

Media Release



The tree in the above photo was the first thing I saw when I awoke on the morning of Tuesday 21st April. The photo was taken from my bedroom window. Had that tree fallen towards the house it would have crushed my wife, myself and at least one of my daughters depending on the exact angle it fell. As can be seen, there is one tree closer to the house.

The tree is a solid mass of wood. There is no 'pipe' or hollow running through the tree. It is not diseased and there is nothing to indicate the roots were insufficient to hold the tree. In fact the tree is (was) a tall, straight handsome specimen and no Arborist would have ever deemed the tree unsafe and I would not have been able to demonstrate it was unsafe if I had removed it claiming it was unsafe. Both the tree that is closest to the house and the one that fell are more than 10 metres from the house. Therefore, I could not use the 10/50 rule to remove the trees.

Once I looked further around our house, I discovered two more trees had fallen that would have crushed the house other than sheer luck in the direction they fell and several other trees that had fallen on fences and across tracks and stockyards etc.

Therefore, the following claims by the greens that...

'It's deeply disappointing to see a Mayor using a natural disaster like the recent storm, **in which it is natural for some trees to fall over** – to ram through a mechanism which will have the effect of assisting property developers and homeowners just wanting to improve their view, while also reducing Koala habitat.' said Ms Flood.

And

'Mayor MacKenzie has failed to explain why any change in Council's policy is necessary.' said Ms Flood. 'Both the Port Stephens Local Environment Plan (Cl.5.9) and Council's Development Control Plan (Clause B2.9) allow residents to remove trees without first obtaining Council permission **if those trees are dangerous** or an immediate threat to property.'

'Given that residents can already remove dangerous trees the obvious question is why is Mayor Mackenzie pushing his proposal?'

...are complete nonsense. You simply cannot predict which trees will fall and which trees will stay in a storm event like we just experienced. Therefore, if '*it is natural for some trees to fall over*' and you can't predict which ones then all trees are dangerous and surely even the greens believe people have the right to protect themselves even if they don't believe in the right to protect your property.

As for the need for immediate action, for every tree that fell during the last storm, there were another ten pushed right to their breaking point and only just hung on. The ground is still very wet and soft and another strong wind event now (with or without rain) would cause another significant tree purge.

Therefore, until such time as science progresses to the point where it can be accurately predicted which trees will fall and which trees will stay, I will support any and all action that allows people to protect themselves. Further, and contrary to the rhetoric of the greens, I do not believe that this will lead to the wholesale removal of trees as the cost of having just one tree removed by a professional tree lopper in an urban situation will cost upwards of \$1500 with Councillor Kafer telling me last night he had heard of one quote for \$2500. Accordingly, people will have to be very concerned before they start spending that sort of money.

Yours faithfully

P Le Mottee

Cr Paul Le Mottee