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Hanna Jaireth
The Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
Legislative Assembly for the ACT

Re: ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Thank for the opportunity to comment on this exciting proposal to nominate the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Although I hoped to provide a more comprehensive response, unfortunately I can only provide a brief response to some of the questions you pose, and these are numbered below.

1. The 2008 timeframe for recommending the lodgement of the nomination form to the Assembly may be too ambitious, as the success of the Biosphere relies on the support and involvement of many sectors of the community. More time and work may be needed than 2008 to firstly promote the idea and its benefits as well as providing opportunities for people to discuss their concerns, before a frank analysis can be made of the extent of community support. I expect the level of support demonstrated by the community stakeholders for this proposal is an important aspect of the nomination which will determine when the nomination is ready.

Ultimately I expect it will depend on how comfortable the committee feels regarding the level of support demonstrated by the community. How much support is enough/not enough? Is there research that indicates approximate figures to help answer this question?

3. Due to the emphasis the UNESCO biosphere reserve has on regional ecosystems it makes sense to include negotiations with NSW about possible cross-border zonation as regional ecosystems are not bound by government boundaries. If negotiations are conducted with NSW stakeholders it would be useful to identify beforehand the potential benefits for their participation in the nomination.

4. Because the nomination process requires demonstrated community consultation, the idea of stakeholders participating in the process of selecting a name is fully supported. The stakeholder participation would not only help demonstrate community involvement, but it would also be a valuable opportunity to promote the ACT as a UNESCO biosphere reserve to those who may not have heard about it. Innovative ways to involving stakeholders in the participation may help increase their involvement eg. Naming competition, public debate on the pros and cons, personal visits to progress associations

and community groups and stalls at sporting events, Canberra show and supermarket entrances.

7. Suggested groups, stakeholders and expertise that needs to be represented in an organisation to either progress the nomination or manage the reserve includes at least people from both the ACT and NSW including:

- Indigenous groups and individuals
- representatives of current land owners of each of the zones: core, buffer and transitional
- government departments, universities, non government organizations who wish to do research
- community groups, non government organizations, government departments and universities who wish to do monitoring
- people and organisations who manage each of the zone types: core, buffer and transitional
- community groups, non government organizations, government departments and universities who provide social support to people.

8. To progress the nomination forward it makes sense to have an independent incorporated association. However the costs involved may require fundraising and the other concern is the liability of the position holders, will they need insurance cover and if so at what cost?

9. Although the suggestion that the ACT holds a volunteer conference in July 2007 may be too soon to organise, a conference like this could be a useful method of promoting to the ACT community:

- the UNESCO biosphere reserve concept
- what the proposal would entail for the ACT
- possible benefits the UNESCO biosphere reserve would provide for the ACT and adjoining NSW communities.

The conference could also be a useful:

- method of recording the level of initial interest in the concept
- opportunity for people to demonstrate an expression of interest in progressing the proposed nomination
- workshop on some of the more contentious issues concerning the nomination such as the issues raised by the stakeholders who have reservations about the proposal.

I wish the committee well in this nomination and I look forward to hearing of its progress.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Heather Kharis