

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

23 June 2008

Comments on Draft Variation 281 to the Territory Plan – Molonglo and North Weston

1. Friends of ACT Arboreta (FACTA) commented earlier on the draft variation with regard to a valuable trial of eucalypts near the present CIT buildings, to the effect that:

This planting was established in 1980 and comprised about 100 plots of eucalypts that might be suitable for planting in and near Canberra, most of which had not been tried before. In 1992 there were about 93 surviving plots and by 2007 there were about 67 remaining plots. Since they were established the surviving trees have withstood drought, low levels of maintenance and the 2003 bushfire so that the survivors are highly appropriate candidates for further plantings. It is clear that the results of the planting are of considerable scientific interest and of great value to all those involved in growing or recommending species for planting in and near Canberra. Four of the species have very restricted natural distributions and are classified as “vulnerable” under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Conservation Act.

We note that a separate paragraph has been inserted into the amended plan indicating that this trial will be assessed and if warranted, a management plan prepared to ensure its future role. We understand that a project officer is to be appointed for this assessment and FACTA offers our help in assessing the plots and determining follow up activities.

FACTA would appreciate an opportunity to meet members of the standing committee to discuss the importance of this trial in the context of future tree plantings in our region.

2. FACTA also drew attention to the arboretum at the southern side of the CIT campus in Weston which seemed to have been overlooked since there was no mention of it in the description of the non-human environment in the preliminary assessment of the draft variation. More recently there has been a media statement by the Minister for Planning to the effect that the trees in the arboretum are to be retained, but without giving details as to how this is to be done.

This arboretum was established from 1977 onwards and contains some 200 trees which are of great horticultural interest, including some that are listed in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's list of endangered plants (the red book) and some that have been considered for planting at the new International Arboretum and Gardens.

Development of the area should allow for retention of these trees for the benefits that they can provide to the general community as well as their scientific and teaching values. The trees are now big enough to create their own sense of place and can make an invaluable contribution to the public well-being associated with a future development in this area which has been depicted as a future urban zone. We are also aware that the School of Horticulture will be moved to Bruce and that the new campus does not contain the same variety of trees as the existing arboretum which will therefore have a continuing educational role.

FACTA would appreciate an opportunity to meet members of the standing committee to outline the values of these trees, the future role of the trees in the arboretum and how their protection may be ensured.

Yours sincerely

Tony Fearnside
President