



**CONSERVATION
COUNCIL** ACT REGION

Investigation #1: The battle for 'Central Molonglo' – endangered grassy woodlands worth protecting

14 May 2026

The Conservation Council ACT Region is the peak body for environment and climate groups in the ACT Region. We represent close to 50 member groups, bringing together a united voice on environment and climate issues to Government, business and community.

Since 1981 we have been at the centre of the region's most important wins for wildlife, bushland, climate and communities. As a hub for the ACT Region's environment and climate movement and a not-for-profit, non government organisation, we run campaigns, promote and upskill local groups, undertake research, advocate passionately, and engage and inform our community.

For further information please contact:

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Introduction

Throughout 2025, the Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) sought an update, through the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna (Conservator), from the Territory Planning Authority¹ (TPA), regarding any development plans in 'Central Molonglo' (Figure 1). BWG was asking cognisant a Future Urban Area (FUA) overlay had been removed from Central Molonglo effective 12 Dec 2008.²

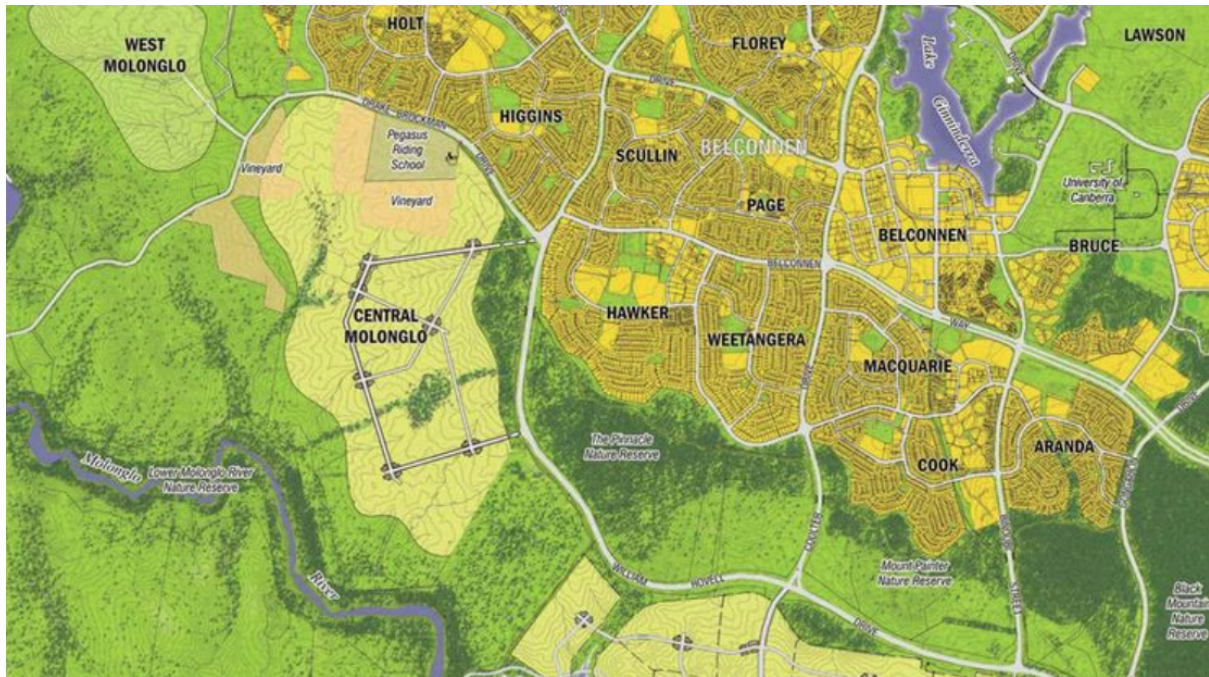


Figure 1: Location and extent of 'Central Molonglo'³

The Conservation Council's initial enquiry did receive a response. On 1 May 25, the Conservator forwarded information obtained from the TPA explaining "the Central Molonglo area ... has been excluded for consideration for urban expansion through the ACT Planning Strategy."⁴

Because the rest of the quoted TPA advice related to the investigation of options for the development of the 'Western Edge', on 7 May 25 the Conservation Council sought clarification through the Conservator. We noted we were aware Central Molonglo is not part of the Western Edge investigation area. We expressed concern however, that the TPA's advice 'left open the possibility' Central Molonglo "may be investigated for development in some other

¹ References to the TPA include references to the former ACT Planning and Land Authority ACTPLA.

² *Planning and Development (Plan Variation No 281) Notice 2008*, NI2008-352 (Variation 281 Notice), <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-352/>, p. 7

³ Image sourced from: ABC News (16 Jul 2008) *ACT Govt, NCA at odds over Molonglo development*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-07-16/act-govt-nca-at-odds-over-molonglo-development/440202>

⁴ Burkevics, B, ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna (1 May 2025) Email to the Council's Executive Director.

current or future investigation.” We asked, as frankly as possible, if the TPA would confirm no development would ever occur in Central Molonglo.⁵ No response was received.

