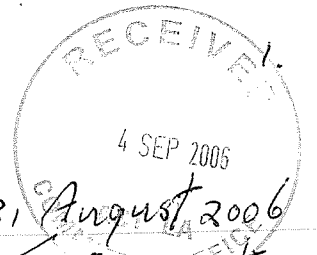
	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE	
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To: ACT Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

Attention: Dr Hanna Jarrett
Secretary

Thank you for the invitation from the ACT Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning and Environment to provide feedback on the issues paper 'Inquiry into the proposed nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.'

Congratulations to the Standing Committee for the quality of the issues paper. The subject has been thoroughly researched in the document. It raises the main concerns and deals with them objectively. It also identifies key issues for further comment. These are summarised on page 9 of the paper. My comments on each of these issues are set out below.

The Biosphere Reserve should be approved in 2009 to coincide with the centenary of the choice of the location of Canberra for the National Capital. This seems preferable to waiting for 2013, by which time momentum might be lost. December 2008 seems too late for lodgement as the approval process in UNESCO could take more than 12 months, depending on when the MAB Council meets to consider the Advisory Committee's recommendations. January 2008 or at the latest June 2008 seem preferable deadlines since the approval process should then

definitely be completed by 2009 and the new biosphere reserve can as a result be launched in the same year.

There are potentially many additional social and economic benefits which an ACT Biosphere Reserve might bring. Any activity concerned with sustainable development could receive additional emphasis. There would be enhanced international exposure and cooperation. New initiatives could develop in nature conservation, more sustainable agriculture, more sustainable buildings, renewable energy innovation, more local food production, new fields of relevant research, more energy efficient transport, better education for sustainable development, enhanced marketing of local agricultural products such as wine and more efficient use of water. There could be enhanced use of social science instruments such as prices and taxes to encourage more sustainable behaviour. Indigenous knowledge could be used more, for example the use of fire to maintain certain natural landscapes in good condition. Ethical frameworks for promoting sustainable development could be further considered. Facilities or even faculties for sustainable development could be established in tertiary education institutions in the A.C.T. We should keep in mind though that in many ways Canberra is already functioning as something of a biosphere reserve. It would be valuable to include New South Wales Government/Local Government officials in the development.

of the biosphere reserve from the beginning but the initial nomination should be the A.C.T. only. Parts of New South Wales can be added later. Negotiations to include parts of New South Wales in the initial nomination could delay the nomination significantly. The international community will mainly be interested in the nomination of the A.C.T. A number of biosphere reserves unofficially have flexible boundaries from time to time in any case.

It would be good to involve the public in the choice of a name for the biosphere reserve. Written suggestions could be invited and a prize given for the successful nomination if appropriate. An ACT business likely to play an important role in the biosphere reserve such as the National Zoo and Aquarium could be invited to donate a prize for the winning name. The prize could be free entry tickets to the Zoo for the winner and family.

The issue of a sister biosphere reserve relationship with Nava is worth investigating. The Japanese National Commission for UNESCO / Japanese Government would need to be consulted. They may take the view that an existing biosphere reserve in Japan is preferable. However Nava has a particular attraction beyond its current sister city relationship with Canberra as it is a former Japanese Capital City. In any case, links should be sought with biosphere reserves in other countries.

The Steering Committee should recommend

to the Assembly that an ACT Biosphere Reserve would be viable, assuming that the proposal has full Government support.

All the stakeholder groups having an interest in sustainable development in all its ramifications should be represented on a body established to administer the nomination process and the biosphere reserve in association with Government. It could be a good idea to establish this body as an incorporated association.

Holding a national meeting in Canberra of volunteers supporting biosphere reserves before July 2007 is a good idea. Financial assistance should be sought from Government and perhaps the private sector. Australia's biosphere reserve managers could be invited as well as perhaps an official from UNESCO.

I hope these comments are of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Anderson

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