



**CONSERVATION
COUNCIL** ACT REGION

Investigation #3: The future of 'Patch GG'

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:

Simon Copland, Executive Director, director@conservationcouncil.org.au.

Introduction

On 20 Dec 2011, a former Federal Environment Minister granted an approval under Part 10 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) for the ACT Government to implement an endorsed plan that describes a program of urban development actions in ‘East Molonglo’ (the Molonglo Approval).

The Molonglo Approval requires the ACT Government to ‘adaptively manage’ and protect as ‘offsets’ various patches of land that exist within the development area boundary (the ‘MNES Plan’).¹

The MNES Plan provides for protecting matters of national environmental significance (MNES) while suburbs including Denman Prospect, Whitlam, Bandler and Sulman are developed. The Suburban Land Agency is carrying out the ACT Government’s program of work.

Figure 1 shows the location, vegetation condition rating and trend of the patches under management—as at 2022—toward satisfying the ACT Government’s vegetation management obligations.

The MNES Plan and therefore the approval requires the adaptive management *and protection* of some patches, and the adaptive management *only* of others. The approval expires on 31 Dec 2041.

We are focused in this investigation report on whether and if so how offsets that are required to be protected are legally protected.

¹ ACT Government (September 2011) *Molonglo Valley Plan for the Protection of MNES, (NES Plan)*, <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/final-molonglo-valley-nes-plan-sep-2011.pdf>

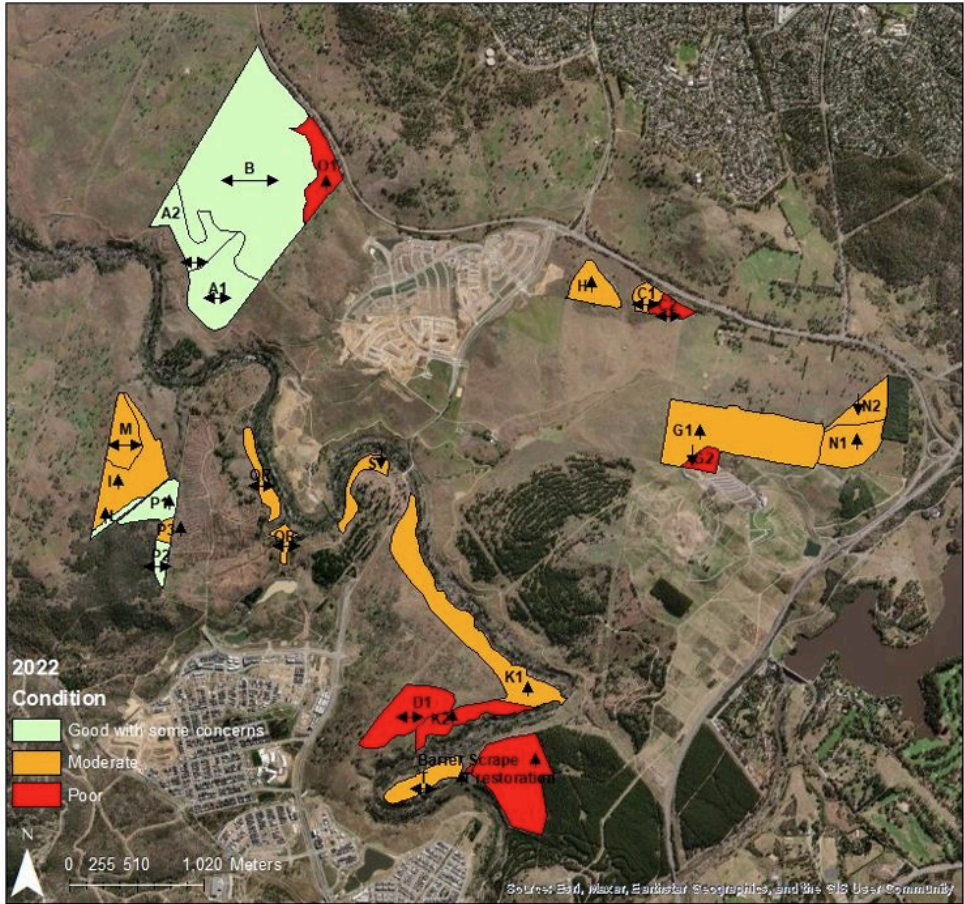


Figure 1: Vegetation condition rating and trend, to 2022, of MNES patches being adaptively managed²