It came as a surprise when, on 10 December 2025, the Suburban Land Authority (SLA) advised the Conservation Council’s Executive Director they had issued a tender for a consultant to prepare subdivision development applications⁶ over:

- The Vines - block 1582 in Belconnen, a 62.1-hectare site formerly owned by Hardy’s wines, zoned Broadacre (NUZ1)
- Pine Ridge - block 1600 in Belconnen, a 164.3-hectare site used for equestrian activities, agistment and cattle grazing, currently zoned Hills, Ridges and Buffers (NUZ3) (Figure 2).

The SLA is the custodian of both blocks.

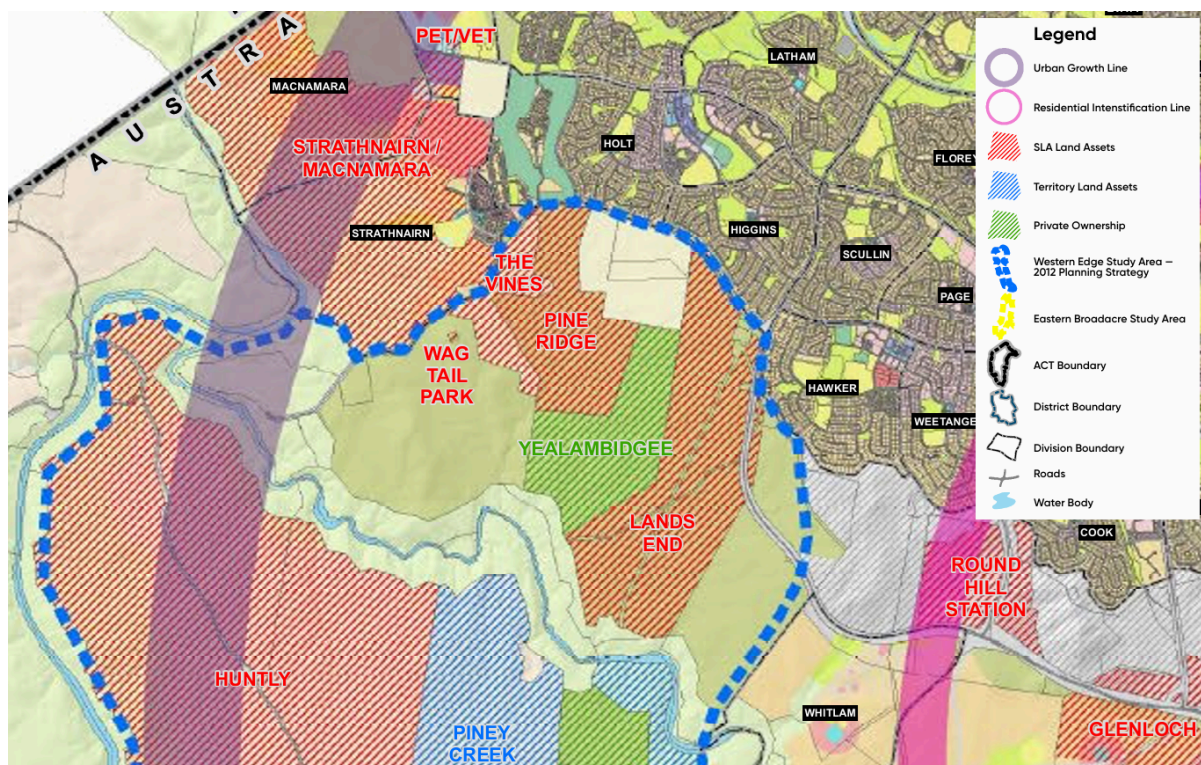


Figure 2: The location of The Vines and Pine Ridge (blocks 1582 and 1600) within Central Molonglo⁷

⁵ Email from the Council’s Executive Director to the Conservator (7 May 2025)

⁶ Phone call and follow-up email to Dr Simon Copland, Executive Director, Conservation Council ACT Region, by a representative of the SLA, 10 Dec 2025.

⁷ Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (2024) *Close to the Edge*, https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2983029/CED.1b.2-Report-OCSE-Investigation-Close-to-the-Edge.pdf, extract from Figure 7-11 on p.149. The northern portion has been magnified and the Legend has been moved.

Discussion

The TPA's reluctance to engage with the Council throughout 2025 harms not just their and SLA's but CED's standing; one minute the Conservation Council is asked to participate and engage on behalf of the community in the Nature Conservation Forum and processes like reviewing drafts of plans and strategies, the next we are 'kept in the dark'.

The Conservation Council was asking about Central Molonglo in the first place because we understood the removal of the FUA layer—as set out above—meant Central Molonglo had a form of protection from development.

Given the SLA's move, it is important to examine the view Central Molonglo is somehow protected by 'the removal of a FUA overlay' and NUZ3 zoning, because understanding is clearly misguided, i.e., any suggestion Central Molonglo is protected is misleading.

Here's what we know and see:

1. Block 1600 is understood to include: White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland that is protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act); and a wider area of Yellow Box – Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland that is protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (ACT) ([Figure 3](#)).

Under both statutes, Box-Gum Grassy Woodland is listed as threatened at the level 'critically endangered'.

In this report, these protected ecological communities, together, are 'Box-Gum Grassy Woodland'.

