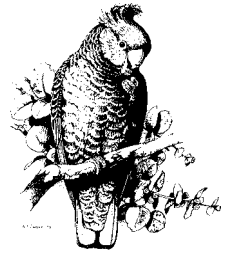


Canberra Ornithologists Group
PO Box 301
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

ABN 72 534 628 789



Dr Hanna Jaireth
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning & Environment
ACT Legislative Assembly

Dear Committee Secretary

ACT Assembly Standing Committee on Planning & Environment – Inquiry into Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 257 – Suburb of Crace, Gungahlin (DV257)

Thank you for the invitation for the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) to provide a submission to this Inquiry.

COG is dedicated to the study and conservation of native birds and their habitats. COG is essentially concerned with better protection for native vegetation which provides habitat and connectivity of habitats for various species of birds, especially birds which are associated with grassy woodlands. COG surveys and research show that a number of woodland bird species continue to decline in abundance, including birds which are listed as threatened under ACT legislation. The primary cause is the overall loss of habitat and fragmentation of habitat, overlaid by a variety of other pressures and threats including urban related pressures.

As a member group of the Conservation Council of the South-east Region and Canberra, COG has provided input to the submission to this Inquiry from the Conservation Council (with the Ginninderra Catchment Group). COG supports that submission and its recommendations.

In terms of bird related issues for the proposed suburb of Crace, the main areas of concern are the loss of a number of large and mature Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and Blakelys Red Gum (*E. blakelyi*) trees on this site; indeed this is an issue for many of the lowland areas which are proposed for urban development. COG recommends that there should be a stronger intention to retain most of the large trees, grouped where possible, even if this means less housing blocks are available.

Yellow Box trees, in particular, provide a rich nectar source for birds, for example, this is one of the tree species relied upon by the threatened Regent Honeyeater (a nationally endangered species and an ACT endangered species). These birds are known to visit the ACT in small numbers, particularly in years when Yellow Box is in good flowering. There are records of the species breeding or attempting breeding from Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyaroo Nature Reserves in Gungahlin, and they are known to use paddock trees in flower as a food source.

The second area of concern is the general need to maintain connectivity and corridor values for birds through the site, especially to Gungahlin Hill Reserve. Many bird species (not all) are able

to use paddock trees and/or 'green strips' of native vegetation of suitable size, as stepping stones in order to move around the landscape. COG recommends that this issue needs to be focussed on more in the final design, using local native species for any re-vegetation/plantings where possible.

COG strongly recommends that cat containment provisions (similar to Forde and Bonner) and effective dog controls, should apply to Crace, to protect the natural values of the Gungaharra Grassland Reserve particularly, and also those of Gungahlin Hill Nature Reserve.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Bounds
Conservation Officer

29 March 2006

Phone: 6288 7802

Email: conservationofficers@canberrabirds.org.au