



**PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE**

**PO Box 85, HUNTERS HILL, NSW 2110**  
[www.huntershilltrust.org.au](http://www.huntershilltrust.org.au)

Mr Mitchell Murpyhy  
General Manager  
Hunters Hill Council  
Via email: [gm@huntershill.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gm@huntershill.nsw.gov.au)

22 November 2023

Dear Mitchell,

I'm contacting you direct because we have a 'sinkhole' rather than pothole situation on our hands with regard to the poisoning of the Moreton Bay Fig tree at 15 Hunter Street, Woolwich.

Yesterday, the Trust and Steve Kourepis received a personalised email from Jason Khouri, Certex Approvals and Certifier of this site who confirmed from an onsite visit this tree has been deliberately vandalized, and provided 12 photographs as evidence of such.

Jason reports the tree is in poor condition with large drill holes at the base and that the large root system has been damaged due to being exposed by the recent excavation of the basement. There were also signs large branches have been cut back recently. Jason writes while onsite he was 'confronted' by the owner (his own client??) who claimed Council had been made aware of the many previous attempts to kill this tree by neighbours across many years and have records of such occurrences even before he purchased this property. Jason further states the owner has agreed to meet back on site with an arborist and himself to seek advice on next steps.

The Trust is therefore seeking your urgent attention to this matter and call on Council to immediately arrange a level 5 arborist 'to alleviate any concerns or suspicions' as previously noted in your email (10th November) so that the health of the tree can be properly assessed and treatment administered. It would be inappropriate for Council to leave such a critical matter in the hands of the owner and Certifier to find their own arborist to provide such an assessment report.

Serious questions must now be asked as to:

- How Council's own Inspector/Ranger could recently attend this site, at your request, only to find nothing to report as to drill holes or exposed root systems, when clearly, two weeks later we are advised by the site Certifier our assertions of deliberate vandalism through poisoning and excavations are correct? Have we inadvertently tipped someone off?
- Is it normal practice for Council to contact the private certifier to verify the veracity of our reports about the dying state of this tree?
- Jason Khouri had been informed of the potential problem by Steve Kourepis in an email sent 30 October with a request to report back by 3 November. Why has it taken so long to pursue this follow up?

It's also clear it has not been in the interests of anyone to protect this tree. We query whether Council has monitored the 50% landscaping rule that should apply to this development and the recent modification approvals (April, 2023) which have allowed construction of a basement so close to the tree root zone, damaging the root system.

If the \$20,000 bond to protect this tree from the original DA is still active, the loss of \$20,000 bond money is perhaps insignificant when construction costs are likely to run into multiple millions of dollars?

Council needs to do more to strengthen penalties and must send a clear message this will not be tolerated in our Municipality, particularly in light of the documented history of vandalism of this particular tree.

We would greatly appreciate your immediate attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Raisin', written in a cursive style.

Karyn Raisin  
President  
**Hunters Hill Trust**