The Conservation Advice for Box Gum Woodland states every patch so identified is critical to the survival of the ecological community.⁸

There is a more-detailed statement of the values of Central Molonglo in [Attachment A](#).

⁸ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2023). *Conservation Advice for the White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland*, www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities/pubs/43-conservation-advice.pdf, p. 20

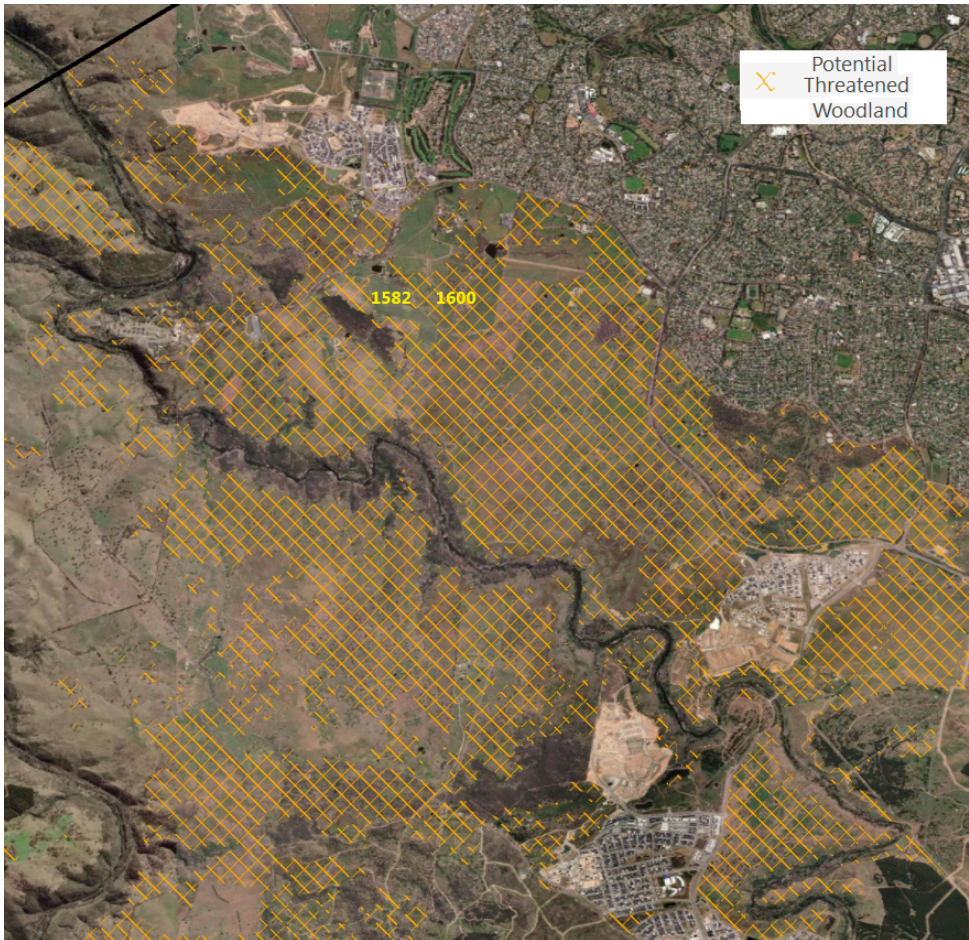


Figure 3: Indication of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland extent in Central Molonglo

2. In February 2026, the Belconnen Community Council began surveying residents to obtain opinions on the proposal encapsulated by a professionally prepared ‘concept masterplan’⁹ supplied by the SLA (Figure 4).

This is disturbing given the ‘illustrative master plan’ included in the 2017 assessment of development in West Belconnen (now Ginninderry) already includes school, mixed use and other support facilities (Figure 5).¹⁰

There was no suggestion in that assessment, or in the endorsed Program Report approved for implementation in 2017, that the Ginninderry development would need additional supporting infrastructure that would put at risk areas of high ecological value in Central Molonglo south of Pro Hart Avenue and Stockdill Drive.

⁹ Bushnell, I. (26 Feb 2026) Survey launched on proposed West Belconnen business and services precinct, *In Region*, <https://region.com.au/survey-launched-on-proposed-west-belconnen-business-and-services-precinct/945036/>; Belconnen Community Council (3 Mar 26) *Post*, <https://www.facebook.com/belcouncil/posts/pfbid02ta hL1k9ydmaszwmXmUKdkkhJx1aZMnDdmdP7ndioaSgBteZkpL3DStH7ngRkbhYl>, viewed 1 May 26

¹⁰ Umwelt (March 2017) *West Belconnen Project Strategic Assessment: Strategic Assessment Report*, Report prepared for Riverview Projects (ACT) Pty Ltd (the **Strategic Assessment Report**) www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/env/pages/f0e0261d-5c7f-4589-a0ec-c8879c09b7c2/files/sa024-strategic-assessment-report.pdf; The ‘Indicative Master Plan’ is in the Strategic Assessment Report, Fig 2-4 on p. 18.

Quite the contrary, the Ginninderry proposal, i.e., [Figure 5](#) and the text associated with it in the Ginninderry assessment, implied a high degree of completeness, of self-containment.

