



PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

PO Box 85, HUNTERS HILL, NSW 2110

www.huntershilltrust.org.au

Steve Kourepis
Director Town Planning
Hunters Hill Council

17 January 2024

Via email: KourepisS@huntershill.nsw.gov.au
Copy to: GM@huntershill.nsw.gov.au; [Mayor](#); [Councillors](#)

Dear Steve

Re: Moreton Bay Fig Tree, 15 Hunter Street, Woolwich

We are writing on behalf of our members who are distressed at the destruction of the Moreton Bay Fig Tree at the above site and would appreciate your investigation into the issues below:

1. Tree Removal

The tree was inspected by Council's Health and Building Surveyor on 30 August 2023 and reported to be "*in reasonable health with no evidence to suggest the tree has been damaged due to the construction work*". However just over three months later, the Arborist, appointed by the owner, deemed it dead. The Private Certifier forwarded the Arborist's report on 12 December asking for feedback from Council and the Trust.

In our letter of 18 December and subsequent phone call on that date, we strongly contested the Arborist's findings that "*immediate removal of the tree was warranted*" and requested that an independent arborist be urgently engaged before the tree was conveniently taken down. This tree had survived several serious attacks over many years and had still managed to thrive so there did not seem to be a genuine reason to recommend its urgent removal. Our worst fears were realized when the tree was felled on 28 December 2023.

Can you please confirm what feedback you provided to the Private Certifier as requested and whether Council gave their explicit permission to remove the tree? The attached letter used as authorisation simply states that "*Council is aware of the works being carried out*". If permission was given, did this include a clear agreement that all costs were to be paid by the owner?

2. Proximity of development to the tree

The Arborist concluded that the demise of the tree was due to the effect of current development, with distances from the edge of the trunk to the retaining wall to the east and brick wall footing to the west, resulting in a space "*completely inadequate to support the growth of a tree of this age and size*". In his opinion, "*the tree is the victim of many cuts to the root plate from multiple approved development applications over the years*".

If this is accurate, could you please investigate why the approved DA20101105 and its Amendments did not allow for a sufficient area to protect this significant tree and prevent cuts to its root plate?

3. Notice of Private Certifier Contact Details

We have been advised that over the time of construction at no. 15 Hunter St and up to this date, there has been no notice displayed on the construction fence displaying contact details of the Private Certifier, which we understand is in breach of DA regulations.

4. DA Condition \$20,000 Bond

In light of the demise of this significant tree, clearly intended for protection, can you please outline the arrangements now pertaining to this matter? In such circumstances, is the bond withheld? And, if removal of the tree was not approved by Council, does a penalty now also apply?

We would appreciate your urgent response so that we can inform our members as soon as possible.

Kind regards



Karyn Raisin
President
Hunters Hill Trust