



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Chair), Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Ms Nicole Lawder MLA,
Miss Candice Burch MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into a Proposal for a Mammal Emblem for the ACT

Submission Number: 18

Date Authorised for Publication: 28/3/2018

Submission to the inquiry by the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services of the ACT Legislative Assembly:

Proposal for a Mammal Emblem for the ACT

Background

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. Civic symbols and emblems are an important part of community building and identity. It is important that such matters are not overlooked in the overall scheme of government administration and the Assembly is to be applauded for examining such a matter and for engaging with the community on the topic.

Symbols and emblems, whether they be national or local, are an important aspect of understanding and expressing our identity as a people and community. In the case of the ACT we are a city that was founded on its national capital role. In the decades since self-government that identity has broadened and deepened. We are now a community that is comfortable in its dual roles of national capital and its own city identity. A local Canberra and ACT identity has developed significantly in recent years, a process that will no doubt continue in the years ahead. At its basis is a growing assurance and knowledge of who we are and the place in which we live.

Key Points

The city of Canberra and the ACT as a jurisdictional entity are unique in several ways. We should celebrate that difference and promote it. We are a people who occupy Ngunnawal land and respect the great care and knowledge that our Aboriginal people of this region have for the land, its rivers and mountains. Representatives of the Ngunnawal people would obviously have suggestions to make about the most appropriate mammal species to be adopted as an emblem for this place.

We are extremely fortunate to live in this place, framed as it is by the Brindabella mountains, which provide the backdrop to our lives individually and as a society. As part of expressing our identity as people who live in this place and love to do so, we should honour that land and invoke its beauty and natural features.

Consistent with such an approach there is other work to be done in relation to civic symbols. We refer specifically to the need to address the current Canberra Coat of Arms. This civic symbol does no justice to the people or the natural environment of the ACT. It is English in its symbolism and tenor. It speaks of other places, not our land or our place. Its adoption at the time of self-government was seemingly an expedient 'fix', born of political compromise. It is something that a mature and confident ACT needs to address.

The simplest approach would not be to change the Canberra Coat of Arms, but rather design an ACT Coat of Arms, as the Territory is currently the only jurisdiction without one. A process of community engagement in the design and selection of an appropriate, more stylised and especially more Australian, indeed locally inspired livery, would be a great statement of identity and self confidence by the ACT community. It is something that the ACT government and Legislative Assembly could initiate and then adopt, without reference to any formality or deference to foreign authorities.

Recommendations

We strongly support the adoption of a Mammal Emblem for the ACT. The principle of doing so is vitally important. We do not have sufficient knowledge of local fauna to propose any specific mammal as a preferred emblem. We are confident that the Committee would have access to such advice from Aboriginal people and other experts in that field.

We further recommend that the Committee support and recommend to the Assembly and the ACT Government, that they commission a process that would engage local designers and the wider community in the creation of a Coat of Arms for the ACT, that would appropriately reflect the character of the Territory's society and the natural features of our land and environment. We would be happy to provide the Committee with advice as to an appropriate pathway for such an initiative.

Terry Fewtrell

David Headon

21 March 2018

Contact Details:

Terry Fewtrell

[Redacted contact details]