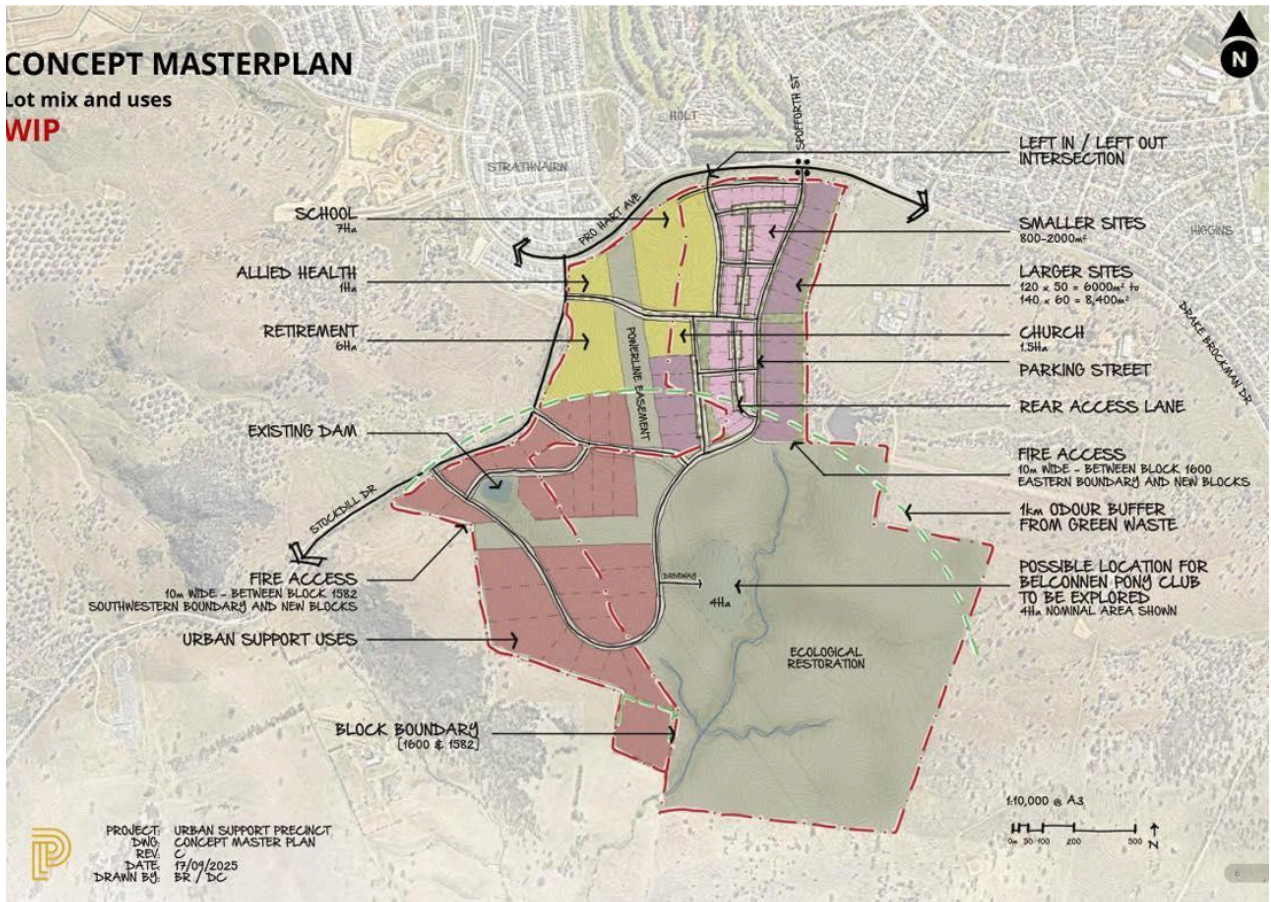


Figure 4: A 'Concept Masterplan' for the development of Block 1582 and part Block 1600¹¹

¹¹ On 6 May 2026, the SLA confirmed this 'Concept Masterplan' is an unpublished tender document.

