



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Chair), Miss Candice Burch MLA (Deputy Chair)

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Nature in Our City

Submission Number: 46

Date Authorised for Publication: 8 August 2018



Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601
LACommitteeETCS@parliament.act.gov.au

TCC submission in response to Inquiry into Nature in our City

Tuggeranong is surrounded by hills, mountains, rural areas and nature parks which add to the amenity and mental wellbeing of all of its residents. It is important that the place of nature is considered when looking at the future development of the ACT with its increasing demand for land for its increasing population.

The importance that the people of Tuggeranong places on nature can be seen in the 2016 CURF report - “Place-based sustainable urban renewal: a case study of the Tuggeranong District”. It states that resident focus groups showed that people *“greatly valued the natural environment and access to visual amenity, offered by the Brindabella mountain ranges and other green spaces.”* With *“suburbs where the green space, ease of access to nature and appreciation of the natural environment and the overall ‘bush feel;” were considered central to the identity of those places?* p55

Consequently, the Tuggeranong Community Council (TCC) is pleased to have the opportunity to give comments on the terms of reference for the Inquiry into in our City.

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Glenys Patulny
President
Tuggeranong Community Council
June 2018

RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

[Redacted] | [Redacted] | [Web: www.tuggcc.com](http://www.tuggcc.com) | [Redacted]



1 The level of public support for and satisfaction with amount and quality of nature and natural environment areas in Canberra, particularly in urban areas.

Residents of Tuggeranong feel very strongly about the importance of Nature in Our City and have a strong passion for the Bush capital (as mentioned above). This has been reflected in:

- CURF report - “Place-based sustainable urban renewal: a case study of the Tuggeranong District”, 2016.
- The Tuggeranong Community Council Survey of 2016, which put Lake in Tuggeranong and the need for better water quality so that residents could enjoy its amenity, as its top priority.
- When local residents and sporting groups were part of a Stakeholders Group to look the possible development of a new suburb (Thompson) in West Greenway, there was an overwhelming response for this not to happen, mainly because of environmental concerns and the possible detrimental effect it could have on the Murrumbidgee River if such a development went ahead
- The passion of local Landcarers to maintain their natural spaces– over 60 groups in the ACT - 27 in Southern ACT Catchment Group (SACTCG) alone.

2 The types of nature and natural environmental areas within Canberra e.g. urban open spaces or bushland reserves and the existing or potential benefits and challenges they bring to Canberra’s:

- a Social amenity;
- b Economic development;
- c Biodiversity; and/or
- d Climate resilience.

There is a growing concern that pressures on development will lead to encroachment on our urban open spaces as well as rural and natural areas. The people of Tuggeranong like their connection with nature and having green spaces around their houses and suburbs, so that walkers, bike riders, horse riders, landcarers who work in these spaces, can enjoy the social amenity. This social amenity will become more important as the density of housing increases.

Nearby natural spaces support economic development as it is leads to more harmonious work and living places. The CURF report on Tuggeranong (p56) stated *“stakeholders strongly identified Lake Tuggeranong as both a recreational and economic asset requiring renewed care and management”*.

The benefit of having a lake, large blocks and significant surrounding green spaces, leads to greater biodiversity of the area which will be very important for our local wildlife as the climate changes. Such areas reduce the effects of climate change lowering the temperature in the area, thus reducing the heat island effect leading to a healthier environment for all of us.

3 Opportunities for Blue(water) and or Green (natural) Infrastructure in Canberra



In this age of economics being all important, there are insufficient policies that look at the way nature can support future urban growth. Places like Lake Tuggeranong have a cooling effect in summer and this will be more and more important as the climate changes. Additionally,

- They provide amenity and recreation for residents to walk around, ride bikes around, play around.
- They allow for the development of such local groups as the Tuggeranong Sea Scouts, Sailability

It should be noted however that “*Water quality is regarded as a significant issue*”, CURF p59 and needs to be improved, not just for the people of Tuggeranong but for those downstream on the Murrumbidgee River– which the Lake Tuggeranong feeds into

- The areas around the lake with its nearby wetlands and rain gardens (recently built to filter water into the lake) need to be maintained. These natural reserves play an important part in the health and wellbeing (including mental wellbeing) of the community and need to be supported and maintained.
- Areas alongside the Murrumbidgee River itself need to be protected to reduce erosion and contamination into the river – thus buildings should not be built too close to the river. The proposal to build a new suburb in West Greenway was knocked back by the local community mainly for this reason – the community is currently looking into the possibility of having it listed as an Environmental Sporting precinct, with additional new public recreation areas and possible water education space.

4 Managing the interface between the natural environment and urban areas particularly in regards to conserved environmental areas.

With the increasing population, there is increasing demand on land for housing. The traditionally recognised boundaries of the urban area are changing and areas that were considered once natural areas or rural lands are being taken over for development. We need to look ahead and work out what we are doing in the future – infill vs greenfill - what will our urban boundaries be? At the same time, we need to look at the areas of possible urban development to find out if there are any areas of specific significance that need to be protected and incorporated into any future plans so they are not bulldozed and built on by developers.

Also with the increasing demand on our urban spaces and the constant battle to reduce the spread of weeds (which reduces the value of conservation areas), the ACT government needs to employ sufficient Rangers as well as support local Catchment Groups to support local landcare volunteers who work to maintain and enhance the environment. There is also a need to improve environmental education for residents, particularly those who live near natural areas, to ensure they don't impact negatively on their local environment. Local residents need to be engaged and supported and amenities well looked after.



5 Current policy or regulatory settings that impede the integration of the natural environment within optimal urban development and design.

There appears to be no landscape policy for urban Canberra and no real Natural Resources plan or prevent urban sprawl. There is insufficient priority given to recognising the benefits of nature especially in some newer and redeveloping urban areas. New developments seem to want to maximize returns for developers with little consideration for integrating the natural environment with optimal urban development. Places like Molonglo have small blocks and currently large houses with little or no space for trees and will have little shade in the future. This it is essential that Street trees and some parks need to be planted and properly monitored, to give some relief for people in these areas from increasing climate change events.

As said above current planning policy seems to be leading to small plots with large houses on them, leaving little green space as the building take up most of the land giving little room for vegetation and possible canopy trees that might help reduce the heat island effect in summer. On any building block, there should be a good plot ratio say 35%, so there is plenty of room put aside for planting – trees, shrubs lawn, vegetable garden as well as driveways.

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO HAPPEN:

1. Ongoing Government commitment (both state and federal), to protect and maintain key natural environment areas in the urban area
2. The ACT Government in consultation with the community, supports an ongoing strategy to fund the maintenance of Canberra's open spaces and nature reserves.
3. The ACT Government should support local landcare groups to help monitor/maintain urban high value open spaces and reserves. They should provide resources to enable them to assist them to support local landcarers and the general community.
4. Development codes for residential housing so that plot ratios are 35% to provide room for shade trees and gardens, reduce the heat island effect and reduce storm water run-off.
5. The ACT Government encourage and resource community consultation on suburban precinct codes.