In an ACT Government map of ‘Molonglo Valley offset areas’ online today ([Figure 2](#)), the patches that are said to be offsets for urban development in East Molonglo are shaded blue. Note that only some of these blue-shaded areas are identified as nature reserves. Note also that not all areas of land under management ([Figure 1](#)) are identified as offsets in [Figure 2](#).

² ACT Government (June 2023) Molonglo Valley vegetation condition monitoring report 2013 – 2022, p. 4

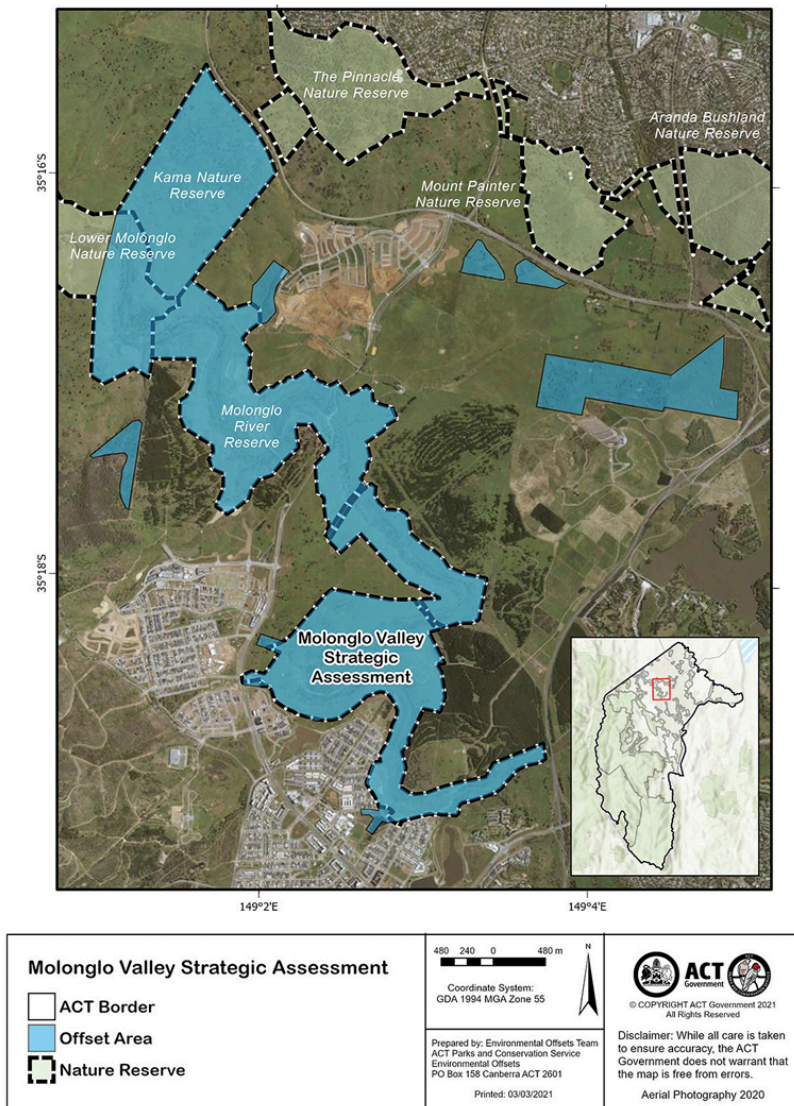


Figure 2: ACT Government map of the Molonglo Valley offset areas³

We note the MNES Plan, i.e., the plan which was:

