplified in the letter from Subiaco Council to Mr (name removed) (Attachment A), various tree removal or replacement policies account for serious losses of healthy, if not perfect, mature trees. Subiaco Council alone will have accounted for the loss of over 30,000 years of cumulative tree growth, based on an average age of 50 years for the 614 trees removed in just 5 years.

In the Nedlands Council response to Mr (name removed), it is also clearly stated that the City has a plan to remove all its Queensland Box trees (Attachment B,A5. Page 3) I know, from my personal dealings with this Council, that healthy paperbark trees were removed from the Stirling Hwy several months ago. I raised my concerns with the "arborists" involved and have been disappointed with the level of blatant disregard for community consultation and the lack of transparency. I was given glib responses about damage caused to the footpath and about the decision having been made by Council. The "arborists" assured me that in view of my strong opposition to the removal, one of the trees (the only one left standing) would be retained and that they would refer the matter to council. Without any further consultation it was also removed several weeks later. There have been countless examples of such controversies caused by these tree removal practices.

Kings Park has an ongoing similar plan to remove Sugar Gums. As very frequent users of the park for more than 20 years, we have never seen so many dead trees and such a poor canopy. We can only wonder whether the constant thinning out of vegetation, the removal of deep-rooted trees and the frequent use of herbicides are all contributing factors combined with a changing climate scenario.

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Mosman Park Council clearly states in its Street Tree Policy (Attachment C) that it allows residents to apply for removal of healthy verge trees.

As previously mentioned, the natural CO2 sequestration performed by very small replacement trees cannot be compared with the vital environmental benefit of large trees. Newly planted trees require watering and are subject to many urban pressures. They provide little or no shade and are often damaged or destroyed, requiring further plantings and costs to ratepayers. In many cases they are not replaced.

Mature tree removal is a considerable and unnecessary financial cost to ratepayers but more importantly, as stated in the Petition, it results in the loss of amenity, shade, wildlife habitat, soil and air quality as well as general moisture retention.

The Hume Tree Management System's use of GPS (Attachment D), provides wonderful opportunities for local government to identify and manage trees but there needs to be the will to retain mature trees, and "arborists", in particular, need to be more sympathetic to good management rather than replacement. As stated in the Post newspaper, May 5, 2007, page 17, council tree experts all too often give unsubstantiated arguments in favour of tree removal.

As stated previously, please find attached the following documents to assist with your investigation.

- A. City of Subiaco letter to Mr (name removed), Re: Street Tree Removal Programme.
- B. City of Nedlands letter to Mr (name removed), Re: Questions Tabled at Council Meeting on Tuesday, 24 April 2007.
- C. Town of Mosman Park Street Tree Removal Policy identifying the approval process for removal of healthy trees.
<http://www.townofmosmanpark.wa.gov.au/mosman/documents/forms/STREET%20TREE%20REMOVAL%20POLICY.pdf>
- D. Local Government FOCUS, Re: "GIS keeps track of Council trees"
- E. "Inquiry into Tree Deaths" and other 2007 newspaper articles and letters to the editor on tree related issues.
- F. Photocopies of additional signed petitions for submission to parliament by Hon Giz Watson.

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Jones

Cc: Name removed (Save Our Trees), name removed (WREN)

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