



## Simon Corbell MLA

ATTORNEY GENERAL

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND WATER

MINISTER FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

MINISTER FOR ENERGY

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MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

Mrs Heather and Mr Dan Buchler  
[buchler@netspeed.com.au](mailto:buchler@netspeed.com.au)

Dear Mrs and Mr Buchler

Thank you for your email of 2 October 2009 to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Mr Jon Stanhope MLA, about the removal of trees in Captain Cook Crescent. As Mr Stanhope is currently overseas on business, I am responding on his behalf.

Extensive tree planting began in Canberra during the 1920s as part of an urban planning strategy which devoted 70 per cent of the city to open space and trees. Unfortunately, many of the trees from these early plantings are reaching the end of their life. In addition, climate change and drought are having an adverse effect on their condition.

The ACT Government is currently removing 282 trees at 24 sites across Canberra due to their poor health and public safety risks, and replacing them with 588 new trees, it is naturally an emotive issue for surrounding residents.

Parks, Conservation and Lands conducted a detailed assessment of all trees at the 24 sites. The trees identified for removal were either unhealthy, in decline or had structural defects such as hollows, die back and rot affected timber that made them potentially unsafe. A total of 195 trees in the median strip of Captain Cook Crescent were assessed and 25 trees were identified for removal. I am advised that consultation with residents living in a street or adjacent to a park on the current program, as well as relevant community groups, took place in early June 2009.

I am advised that of the four remaining trees identified for removal that are located in the median of Captain Cook Crescent, one has an active bird nest containing eggs and/or young birds and that this tree will not be removed until the young have fledged.

The work being carried out is part of an ongoing tree replacement program that commenced in 1992 to manage ageing and potentially hazardous trees in suburban streets, laneways and parks, mainly within older parts of the city. This program takes place with the assistance of independent tree experts who assess the health and safety of trees. This assessment considers issues like health, safety and the location of each tree.

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Wherever appropriate, tree surgery is undertaken to make a tree safe but unfortunately, sometimes removal is the only option. Those trees identified as being potentially hazardous are removed and replaced with a suitable species. In all cases pruning is considered first with complete removal being the last option.

Given the mature age of many of Canberra's trees, it is inevitable that substantial numbers of them will need to be replaced as they senesce and decline. Indeed a recent study by the ANU forestry department found that up to two-thirds of trees in established areas of the city are expected to decline and will need to be replaced during the next 10 to 25 years. This situation has been exacerbated by the drought that has prevailed for the past seven years. The ANU study predicts that if action is not taken in the short-term, the decline of a large number of trees during a short timeframe will have a significant effect on Canberra's urban forest, and associated wildlife.

To address this issue in a strategic manner, the Department of Territory and Municipal Services is currently developing an Urban Forest Renewal Program. This program will ensure that Canberra's world renowned street and parkland tree-scapes are maintained for future generations.

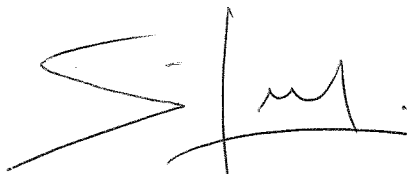
Replacement of trees is only one aspect of the Urban Forest Renewal Program. An improved strategic (cyclic) maintenance program is being developed to further improve tree health and extend the life of the trees along with better species selection in anticipation of a changing climate. The temporary replacement of nesting hollow is also being considered in this context.

The future of Canberra's urban forest is being given utmost consideration. While the removal of unsafe and unhealthy trees may result in some short-term effects on the look and feel of some streets and parkland areas, the failure to take appropriate action now would be irresponsible.

In relation to your suggestion regarding the installation of nest boxes, the Government is currently investigating the feasibility and likely success of using nest boxes in urban areas.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Corbell', written over a horizontal line.

Simon Corbell MLA  
Acting Minister for Territory and Municipal Services

20.10.09