- prepared and submitted by the ACT Government before being
- endorsed and approved for implementation by a former Federal Environment Minister under the EPBC Act⁴,

and which:

- sets out what actions are included in the SLA's 'East Molonglo' urban development program

³ ACT Government (online) *Molonglo Valley offset areas*, www.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2545503/molonglo-valley-strategic-assessment-map.pdf, viewed 13 May 2026

⁴ Commonwealth Environment Minister (20 Dec 2011) *Approval*, www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/env/pages/b42a89fd-8b94-43d0-8721-81b01ff35a57/files/molonglo-approval-instrument.pdf

- alongside commitments –now, following the approval, they are requirements – explaining how the impacts of this program will be avoided, mitigated and offset,

identifies a different smaller set of areas as offsets (Figure 3).

From a legal perspective, *this* is the map that matters. *These* are the offsets the ACT Government is *required* to protect under the EPBC Act approval. The ACT Government’s obligation is to ‘adaptively manage’ the other areas, only, until the approval expires at the end of 2041.

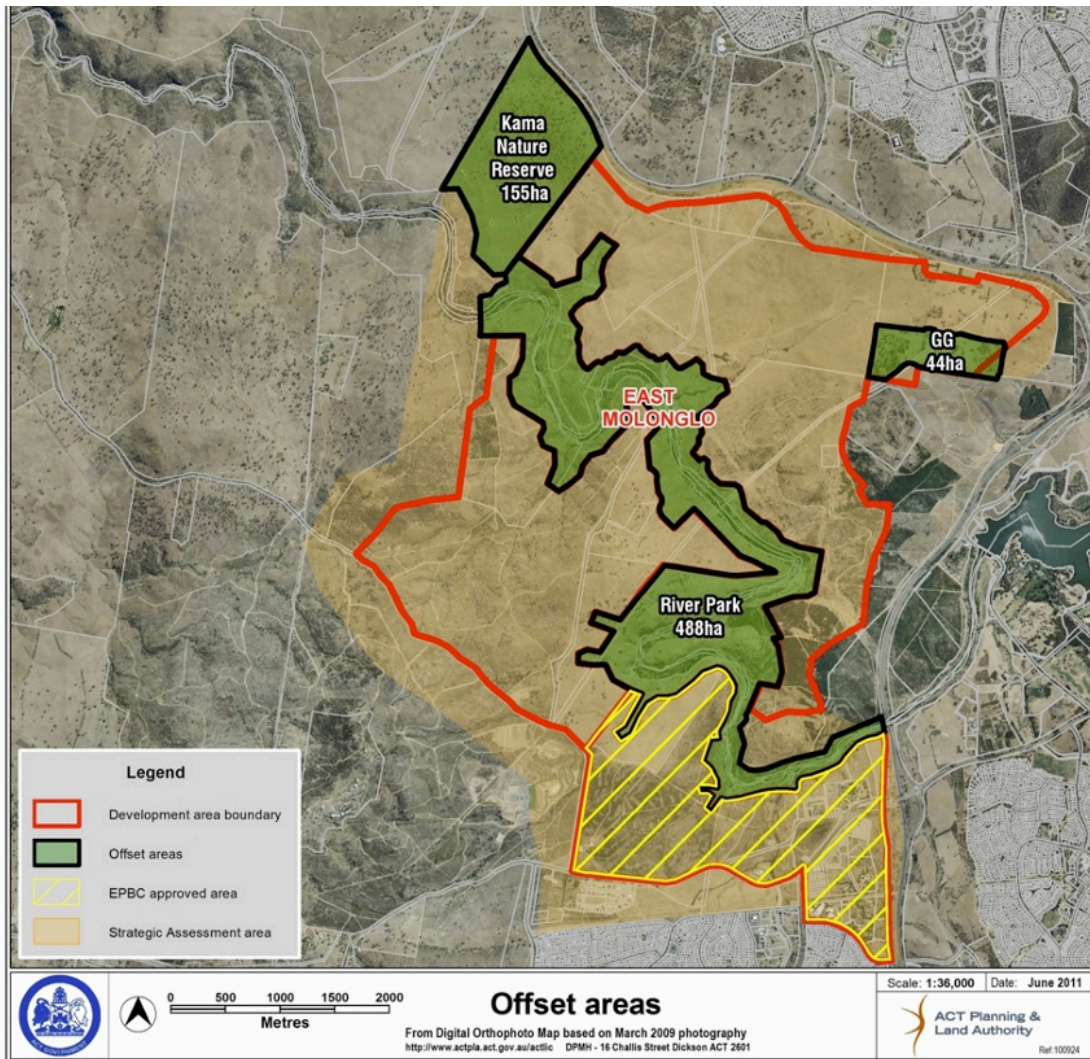


Figure 3: Offsets identified in ‘the endorsed NES Plan’ approved for implementation⁵

Leaving aside some very small patches included as offsets adjacent to the River Park in Figure 3, Patch GG (identified in the east of Figure 3) is the only area identified as an offset in the MNES Plan (Figure 3) that is not identified as a nature reserve in Figure 2.

⁵ Figure 6 on p. 14 of the NES Plan

Management Context

Context and Location

Patch GG is Patch G1 in the east of [Figure 1](#) and Patch GG in the east of [Figure 3](#).

Patch GG has a long grazing history. Prior to 2012, it was part of the rural property 'Glenloch'. Prior to that Patch GG was managed by First Nations People for tens of thousands of years.

Patch GG is now part of the 'Arboretum Woodland Conservation Area' (69 ha) ([Figure 1](#)); it is managed as a contiguous unit. This wider construct includes patches G1, G2, N1, N2 and N3.

