



**CONSERVATION
COUNCIL** ACT REGION

Submission to ACT Planning

Minor Amendment Regarding Bluetts Block

10 October, 2024

The Conservation Council ACT Region is the peak non-government environment organisation for the Canberra region. Since 1981, we have spoken up for a healthy environment and a sustainable future for our region. We harness the collective energy, expertise and experience of our more than 40 member groups to promote sound policy and action on the environment.

We campaign for a safe climate, to protect biodiversity in our urban and natural areas, to protect and enhance our waterways, reduce waste, and promote sustainable transport and planning for our city. Working in the ACT and region to influence governments and build widespread support within the community and business, we put forward evidence-based solutions and innovative ideas for how we can live sustainably.

At a time when we need to reimagine a better future, we understand that the changes we need will only happen with the collective support of our community.

For further information please contact:

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Introduction

The Conservation Council ACT Region appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the Territory Planning Authority and ACT Government on the proposed:

Minor Amendment to the Territory Plan 2024-m (MA2024-m) Extending nature reserve overlay (Stromlo Block 403 and Denman Prospect part block 12 section 2); and Rezoning (Denman Prospect part block 12 section 2) under future urban area.

Summary

This planning amendment relates to an area known to the community as Bluetts Block. Bluetts Block is highly valued by the ACT Region community, who expect that the area will be appropriately protected. This area is made up of critically important ecosystems that include several threatened and rare species, and it provides important connectivity links across the ACT for these species.

The Conservation Council ACT Region:

1. Supports the recommendation that Blocks 403 and Block 12 (Section 2) become part of an extended nature reserve overlay;
2. Strongly recommends that all of Block 12 and a northern section of Block 403 be included in the extended nature reserve overlay; and
3. Strongly recommends that Block 402 also be included in the extended nature reserve overlay.

Background

Bluetts Block is a parcel of land that has strong ecological and social values. It contains some of the most intact ecosystems close to the southern and western suburbs of Canberra, as well as numerous flora and fauna, some of which are rare, threatened, or endangered. Bluetts Block has been and continues to be very important to the ACT community, who are concerned about its ecological sensitivity given its relatively small size and the negative pressures placed on it from the expansion of Canberra's suburbs.

The long-term viability of all nature reserves depends on their size, shape and connectivity to other reserve areas. Small-sized nature reserves can be compromised by nearby human activities more so than larger, block-shaped reserves. If connectivity to other reserves is lost, landscapes, river systems, and seascapes become fragmented, the movement of wildlife becomes limited or ceases, and ecological systems can begin to break down. The boundaries of the proposed reserve overlay in the Minor Amendment contain only minimal buffers for mitigating negative urban impacts. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the proposed Amendment adequately addresses these requirements (see Table below) to ensure that Bluetts

Block has a more appropriate shape, is larger, and has appropriate boundaries so that longer-term conservation outcomes can be achieved.

Lots	Important ecological features & threats
Block 12 Section 1 (“Deferred Area”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Adjacent to Block 403 providing connectivity & size · Habitat for vulnerable species (Scarlet Robin, Diamond Firetail, White-winged Triller) · Nesting habitat (Blakely’s Red Gum trees) for threatened species (Gang-gang Cockatoo, Superb Parrot) · Reduced size from Stromlo Reach housing development
Block 403	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Different habitats (Red Stringybark Scribbly Gum forest, Red Gum-Yellow Box grassy woodland and Natural Temperate Grassland) that support variety of vulnerable flora & fauna species (Pink-tailed Worm Lizard, Superb Parrot, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Common Dunnarts)
Block 402 (western side of Block 403)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Critically endangered habitats: Natural Temperate Grassland, Box-Gum Woodland · Declining species: Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, Superb Parrot, Swift Parrot · Medium-sized dam providing only permanent water source for animals · Connectivity habitats to Murrumbidgee River Corridor, the Molonglo River Corridor, then to Kama reserve and Black Mountain

The Conservation Council ACT Region strongly supports the recommendation that Block 403 and Block 12 Section 2 become part of an extended nature reserve overlay. The Council also implores the Territory Planning Authority and ACT Government to extend the proposed nature reserve overlay by undertaking the following actions:

- For Block 403 - include its northernmost sections to the Molonglo River Reserve boundary to provide better connectivity from Mt Stromlo through the Molonglo River Reserve to The Pinnacle Nature Reserve;
- Progress discussions with the lessee of Block 402 (ANU) to include this block in the Amendment, as Block 403 and parts of Block 12 are of insufficient size to ensure sustain and protect rare and endangered habitats, flora, and fauna; and
- Ensure that future management plans include specific methods to effectively address environmental impacts of any recreational use of Bluetts Block (e.g. designated trails, dog walking, etc)

This submission is also supported by the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group (CRPCG) and The National Parks Association.