

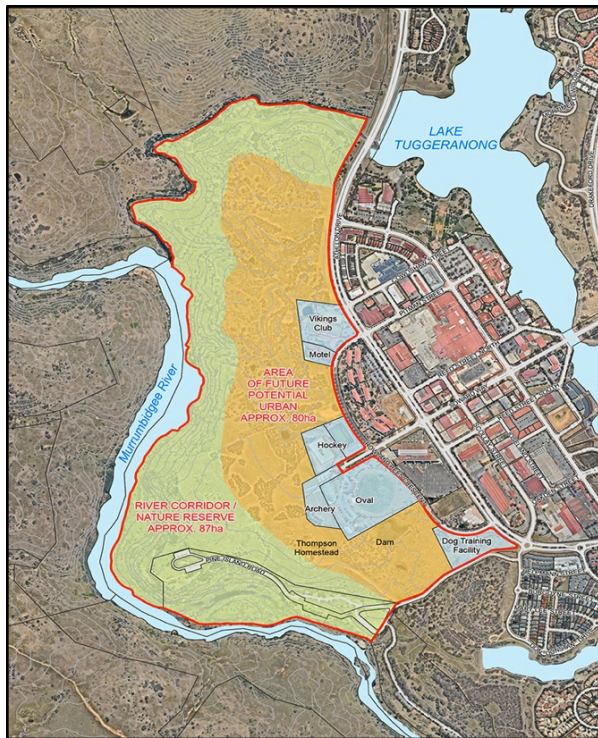


The concept bubble of suburb 'Thompson' ... help us protect what remains of our bush capital

Overview

On 3 March 2016 ACT Planning Minister Mick Gentleman announced the **possibility** of a new 'suburb' called Thompson, west of Tuggeranong town centre with 3,500 dwellings. He "would like to hear from local people about how they value the area, [and] if it should be developed" ([Media Release 7 March](#)).

The 190 hectare area is currently zoned River Corridor of which approx. 87 hectares is nature reserve and with some small pockets designated as Leisure and Accommodation [CZ6], currently including a motel, oval, hockey field. Comments close on 30 April to: communicationsandengagement@act.gov.au



Conservation Council viewpoint

The Conservation Council is concerned about potential impacts on the Murrumbidgee River corridor. The Murrumbidgee is an iconic Australian river and a ribbon of natural connectivity, valuable for plants, animals and humans.

The concept is at an early stage and we hope for a collaborative process to identify and protect ecological and heritage values even if that means development does not ever take place. We need to consider growth of our city strategically not via piece-meal consideration of one proposal here and another there.

A major concern is this proposal could add further pressure to undertake even more damaging urban development west of the Murrumbidgee. Such development could impact on grassy woodland habitats, including for ACT threatened woodland birds which have all but disappeared from peri-urban areas, such as Brown Treecreeper and Hooded Robin.

We need to better look after our rivers all along their length so they are there for flora and fauna and humans for generations to come. Areas of ecological significance need to be protected and restored with adequate buffers to mitigate urban impacts.

Canberrans love living next to nature in our bush capital, proposed developments like "Thompson" threaten our existing bushland including threatened plants and animals as well as our precious waterways. We must consider impacts on nature – animals, plants and healthy waterways before progressing any urban development. We must protect what remains of our Bush Capital.

Historical

Discussion of urban development west of Tuggeranong Town Centre and west of the Murrumbidgee started in the 1970s yet has always been dismissed on environmental grounds – in particular to protect the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. The [Planning Strategy 2012](#) indicated a "western edge study" would be undertaken however this has not proceeded.

A [Master Plan for the Tuggeranong Town Centre](#) completed in 2012 had a priority of increasing residential numbers in the Tuggeranong Town Centre itself. (Figure 11, page 27). Decisions around potential residential development need to be made strategically not announced bit by bit via media.

Environmental Values

Canberra Ornithologists Group data shows 131 bird species in the area including one endangered species – Regent Honeyeater – as well as six vulnerable species that rely on woodlands: the Diamond Firetail, Scarlet Robin, Double-barred Finch, Little Eagle, White-winged Triller and Swift Parrot.

Other important threatened species are: Murray crayfish, Tuggeranong lignum, Perunga Grasshopper, Pale Pomaderris, potentially pink tailed worm lizard. The River Corridor itself is of great significance for natural connectivity.

Key issues

- Lack of consultation: key stakeholders – including National Capital Authority; [ACT Place Names Committee](#), and; developers adjacent to 'Thompson' – were not consulted
- Environmental impacts on River Corridor
- Urban edge impacts (weeds, water runoff, litter, domestic animals on the Nature Reserve)
- Very narrow buffer between proposed urban area and River, possibly as narrow as 150 metres and widest at 450 metres
- Identification of natural areas of the area before development is proposed.
- Local Aboriginal and European heritage values not identified
- Residents not working at Tuggeranong would have substantial commute times to major employment hubs of Civic and Parliamentary Triangle, and minor hub of Woden, meaning high car dependence and car use, and increased congestion, pollution and greenhouse emissions.

What ACT Government has done to date and proposed next steps

ACT Government commissioned an internal desktop study, not intended for public release, to investigate the area. Apparently the study saw no major obstacles to future urban development, however without considering the environment as no environmental studies have been undertaken.

Government has advised no more investigations will take place until it considers community responses and decides to proceed with urban development.



Tuggeranong dry stone wall - heritage in concept area

What you can do

“At this stage the ACT Government is seeking community views on whether this development should proceed.” So it is important to let the ACT Government hear your views.

There are better ways to revitalise Tuggeranong Town Centre and facilitate urban renewal (e.g. see [Master Plan](#)) than this proposal which will compromise the ecological values of the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. Help us protect the Murrumbidgee River and the river corridor habitat it provides.

Four things you can do:

1. Write to Minister Gentleman: GPO Box 1020 Canberra, ACT 2601, gentleman@act.gov.au
2. Join the discussion and make comments on the ACTPLA have your say [website](#)
3. Make submission or comment by 30 April to: communicationsandengagement@act.gov.au
4. Contact us info@conservationcouncil.org.au to be kept up to date with this proposal.

Contact: Executive Director: Clare Henderson: 6229 3202 or 0412 425 665