In 2014, Patch G1 (43.9 ha) and G2 (3.9 ha) were included in the northern part of the National Arboretum.

Therefore, Patch GG has the rest of the Arboretum to its south, the Glenloch Cork Oak Plantation to its east, and what remains for now as rural leasehold land to its north and west. In September 2024, the suburbs Sulman and Bandler were established over these soon-to-be-developed rural lease areas to the north and west of Patch GG, respectively.⁶

Values

Patch GG protects 43.9 ha of critically endangered Box-Gum Woodland; potential populations of the Pink tailed Worm-lizard; key breeding and foraging habitat for declining woodland birds and provides a potential corridor between the Belconnen woodlands and the Molonglo River Corridor (via the National Arboretum).

Future of Patch GG

The Conservation Council is very concerned about the future of Patch GG.

We explained our concern in a letter to the Planning Minister ([Attachment 1](#)), and received a prompt response from the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs ([Attachment 2](#)).

Discussion

The Conservation Council is grateful to Minister Berry for her response. We have written to the Minister to thank her for that response; in that letter (not included here), we explain our reasons why her response has not allayed our concerns:

1. We have seen solemn commitments given before, e.g., the Central Molonglo Case; sadly, the SLA is clearly not constrained by these commitments. The SLA is spending public funds on consultants preparing sub-division development application documents long in advance of detailed discussions with let alone obtaining an approval from the NCA to rezone areas protected by the NCOS and set aside as Hills, Ridges and Buffers.

⁶ ACT Government (5 Sept 2024) *Names of two new Molonglo suburbs announced*, www.act.gov.au/our-canberra/latest-news/2024/september/names-of-two-new-molonglo-suburbs-announced

2. We have seen how the SLA regards environmental offsets, e.g., the Lot 2 Case; they are places open to development.

Recommendation

We recommend that Patch GG is dedicated as a nature reserve.

Chris Steel MLA
Minister for Planning and Land Management

cc.

Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water

Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Homes and New Suburbs

Adam Davey, Chief Executive Officer, Suburban Land Agency

Bren Burkevics, Conservator of Flora and Fauna

Dear Minister,

Re: the future of 'Patch GG' in Sulman

I seek your clarification regarding the future of 'Patch GG', a 43.86-hectare environmental offset site identified in Figure 6 of the *Molonglo Valley Plan for the Protection of MNES (NES Plan)* ([Figure 1](#)).¹

As you would be aware, the NES Plan was endorsed by the then Federal Environment Minister on 7 Oct 2011. The NES Plan was subsequently approved for implementation with no conditions attached on 20 Dec 2011 (the **Molonglo Approval**). The Molonglo Approval will expire on 31 Dec 2041.

My query arises after I studied spatial information available in ACTmapi. In the figures on page three, the layer identified as:

- ACTGOV Environmental Offsets Boundary² - is shaded purple
- the Molonglo Development Area³ - is shown with black cross hatch
- Territory Plan Land Use Zones⁴ - are shown with multiple colours.

[Figure 2](#) shows the Molonglo Development Area lies over Patch GG. [Figure 3](#) shows Patch GG is zoned for development, mostly RZ1 residential with some RZ3 urban residential. Its area includes some CZ4 local centre and an extension of Bindubi Street.

From this spatial information and my understanding of the law, I understand the ACT Government is declaring its intention to develop Patch GG after the Molonglo Approval expires on 31 Dec 2041.

Would you advise me please on whether the ACT Government does indeed intend to clear the critically endangered Box Gum Woodland found on Patch GG, or if it will be retained and restored.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Simon Copland
Executive Director
Conservation Council ACT Region
17 March 2026

¹ ACT Government (September 2011) *Molonglo Valley Plan for the Protection of MNES (the NES Plan)*, www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/final-molonglo-valley-nes-plan-sep-2011.pdf, pp. 7, 14

² https://services1.arcgis.com/E5n4f1VY84i0xSjy/arcgis/rest/services/ACTGOV_ENVIRONMENTAL_OFFSETS_BOUNDARY/FeatureServer

³ https://services1.arcgis.com/E5n4f1VY84i0xSjy/arcgis/rest/services/Strategic_Assessment_Areas/FeatureServer

⁴ https://services1.arcgis.com/E5n4f1VY84i0xSjy/arcgis/rest/services/ACTGOV_TP_LAND_USE_ZONE/FeatureServer