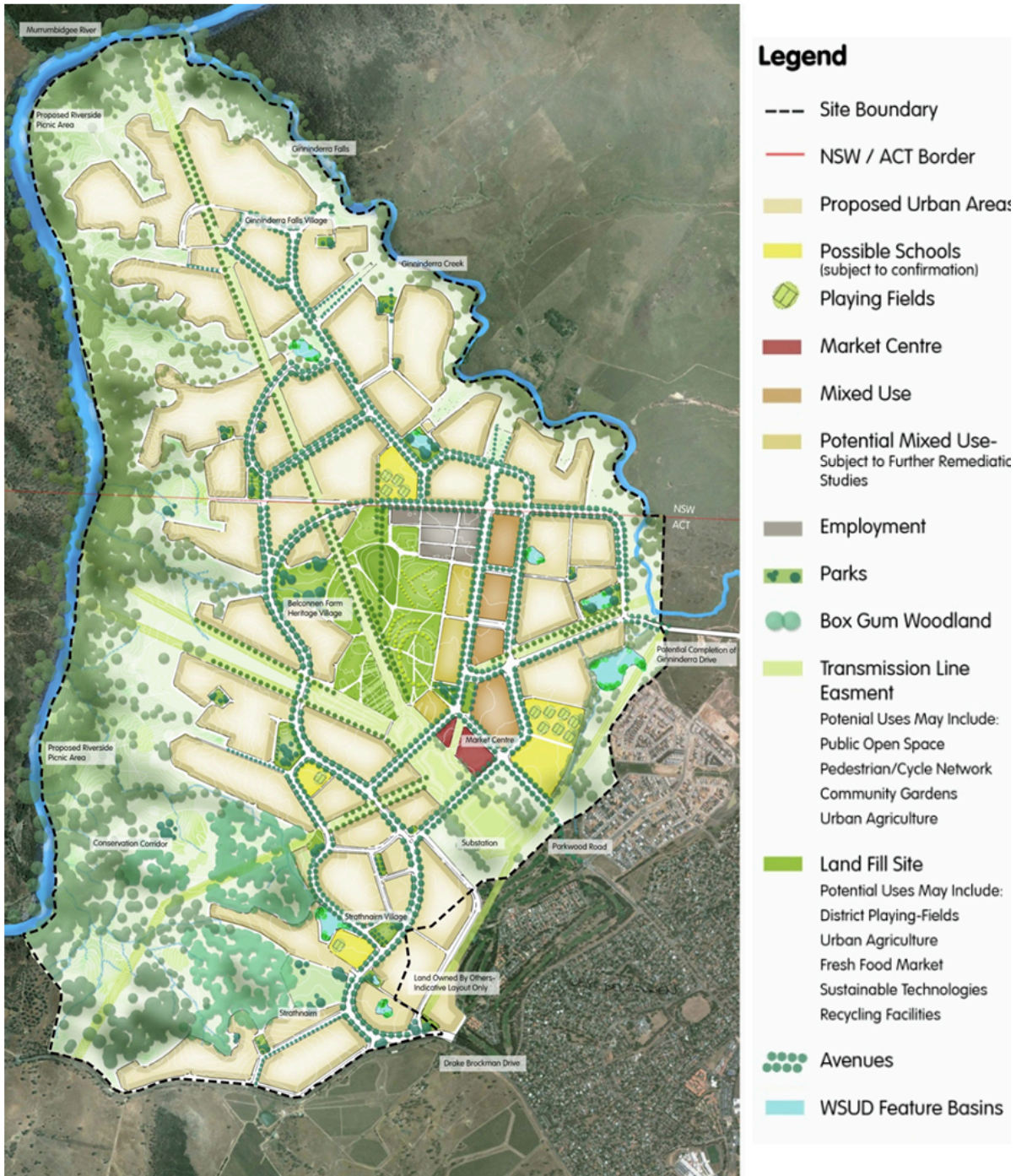


Figure 5: Indicative Master Plan of Ginninderry development (2017)¹²

In 2007, both the TPA and the National Capital Authority (NCA) consulted the public over urban development proposed in the Molonglo and North Weston Districts. On 31 Aug 07,

¹² Umwelt (SAR) n 9, Fig 2-4 on p. 18

the TPA invited comment until 26 Nov 07 on Draft Variation 281 to the Territory Plan.¹³ On 1 Sep 07, the NCA invited comment until 23 Nov 07 on Detailed Amendment 63 to the National Capital Plan (**DA63**). The Territory Plan must align with the National Capital Plan. The purpose of DA63 was ‘to provide for the continuation of urban development in East Molonglo and North Weston while ensuring adequate protection of the National Capital Open Space System’¹⁴ (**NCOSS**), i.e., of the space between (among other towns) the development of East Molonglo (Whitlam) and Belconnen (i.e., Holt and Higgins).

3. The NCROSS requires a “balanced range of uses which reinforces the natural, cultural, scenic and recreational values of the ACT.”¹⁵ For urban areas, the NCROSS promotes the retention of hills, ridges and some major open spaces which separate Canberra’s towns, supporting a distinct urban form, a ‘city in bush surrounds’.¹⁶ The NCROSS:
 - is an integrated system designed to protect Canberra’s environmental qualities, to promote a continuum of natural and park-like settings for the National Capital, and to frame and enhance existing and future urban areas.¹⁷
 - prescribes that Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces ‘play a role in satisfying the landscape function of NCROSS’. ... They are intended for multiple-use appropriate to the location and character of each hill area. They will be used as vantage points from which people can view the city and to provide a quiet refuge from urban living. They will also serve as wildlife and access corridors linking urban areas with other parts of the Territory’s open space system.”¹⁸
 - prescribes that Hills, Ridges and Buffer spaces are to remain substantially undeveloped”¹⁹
 - states the “environment and Australian landscape character of the hills and ridges will be protected and enhanced to provide a unified landscape setting for the National Capital.”²⁰

The Council consider the NCA’s open-space determinations are intended to be enduring, structural and resistant to change. The National Capital Plan positions NCROSS as a foundational element of Canberra’s national identity and landscape setting. While not legally “permanent” in the sense of a constitutional protection, NCROSS designations are: controlled by the Commonwealth, strategically non-negotiable, explicitly protected from urban encroachment, tied to (among other things) environmental integrity and changeable only through formal amendment of the Plan.

