



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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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: 59**

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29 June 2018

The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and  
City Services  
Legislative Assembly for the ACT  
GPO Box 1020  
**CANBERRA ACT 2601**

Dear Committee Secretary

### **Inquiry into the value of the natural environment to an urbanising Canberra**

This letter and Attachment 1 provides Icon Water's response to the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services inquiry into the value of the natural environment to an urbanising Canberra.

Icon Water provides quality drinking water and wastewater services to the ACT and region. We own and operate assets and manage land across the ACT, comprising the dams, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, reservoirs, water and sewage pumping stations, mains and other related infrastructure. Our water and sewerage network consists of over 6,440 kilometres of pipeline across both public and private land.

Icon Water therefore has a keen interest in maintaining nature in our bush capital and recognises the importance of providing areas for recreation throughout our city. In particular, Icon Water sees the benefits of natural open spaces as a green easement and buffer for utility infrastructure. It is also necessary to provide appropriate alternative places for recreation and activities that are otherwise restricted in Canberra's drinking water supply catchments.

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. For further information on this submission please contact Benjamin Bryant, Manager Environment and Sustainability,

[REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Jane Broaden  
General Manager Business Services

## **Attachment 1**

### **Introduction**

On the 6 December 2017, the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services self-referred an Inquiry into 'Nature in our City'. This submission provides Icon Water's response to the inquiry to support the focus on ensuring sufficient natural areas in Canberra, particularly in urban areas.

Icon Water is an unlisted public company owned by the ACT Government, which undertakes two primary activities: delivery of water, sewerage and associated services; and managing the investment in the energy businesses, Evoenergy and ActewAGL.

Under the *Territory-owned Corporations Act 1990* (TOC Act), Icon Water must:

- operate at least as efficiently as any comparable business
- maximise the sustainable return to the Territory on its investment in Icon Water, Evoenergy and ActewAGL
- show a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the interests of the community in which we operate
- effectively integrate environmental and economic considerations into decision making processes.

We own and operate the ACT's network of dams, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, reservoirs, water and sewage pumping stations and other related infrastructure. We consistently deliver safe drinking water and reliable sewerage services to a community of over 400,000 people.

Icon Water is keen to contribute to understanding the value of natural environment areas in Canberra, by raising potential opportunities with the Standing Committee and interested parties.

Within this response, Icon Water outlines its general experience as a public corporation with extensive utility infrastructure in natural areas and an interest in protection of our source water catchments.

### **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 (Inquiry reference 2)**

#### Green easement and buffer for utility infrastructure

Canberra has a range of green areas, ranging from street verges to urban open spaces to urban reserves, which provide community liveability outcomes, green easements and buffers for utility infrastructure.

Water and sewerage assets such as linear pipelines, pumping stations, reservoirs, valves, scours and vent stacks have been successfully integrated within natural areas across Canberra. These can be considered as valuable green easements which enable urban development whilst supporting conservation and social amenity. At Icon Water, we are able to manage and minimise potential impacts of our activities in nature reserves through adherence to the Site Management Agreement established between Icon Water and the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (ACT).

As a planned city, there are some synergies between natural areas and utility infrastructure, such as providing buffers for noise and odour emissions to protect human health and the environment. These natural areas also enable some form of recreation and conservation for the benefit of the community. Disrupting this synergy, such as by allowing development of those existing open spaces, could increase the risk of nuisance to the community from essential water and sewerage services.

#### Demand for recreation in source water supply catchments

It is necessary to ensure there are adequate natural areas and open spaces throughout the city to provide for a range of public recreation and conservation needs.

Icon Water is particularly interested in working with the ACT Government to ensure that recreation and activities in the drinking water catchments have appropriate restrictions to ensure the protection of water supplies. If there are sufficient open and natural spaces available in the urban areas, then this will ensure a balance of expectations and reduce the demand for recreation in the drinking water catchments.

Appropriate planning and management of activities is required in our source water catchments to protect the drinking water supplies of the Canberra region, including the Cotter, Googong and Upper Murrumbidgee catchments. As the land manager for the Cotter Catchment and Googong Foreshores Area, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service enforces public compliance with source water protection measures. Having alternative areas available for redirecting activities incompatible with the source water catchments is a critical component for effective enforcement.

### **Opportunities for Blue (water) and or Green (natural) Infrastructure in Canberra (Inquiry reference 3)**

#### Land management collaboration

Icon Water land management activities are generally planned and delivered in consultation with relevant ACT Government land custodians to meet land management objectives and utility asset protection.

Icon Water meets regularly with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service to ensure alignment of programs for asset maintenance, bushfire hazard reduction, weed control and pest management. Icon Water supports continued collaboration and coordination of maintenance activities, safe access and prevention of interference with utility assets.

Controlled-access tracks on public land may serve multiple purposes for a variety of stakeholders. The specifications and condition of tracks on public territory land is therefore highly variable. Icon Water is working with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service to better define track requirements for utility infrastructure access whilst supporting the values of natural areas.

#### Street tree and utility infrastructure replacement programs

There is potential to align the objectives of the ACT Government street tree replacement programs to provide the natural and amenity outcomes while aligning with utility infrastructure protection objectives. Improved coordination in planning streetscapes includes consideration of suitable tree species for the climate, and potential for tree root intrusion of pipes. Icon Water and the Transport Canberra City Services Directorate have held initial discussions to progress mutually beneficial alignment of activities.

**Managing the interface between the natural environment and urban areas particularly in regards to conserved environmental area (Inquiry reference 4)**

Icon Water takes its land management responsibilities very seriously, has a good environmental record and works closely with the ACT Government and catchment interest groups to ensure we meet environmental outcomes.

There are opportunities to improve coordination of land management activities between a range of landholders and stakeholders across the ACT, to ensure implementation of effective and efficient land and water management practices.

**Current policy or regulatory settings that impede the integration of the natural environment within optimal urban development and design (inquiry reference 5)**

Canberra is a planned city where urban open spaces and urban reserves provide multiple functions, including as buffers for noise and odour emitted as part of utility operations to protect human health and the environment. The buffer function is not currently reflected in the compliance points for nuisance impacts in the *Environment Protection Regulation 2005 (ACT)*, where on public land the compliance point is specified as the point of emission rather than at the land boundary with a sensitive receiver. Icon Water is currently in discussions with the ACT Environment, Planning, and Sustainable Development Directorate regarding review of the nuisance compliance point, to acknowledge the performance of public land as a potential buffer for utility infrastructure.