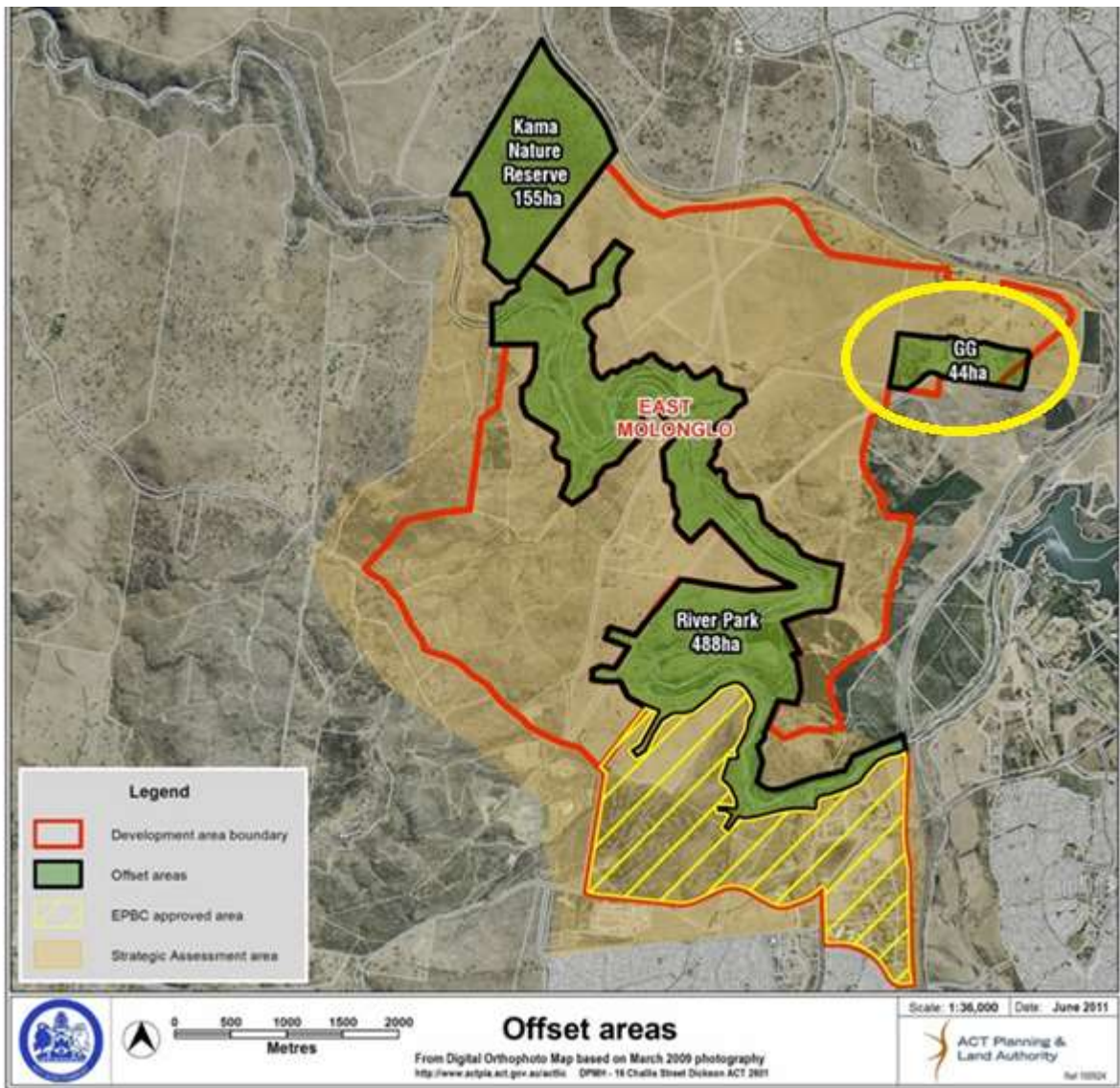


Figure 1: Patch GG is an environmental offset identified in Figure 6 of the NES Plan⁵

⁵ Extract from the NES Plan, Figure 6 on p. 14, yellow oval added

- Drawing Order
- Map
 - Strategic Assessment Areas
 - Gungahlin_Development_Area
 - Gungahlin_Future_Conservation...
 - Gungahlin_Strategic_Assessmen...
 - Molonglo_Development_Area
 - Molonglo_Future_Conservation_...
 - Molonglo_Strategic_Assessment...
 - West_Belconnen_Development_...
 - West_Belconnen_Future_Conser...
 - Strategic_Assessment_Area
 - ACTGOV ENVIRONMENTAL OFF...
 - Territory Plan Land Use Zones