¹³ ACTPLA (August 2007) *Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281 Molonglo and North Weston*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140309191846/http://apps.actpla.act.gov.au/tplan/variatio/dv281/dv281.pdf> (**Aug 07 Draft Variation instrument**)

¹⁴ National Capital Authority (24 Sep 2008) *Amendment 63 - Molonglo and North Weston (DA63 website)*, www.nca.gov.au/amendment/amendment-63-molonglo-and-north-weston; *Report on Consultation National Capital Plan Draft Amendment 63 – Molonglo and North Weston (DA63 Consultation Report)*, www.nca.gov.au/sites/default/files/amendments/Draft%20Amendment63_Report_on_Consultation_May2008, p. 3

¹⁵ *National Capital Plan* (December 1990), volume 1 (**National Capital Plan**), <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2007B00014/latest/text>, section 3.22 on p. 23

¹⁶ National Capital Plan n 14, sections 2.1 on p. 11 and 3.3.1 on p. 39

¹⁷ National Capital Plan n 14, section 3.23 on p. 23

¹⁸ National Capital Plan n 14, section 3.2.4.1 on p. 24

¹⁹ National Capital Plan n 14, section 3.2.4.2 on p. 28

²⁰ National Capital Plan n 14, section 3.2.4.3 on p. 29

In short, the NCA's open-space determinations are meant to last, and the National Capital Plan is written to make altering its determinations difficult, exceptional and subject to national-level scrutiny. Developing Central Molonglo is fundamentally inconsistent with the designations of the NCOSS.

4. A clear majority of submissions received by the NCA on DA63 raised environmental concerns, with many focussed on the risks posed to high conservation values in Central Molonglo.²¹ The Standing Committee on Planning and Environment's Report account of the NCA consultation notes submissions said:
 - Central Molonglo is one of a few surviving large-scale examples of the iconic Australian landscape visible from the edges of Canberra's urban areas:
 - o The landscape value of the area has been underestimated and that the open space and extensive vistas contribute to Canberra's uniqueness.
 - o The development of Central Molonglo would be an intrusion into the rural landscape, an integral part of Griffin's design for the city.²²
 - Urban development in Central Molonglo will have a significant adverse impact on areas of high conservation value; in particular, it would result in the loss of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland values.²³
 - Central Molonglo should be excluded from urban development due to the existence of these values. Several submissions suggested the Central Molonglo area be incorporated into a 'nature reserve' or similar.²⁴

5. It is understood:

In light of submissions received during the public consultation period, the NCA identified the need for an independent review of previous environmental work undertaken to determine if the proposed urban boundary was justified in terms of biological and environmental conservation.²⁵

It is not clear precisely when the NCA first identified this need.

6. It is not known when the NCA and TPA jointly funded an independent review carried out by NGH Environmental of previous environmental work undertaken.²⁶ The Council is trying to obtain this report from the NCA; it is not published on the webpage where everything else related to DA63 is found.²⁷ It is understood NGH Environmental recommended that the woodland of the Central Molonglo area be preserved to provide for the retention of vegetation and ecological communities in the more sensitive localities.²⁸

²¹ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Aug 2008) *Report 36: Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281: Molonglo and North Weston*, www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/380606/36peDV281.pdf, (**Report no. 36**)

²² Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, section 1.5 on p. 8

²³ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, section 1.9 on pp. 14-15

²⁴ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, section 1.9 on p. 16

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ This is mentioned in: NCA (DA63 Consultation Report) n 13, pp. 13, 16

²⁷ NCA (DA63 website) n 13

²⁸ NCA (DA63 Consultation Report) n 13, pp. 16-17

7. In regard to subsequent variations made to the Territory Plan:
- a. On 30 Aug 07, comment was invited on the Aug 07 Draft Variation instrument.²⁹ At that time, Block 1582 and *part* Block 1600 were zoned NUZ3. The remainder of Block 1600 was zoned NUZ1.
 - b. On 23 Apr 08, the TPA referred *Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 281 – Molonglo and North Weston* to the Minister for Planning (the **Apr 08 Draft Variation instrument**).³⁰
 - o The following presumes the Apr 08 Draft Variation instrument is the one visible at Appendix C to the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment's *Report 36: Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281: Molonglo and North Weston*.³¹
 - c. The Notice that points to the referral of the Apr 08 Draft Variation instrument to the Minister explains the instrument had interim legal effect from its commencement on 28 Apr 08.³²
 - d. The effect of the Apr 08 Draft Variation instrument was that, for the first time, block 1582 and all Central Molonglo, including all of block 1600, was the subject to a FUA overlay. Block 1582 had been rezoned to NUZ1 and the majority of Block 1600 was zoned Residential (**RZ1**).
 - e. On the same day, i.e., on 28 Apr 08, based on NGH Environmental's report, the NCA indicated to the TPA that Central Molonglo should be excluded from urban development.³³
 - f. On 29 April 2008, the Minister for Planning referred the Apr 08 Draft Variation instrument to the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment for consideration.³⁴ In its subsequent report (see para 7.h, below), the Standing Committee:
 - o noted the connection to Kama (now a nature reserve) is important.³⁵
 - o explained several areas of 'moderately modified' woodlands in Central Molonglo have been undervalued in terms of their ecological significance³⁶, one submission explaining 'In terms of size, connectivity, diversity and condition, the ACT yellow box-red gum woodland remnants are exceptional ... with very high regional and national conservation significance.'³⁷
 - o explained Biosis Research found a greater proportion – relative to eastern and western Molonglo - of intact and connected native woodland (albeit most moderately modified) within the Central Molonglo area - 'These woodlands (and grasslands) provide better habitat opportunities for rare and threatened species and have ostensibly better functional value than the woodland fragments of East and West Molonglo Valley development areas.'³⁸

