



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

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Submission Cover Sheet

Nature in Our City

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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.

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Nature in the City Submission

Keeping the “Bush Capital” Green

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important aspect of the Bush Capital. My decision made nearly 20 years ago to live here permanently was heavily influenced by the abundance of green space for daily walking, running and biking. The easy access to Namadgi National Park for extended bushwalks and camping sealed the decision.

Daily access to “natural” areas should be considered an essential amenity in city development. Such areas must be **mandated** in every development so that no home is far (ideally less than 0.5 Km) from green space even in areas of the densest high rise development. The green spaces also provide healthy places for children to play and explore. And here is the important immediate “economic” benefit – fit and active people are likely to require less from the healthcare budget.

Greenways connecting suburbs to each other and to Nature Reserves and City Parks promote fitness by encouraging walking and biking. People will actually walk from one destination to another if they are connected by green spaces. Every day many runners, walkers and informal social walking groups make use these pathways as well as bicycle commuters. The greenways also provide corridors for movement of wildlife among the various nature reserves. This network should be given a high priority in all new development plans.

Canberra has an outstanding system of Nature Reserves. These are refuges for wildlife, outdoor classrooms for learning nature appreciation and places for leisurely exploration. As the city expands the Nature Reserve system should be expanded by adding significant Reserves in new developments. To ensure that these are functional nature conservation reserves, areas adjacent to but outside of the reserves should be designated as bushfire buffers and for high use through walking and biking tracks. These tracks can then have side links into the reserves themselves. For instance the Molonglo River Nature Reserve should be maintained at a width along the river to make a viable wildlife and nature refuge. This consideration is critical given the likely large adjacent population using the area for recreation. A wide Nature Reserve along the Murrumbidgee River in the Ginninderry area should be established for the same reasons.

A new Nature Reserve/Park including **Ginninderra Falls** would be a terrific addition to the ACT parks and reserve system with the potential for attracting tourism and economic benefit. It is a real pity that this significant natural feature is no longer available to the public.

Finally **trees are an extremely important** consideration in terms of both quality of natural areas and urban amenity. Trees beautify the city and provide shade thus moderating increasingly hot summer temperatures. They also act as a carbon sink to help reduce the carbon foot print of the city and add value to individual properties. It is very distressing to see that blocks in new developments are becoming too small for trees! And even more distressing to see mature healthy trees removed by developers’ bulldozers or by city “hazard” reduction efforts.

I hope you will seriously consider my suggestions. I look forward to enjoying nature in the Bush Capital for many years to come.

Esther M. Gallant

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