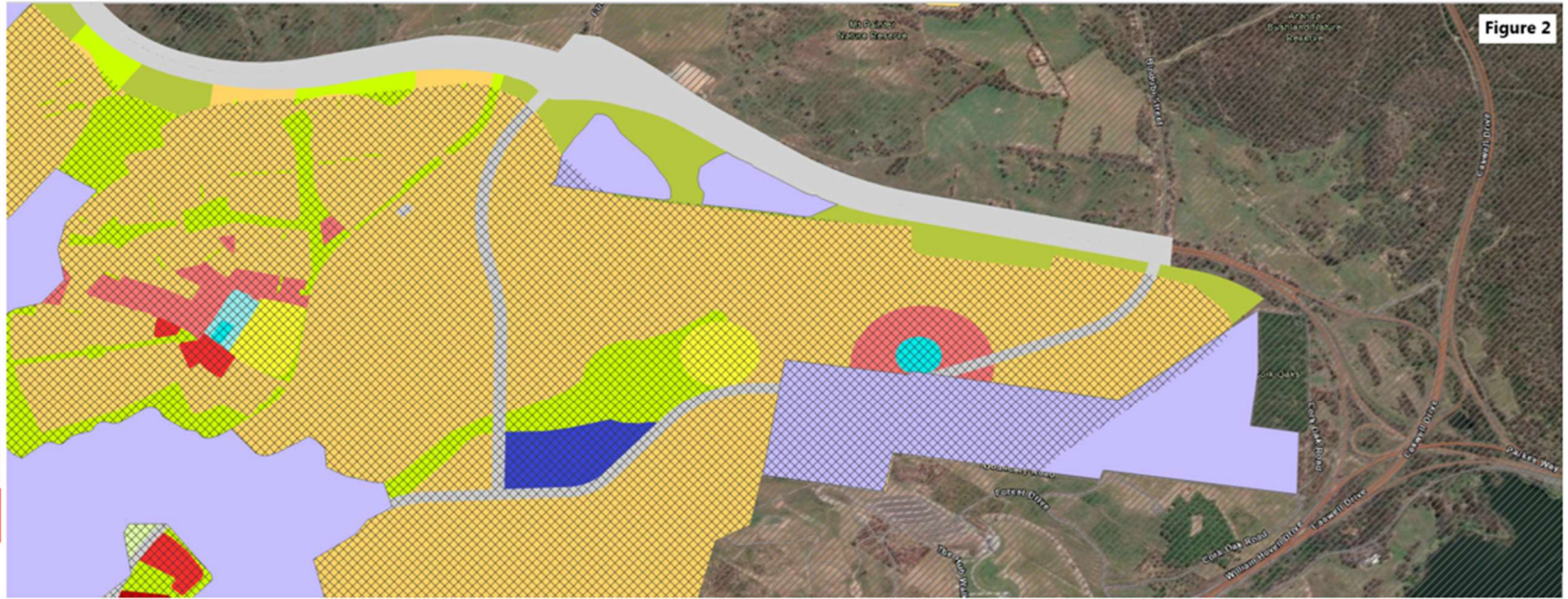


Figure 2

- Drawing Order
- Map
 - Territory Plan Land Use Zones
 - Strategic Assessment Areas
 - Gungahlin_Development_Area
 - Gungahlin_Future_Conservation...
 - Gungahlin_Strategic_Assessmen...
 - Molonglo_Development_Area
 - Molonglo_Future_Conservation_...
 - Molonglo_Strategic_Assessment...
 - West_Belconnen_Development_...
 - West_Belconnen_Future_Conser...
 - Strategic_Assessment_Area
 - ACTGOV ENVIRONMENTAL OFF...