²⁹ Land (Planning and Environment) (Draft Variation No 281 and Preliminary Assessment) (Molonglo and North Weston) Notice 2007 Molonglo and North Weston (NI2007—252) (**Aug 07 Draft Variation 281 Notice**), <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2007-252/>

³⁰ *Planning and Development (Draft Variation No 281) Notice 2008 Molonglo and North Weston* (NI2008—134) (**Apr 08 Draft Variation 281 Notice**), <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-134/>

³¹ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, Appendix C

³² Apr 08 Draft Variation 281 Notice n 29

³³ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, section 1.9 on p. 17

³⁴ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, paragraph 2.17 on p. 8

³⁵ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, paras 3.13 to 3.16

³⁶ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.19

³⁷ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.19

³⁸ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.20

- o noted the NCA had removed Central Molonglo altogether from DA63 based on the substantial environmental research supporting that action.³⁹
- o stated that it “believes, based on the numerous environmental studies already undertaken, the position of the [NCA] and the high degree of public concern for the future preservation of Central Molonglo, that Central Molonglo should be removed in perpetuity from being considered as a future urban area.”⁴⁰
- o recommended that Central Molonglo be removed in perpetuity from being considered as a FUA.⁴¹
- o recommended that that the ACT Government consider implementing a system of conservation leases in the Central Molonglo area.⁴²
- g. On 29 May 08, the TPA agreed to the NCA’s “request” of 28 Apr 08, and this position was reaffirmed on 8 Jul 08.⁴³
- h. On 18 Aug 08, the then ACT Minister for Planning Andrew Barr MLA:
 - o approved Variation 281 to the Territory Plan under s 76(3) of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* (ACT) (**Variation 281**)⁴⁴
 - o tabled the Standing Committee’s Report No. 36 in support of Variation 281 and in doing so noted in the *Tabling Statement* that the “Committee’s fourth recommendation is that Central Molonglo be removed in perpetuity from being considered as a future urban area”⁴⁵
 - o **directed the TPA to “Vary the draft variation Territory Plan map to remove Central Molonglo in perpetuity from being considered as a future urban area.”**⁴⁶
- i. On 24 Sep 08, DA63 was approved by the then Federal Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Bob Debus.⁴⁷
- j. On 11 Dec 08, a Notice states that 12 Dec 2008 was fixed as the commencement of Variation 281.⁴⁸ This: removed the FUA overlay from Central Molonglo; zoned part of Block 1600 NUZ3, the rest NUZ1; and Block 1582 was re-zoned back to NUZ3.⁴⁹

Conclusions

Given all the above, **it is the Council’s view that Variation 281 and DA63 preclude development in Central Molonglo:**

³⁹ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.26

⁴⁰ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.28

⁴¹ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.29 and Recommendation 4

⁴² Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.35 and Recommendation 5

⁴³ NCA (DA63 Consultation Report) n 13, section 1.9 on p. 17

⁴⁴ *Planning and Development (Plan Variation No 281) Notice 2008*, NI2008-352 (**Territory Plan Variation 281 Notice**), <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-352/>

⁴⁵ Legislative Assembly (19 Aug 2008) *Tabling Statement: Variation No. 281 to the Territory Plan: Molonglo and North Weston*, www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/380607/6th_PE_36_DV281.pdf, p. 5

⁴⁶ *Planning and Development (Plan Variation No 281) Direction 2008 Molonglo and North Weston* (NI2008 351), www.legislation.act.gov.au/View/ni/2008-351/20080822-37459/PDF/2008-351.PDF, point 3 in Annex A

⁴⁷ NCA (DA63 website) n 13

⁴⁸ *Planning and Development (Plan Variation No 281) Commencement Notice 2008* (CN2008-16), <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/cn/2008-16> (**Territory Plan Variation 281 Commencement Notice**)

⁴⁹ Territory Plan Variation 281 Notice n 44

1. As Central Molonglo includes the hill in Block 1600 that reaches upslope to a ridge, under the NCOSS it is surely arguable, given its zoning (NUZ3), that Block 1600 has a degree of protection on the basis of the NCOSS.
2. As per point 3 above, the NCA's open-space determinations are intended to be enduring, structural, and resistant to change. The National Capital Plan positions NCOSS as a foundational element of Canberra's national identity and landscape setting. While not legally "permanent" in the sense of a constitutional protection, NCOSS designations are: Commonwealth-controlled, strategically non-negotiable, explicitly protected from urban encroachment, tied to (among other things) environmental integrity and changeable only through formal amendment of the Plan.

