

From: Steven Douglas
Sent: Monday, 10 April 2006 3:11 PM
To: Committees
Subject: Biosphere Reserve submission
Dr Hanna Jaireth,
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment,
ACT Legislative Assembly

I wish to express my support for the proposed ACT Biosphere Reserve. I am in favour of the concept but am concerned that it will need to be supported with adequate ACT Government funding in order to be a substantive improvement on current arrangements. ACT funding for ecological management is demonstrably deficient. One only has to undertake traverses of the Territory's conservation estate to see that funds for pest species control, access control, boundary management, revegetation, and fire management are inadequate. This applies in both core areas such as Namadgi NP and relatively peripheral reserves such as much of the Canberra Nature Park. I am also concerned as to whether the government can be considered a serious supporter of the Biosphere Reserve when it continues to undermine conservation measures through poor planning decisions such as the construction of the GDE project, releasing new urban fringe estates next to high conservation value reserves, and permitting inappropriate infill development such as at East O'Malley. I wouldn't want the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve to be little more than a distraction from the fact that the ACT Government is not providing adequate resources to manage existing conservation estate. Too much emphasis is already placed on volunteers and external grants. The Reserve structure should not be set up primarily as a vehicle for obtaining additional volunteer and student labour and external funding, when core funding remains inadequate.

The Committee may wish to investigate a related venture in the form of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute. This body has an applied research focus and involves several universities, local councils, and the NSW Govt (DEC). It may have some value as a structure relevant to the optimal functioning of an ACT Biosphere Reserve.

Regards,
Steve Douglas
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