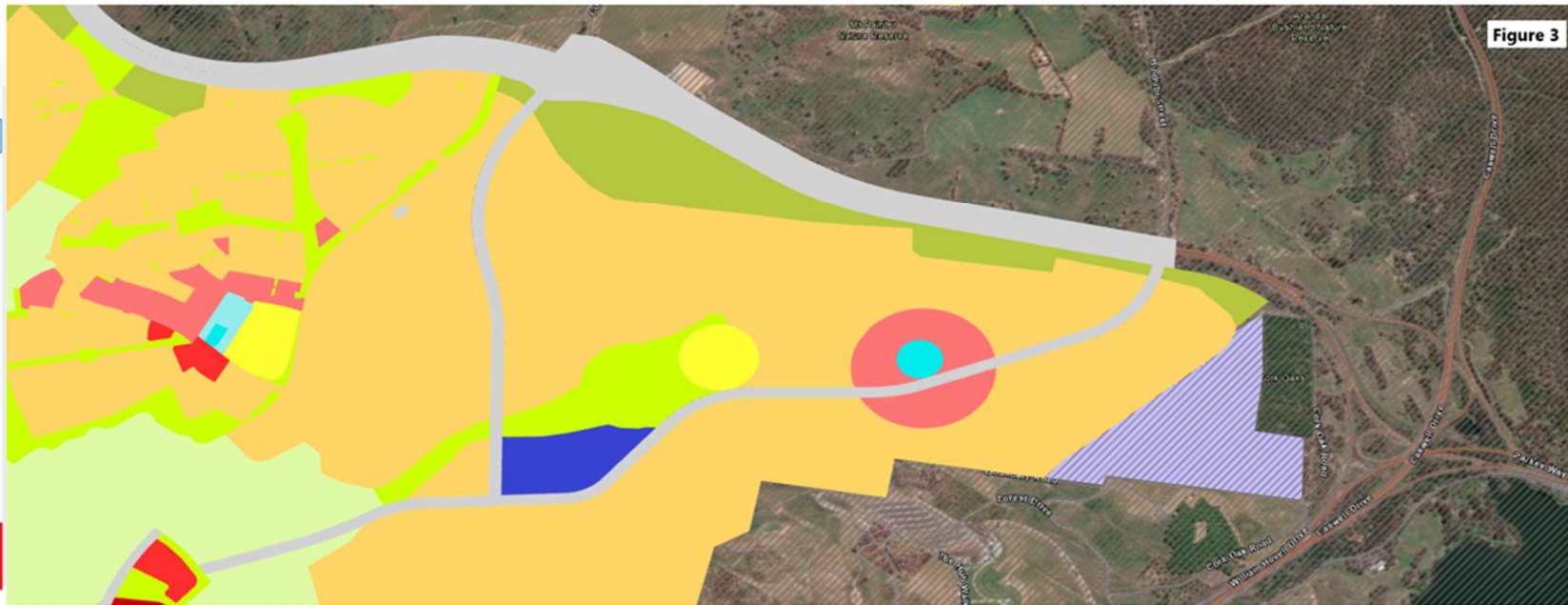


Figure 3



Yvette Berry MLA
Deputy Chief Minister
Minister for Education and Early Childhood
Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs
Minister for Sport and Recreation
Member for Ginninderra

Dr Simon Copland
Executive Director
Conservation Council ACT Region

Our ref: fA17412488

Via email: director@conservationcouncil.org.au

Dear Dr Copland

Thank you for your letter about the proposed suburb of Sulman and the adjacent environmental offset area known as *Patch GG*. Minister Steel has referred your correspondence to me for response as the matters falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

The ACT Government takes its environmental responsibilities seriously, and I wish to provide you with clear assurance that *Patch GG* will not be developed as part of the Sulman residential development. The area is recognised as an established environmental offset under the Molonglo Valley Plan for the Protection of Matters of National Environmental Significance and will be retained for conservation purposes.

Additionally, under the new Territory Plan, the Molonglo Valley District Strategy identifies *Patch GG* as protected conservation land. Consistent with this designation, preliminary planning and design work for Sulman undertaken over recent years has deliberately avoided impacts on *Patch GG* and treats the area as an enduring offset site.

The design of Sulman will specifically accommodate the ongoing protection of this offset area, including the provision of appropriate buffers. The ACT Parks and Conservation Service has implemented a program to manage and restore *Patch GG* to aid the long-term conservation of the critically endangered Natural Temperate Grassland and Box-Gum Woodland flora and fauna located in the area.

I trust this response provides the clarity you have been seeking.

act.gov.au



Yvette Berry MLA
Deputy Chief Minister
Minister for Education and Early Childhood
Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs
Minister for Sport and Recreation
Member for Ginninderra

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Yvette Berry", written over the "Yours sincerely" text.

Yvette Berry MLA
20 April 2026

Cc. Suzanne Orr MLA

act.gov.au

ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit, GPO Box 1020,
Canberra ACT 2601

+61 2 6205 0233
berry@act.gov.au

YvetteSBerry
 Yvette_berry_mla