



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into a Proposal for a Mammal Emblem for the ACT

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The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020, CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via Email: LACommitteeETCS@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Eastern Bettong for ACT's mammal emblem



Humans haven't always been kind to bettongs

The first 'rat kangaroo' collected and described by western science was taken from the Blue Mountains in 1819 before it fell victim to a ferocious dog while 'advancing in search of a caress'¹.

Locally we weren't much kinder – Canberra historian, Lyall Gillespie, reported that by the 1850's we had killed large numbers of rat kangaroos because they 'dug up and ate seed potatoes as soon as they were sown'.

Only 100 years after the scientific description of the bettong, now with foxes eating them and humans culling and clearing their habitat, we had cleansed the mainland of the then-considered 'pest'.

¹ Troughton, E. (1941) *The Furred Animals of Australia*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.



But times change

The things our community hold dear and value changes through time. The unique biodiversity of our nation is now being recognised as an important part of our fabric.

In the Bush Capital the opportunities are immense. We have smart people, a strong economy and people willing to try new things.

Cue the first reintroduction of Eastern Bettongs to the Australian mainland in 2012 – through a bold partnership between the Tasmanian Government, the ACT Government and the Australian National University.

The return of the Eastern Bettong to the ACT is a conservation success story, and one that represents what we can do to enhance the Bush Capital.

On behalf of all disappearing wildlife, the Eastern Bettong is an ambassador for conservation and also a symbol of what makes Canberra special – a progressive agenda for improvement.

Reasons for choosing the Eastern Bettong:

- 1. To celebrate Canberra's groundbreaking conservation initiatives**
- 2. To highlight the plight of this endangered species** – in the same way that the status of other state emblems has helped endangered wildlife like the Tasmanian Devil (Tasmania), Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat (South Australia), Numbat (Western Australia) and Leadbeater's Possum (Victoria)
- 3. The ACT is the only place on mainland Australia where you can see the Eastern Bettong**
- 4. It is a mammal and conservation story that inspires the community and visitors to the ACT.** For example, visitors to Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary have said:

"It was my first time in Australia and I got to see lots of animals, some I had never even heard of (bettongs). I loved hearing about the challenges and successes of the preserve. If I ever get back to Canberra, it will certainly be on my to do list. Good work, keep up the good research."

"I think it was the moment our guide pointed out that we were the only people on mainland Australia currently looking at a Bettong. This just brought home exactly what has been achieved in the sanctuary."

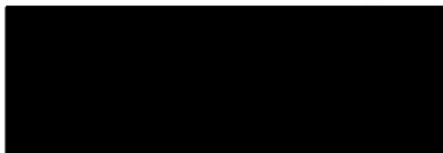
"I arrived at the Mulligans Flat Sanctuary bathed in a glorious sunset for a Twilight Tour, largely ignorant of the Eastern Bettong, its history and quirky ways. The night walk was spectacular and it was heartening to see so many bettongs bounding along at the far reach of the torchlight and digging for their favourite food, the truffle, and with over 100 different varieties of native truffles to choose from, they prosper. Their digging serves to aerate compacted soil, improve the ecosystem function and help native seed germination."



5. In light of Australia's mammal extinction crisis, it gives a profile to Australia's small ('critical weight range') native mammals that are most impacted by foxes and cats across the continent.

Should you have any queries regarding this submission please do not hesitate to contact us, and we would be pleased to attend a public hearing.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Kate Grarock (Sanctuary Ecologist)

