



Comment on National Capital Plan -Exposure Draft 2015

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If you have any queries regarding this submission please contact: Clare Henderson Executive Director on 6229 3202 or director@conservationcouncil.org.au.

The Conservation Council ACT region is the peak non-government environment organisation for the Canberra Region. We have been the community's voice for the environment in the Canberra region since 1979.

Our mission is to achieve an ecologically sustainable and zero net carbon society through advocacy, education, research and engagement with community, the private sector and with government.

We represent more than 40 member groups who in turn represent over 15,000 supporters. We harness the collective expertise and experience of our member groups and networks. We work collaboratively with Government, business and the community to achieve the highest quality environment for Canberra and its region.

The Conservation Council is active in a number of campaign areas. Our current focus includes:

- **Biodiversity Conservation** – protecting our unique ecological communities and the Bush Capital
- **Climate Change** – a regional, national and global challenge
- **Planning** – the right things in the right places
- **Transport** – connecting people and places
- **Waste** – being efficient through closed-loop systems
- **Water** – smart use of a scarce resource
- **Governance** – for a Smarter, Sustainable Canberra

The Conservation Council ACT Region supports the matters established in the National Capital Plan, namely:

- The pre-eminence of the role of Canberra and the Territory as the centre of National Capital functions, and as the symbol of Australian national life and values.
- Conservation and enhancement of the landscape features which give the National Capital its character and setting, and which contribute to the integration of natural and urban environments.
- Respect for the key elements of the Griffins' formally adopted plan for Canberra.

- Creation, conservation and enhancement of fitting sites, approaches and backdrops for national institutions and ceremonies as well as National Capital Uses.
- The development of a city which both respects environmental values and reflects national concerns with the sustainability of Australia's urban areas.¹

The Conservation Council regards the National Capital Authority (NCA) as a very important counter to the ACT's Government's exuberance to develop without adequate regard for the environment. We recognise that the NCA takes a longer-term view and we are concerned that its influence is being reduced through reduction in the areas for which it has responsibility.

Two particular matters of national significance identified in the Exposure Draft are important for the ongoing role of the National Capital Authority:

- Conservation and enhancement of the landscape features which give the National Capital its character and setting, and which contribute to the integration of natural and urban environments.
- The development of a city which both respects environmental values and reflects national concerns with the sustainability of Australia's urban areas.²

These are matters where the NCA has had a valuable role in providing for the ongoing protected natural values in and around Canberra. They are matters for which the NCA has a specific remit whereas the ACT Government has no such *raison d'être*. The Conservation Council values the NCA's ongoing role in environmental protection and regards any reduction in the *designated land* or *National Land* as a reduction in environmental protection. This is not to say that we support all activities undertaken in these areas with the approval of the NCA as appropriate for environmental protection and we would make comment on these matters as appropriate.

Recommendation 1. That there be no reduction of designated land or National Land under the National Capital Plan

The Conservation Council does not support the identification of the West Murrumbidgee area as a future urban area.³ This area has ongoing natural environmental values and as the first main foray of Canberra over the Murrumbidgee would have a significant impact on the environmental values of the surrounding areas.

Recommendation 2. That the West Murrumbidgee area should not be recognised as a future area

The development of the West Murrumbidgee area is not a logical extension of Tuggeranong given the significant riparian region that needs to be set aside to protect the natural values of the Murrumbidgee. The distance between the proposed urban area and the existing town centre of Tuggeranong would effectively create two communities – one without adequate facilities.

The development of the identified West Murrumbidgee area would lead to further development on the western bank of the Murrumbidgee. The Conservation Council believes that before any development is recommended, or certainly commenced, there should be identification and evaluation of the natural values of an area. As a society we should look at what needs to be protected and then implement that protection. The National Capital Authority should undertake this evaluation given the matter of national significance: “The development of a city which both respects environmental values and reflects national concerns with the sustainability of Australia’s urban areas”.

Recommendation 3. That the National Capital Authority adopt a policy of undertaking and publishing identification and evaluation of the natural values of an area before approving any development

Recommendation 4. That the National Capital Authority undertake and publish an evaluation of the natural values of the West Murrumbidgee area

¹ National Capital Authority, National Capital Plan Exposure Draft, p9

² National Capital Authority, National Capital Plan Exposure Draft, p13

³ National Capital Authority, National Capital Plan Exposure Draft, p23 and Figure 2 p25