In short, the NCA's open-space determinations are meant to last, and the Plan is written to make altering them difficult, exceptional, and subject to national-level scrutiny.

We observe that, generally speaking, development only has to be approved once; by contrast, in the ACT—more than anywhere else in this country—protections have to be achieved over and over and over again.

Recommendations

We recommend:

1. that Central Molonglo be dedicated to the conservation of nature with a legal mechanism intended to be permanent and that is secure, i.e., not easily revoked or varied in favour of development (including intensifications of use).
2. Failing that, we recommend—as the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment did in August 2008—that the ACT Government consider implementing a system of conservation leases in the Central Molonglo area.⁵⁰

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	meaning ...
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
BWG	Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group
Conservator	ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna
DA63	Detailed Amendment 63 to the National Capital Plan
DCCEEW	Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth)
FUA	Future Urban Area
GSM	Golden Sun Moth, <i>Synemon plana</i>
MNES	Matters of National Environmental Significance
NCA	National Capital Authority

⁵⁰ Standing Committee on Planning and Environment (Report no. 36) n 20, para 3.35 and Recommendation 5

NCOSS	National Capital Open Space System
NSW	New South Wales
NUZ1	ACT Broadacre zone
NUZ3	ACT Hills, Ridges and Buffers zone
SLA	ACT Government's Suburban Land Agency
SLA	Suburban Land Agency (and all former entities performing the same or similar functions)
TPA	Territory Planning Authority (and the former ACT Planning and Land Authority)
Variation 281	Variation 281 to the Territory Plan under s 76(3) of the <i>Planning and Development Act 2007</i> (ACT) ⁵¹

Attachment: Detailed statement of the values of Central Molonglo

Central Molonglo supports diverse vegetation communities including critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands, critically endangered Natural Temperate Grasslands, she-oak & black cypress pine habitats, and many mature, remnant hollow-bearing eucalypts.

There is very significant landscape-scale connectivity and valuable habitat corridors, which includes the high value biodiversity areas such as the Kama Nature Reserve, and the Molonglo River corridor, with connections to the Western Edge rural lands as far as the Murrumbidgee River, and to the east through to The Pinnacle Nature Reserve and Black Mountain.

There is the potential for restoration actions to enhance some habitats outside of the formal reserve areas (on rural leases, and ACT Government owned blocks/land), consistent with the draft of the next *ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2026-2036*.

Central Molonglo is an important nesting location for the Commonwealth and ACT-listed threatened Superb Parrot, one of only three known nesting areas/colonies in the ACT. Superb Parrots use a wide area of the landscape for foraging, often following tree lines/vegetation, up to ten kilometres from nest sites, and are known to utilise flight paths over Central Molonglo. The Central Molonglo land north of the Kama Nature Reserve, in and around the nesting locations, has potential to be enhanced for Superb Parrots into the future, planting and regenerating the next generation of suitable nest trees and planting nodes of foraging plant species.

Central Molonglo also has a large and important patch Brown Treecreeper habitat on the peri-urban fringe. Brown Treecreepers nest in tree hollows, and a number of breeding groups of Brown Treecreepers occurred across Central Molonglo until relatively recently. Otherwise, breeding groups of this species had generally disappeared some time ago from other areas of suitable habitat on the ACT peri-urban fringe, due to habitat fragmentation and other factors.

It is of significance that this Brown Treecreeper habitat in Central Molonglo is still well connected to other natural areas such as the Western Edge lands and the Murrumbidgee River corridor, which potentially could facilitate a source of new birds moving into the area and re-establishing breeding territories. A few, very recent records of Brown Treecreepers, with a possible breeding record in the Kama NR, indicate a natural re-establishment is possible. Central Molonglo is a

⁵¹ *Planning and Development (Plan Variation No 281) Notice 2008*, NI2008-352 (**Territory Plan Variation 281 Notice**), <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-352/>

good opportunity to improve the overall ACT conservation status of the threatened Brown Treecreeper, with targeted habitat restoration actions there; a conservation enhancement plan could be undertaken, such as introduction of woody debris (logs) and encouraging appropriate eucalypt regeneration.

There are habitats in Central Molonglo for a wide range of woodland and grassland bird species, including many woodland-dependent bird species, which long-term research shows are declining. This includes ACT threatened birds, birds of conservation concern and rare/uncommon bird species. Some of these are Brown Treecreeper, Varied Sittella, White-winged Triller, Diamond Firetail, Flame Robin and Scarlet Robin. Long-term research is also showing that relatively common bird species have declining trends, mostly small birds and woodland-dependent birds, so habitat retention and restoration is very important; these species include Leaden Flycatcher, Rufous Whistler, Western Gerygone, Striated Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Southern Whiteface, Tree Martin, Grey Fantail and Willie Wagtail.⁵²

Central Molonglo has records of breeding territories/nesting sites for the ACT threatened Little Eagle; the area provides foraging opportunities. Also, habitats exist for the threatened Pink-tailed Worm Lizard, on stony hillsides within riverine zones.

⁵² Bounds, J. *et. al.* (Oct 2021) *Long-Term Trends in ACT Woodland Birds 1998-2019*, Canberra Ornithologists Group