



2 April 2007

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra City ACT 2600

Dear Dr Jaireth

Inquiry into the proposed nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to the Committee on its inquiry into the proposed nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The Property Council of Australia (ACT) is unable to support the current ACT Government proposal to apply to have the ACT declared as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve on the information available to date.

The Property Council is actively involved and keenly interested in the greening of the urban environment and the development of Canberra as an affordable sustainable city. The Property Council took a leading role in the public debate and consultation process during the development of the Canberra Plan so that Canberra would be a more affordable, compact and sustainable city in the future.

The Property Council was a founding member of the Green Building Council and is a continuing supporter. Property Council members are producing new urban forms each day to reduce the environmental impact of our cities, which are Australia's engines for growth and economic prosperity.

The Property Council's major concerns on the current proposal are as follows:

1. There is no data on the form of the proposal and the impact on the future development of Canberra in response to the Canberra Plan and beyond.
2. There is no evidence that the ACT Government has developed a draft regulatory impact statement including a triple bottom line assessment of the impact of the ACT becoming a biosphere reserve, including the cost benefit to government, the business community, and any social uplift to the broader ACT and regional community. This can be encapsulated in the idea: "who pays and how?"
3. There is no evidence that the Commonwealth Government as "trustee" for the Australian community, the freehold owners of our national capital, are prepared to endorse or give in principle support for the biosphere concept.

The *Voice* of Leadership

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The Property Council remains ready to participate in an open public debate and consultation in the interest of a more sustainable Canberra, based on real information and research to achieve an informed policy on the biosphere proposal. Presently this cannot occur on the information made available. Should the Government wish to proceed with further consideration of this proposal we request that, at a minimum, the Government release a draft regulatory impact statement for public consultation.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Carter
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Property Council of Australia (ACT)

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