

2021

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES REPORT 2**

Draft Reserve Management Plan: Canberra Nature Park

**Presented by
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November 2021**

Introduction

The Government thanks the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services for their July 2021, Report 2, Draft Reserve Management Plan: Canberra Nature Park and the recommendations therein.

The Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management Plan was prepared by the land custodian, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service in the Environment Heritage and Water Division of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). During development of the plan, extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken prior to releasing the plan for public comment from 23 September 2019 to 16 December 2019.

Ninety-nine submissions were received during public consultation and consideration was given to the more than 570 comments in revising the draft plan. A Consultation Report was prepared outlining all consultation undertaken during development of the plan, and how the custodian responded to the issues raised in public submissions.

The revised draft plan and Consultation Report were referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services on 22 January 2021 by the Minister for Planning and Land Management in accordance with Section 181 of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.

The Standing Committee conducted an inquiry without the usual process of inviting submissions or holding public hearings and at no point accepted offers of assistance from EPSDD officials. The Committee presented its report to the Legislative Assembly on 3 August 2021. The Committee made four recommendations in the report.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendations
Recommendation 1	The Committee recommends that the Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management Plan be amended so that it will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• set out clear, concise, and measurable propositions throughout;• provide clear articulations across goals and actions; and• include reserve plans, comprising measurable actions and goals, in the body of the Plan.
Recommendation 2	The Committee recommends that the ACT Parks and Conservation Service include in the draft reserve management plan estimated staffing and resourcing requirements in order to achieve the outcomes set out in the draft reserve management plan, and the ACT Government include in Budget Papers and Annual Reports appropriations and numbers of staff dedicated to maintaining Canberra Nature Park.
Recommendation 3	The Committee recommends that consultation reports for this and future management plans present all comment provided during consultation phase of the draft management plan process and

	that the current consultation report for the draft reserve management plan be amended to reflect comments provided during the consultation phase.
Recommendation 4	The Committee recommends that the ACT Parks and Conservation Service continually monitor the Reserve Management Plan for Canberra Nature Park, taking into account significant bushfire and pandemic events which have occurred since the 2019 release of the Plan for Consultation.

ACT Government Response to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services Report No. 2 – Draft Reserve Management Plan: Canberra Nature Park

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management Plan be amended so that it will:

- *set out clear, concise, and measurable propositions throughout:*
- *provide clear articulations across goals and actions: and*
- *include reserve plans, comprising measurable actions and goals, in the body of the Plan.*

Response

NOTED

Each chapter of the Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management Plan 2020 sets out clear objectives, and policies and actions to achieve the objectives and the higher-level management goals and key outcomes. The Table of Actions at Appendix 1 of the plan has been amended to incorporate goals and key outcomes and to provide clear articulation across goals and actions.

Measurable targets will be incorporated into five yearly implementation plans and annual operations plans. This approach allows the land manager to apply best practice, take advantage of learnings and be responsive to new priorities which may arise within the ten-year timeframe of the management plan.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders during development of the preliminary draft plan through workshops and circulation of a preliminary draft plan prior to public consultation. There was general acceptance that the structure of the plan into two parts was a good approach and useful for those who were interested in a particular reserve. The information provided on each reserve in Part 2 of the plan is a summary of information provided in full reserve profiles on the EPSDD website (currently being updated). The specific actions for each reserve reflect broader actions in each chapter of Part 1 of the plan which are consolidated in Appendix 1.

Feedback provided during public consultation on the plan was supportive of the two-part structure of the draft plan and did not justify any structural changes. No submissions received commented negatively on the two-part structure and several were positive about this approach.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Parks and Conservation Service include in the draft reserve management plan estimated staffing and resourcing requirements in order to achieve the outcomes set out in the draft reserve management plan, and the ACT Government include in Budget Papers and Annual Reports appropriations and numbers of staff dedicated to maintaining Canberra Nature Park.

Response

NOT AGREED

Staffing and resources are not included in management plans which are long-term aspirational documents that are generally in force for at least ten years. Resourcing, staffing, conditions and government priorities vary over this longer timeframe and can rarely be anticipated in advance.

Staffing and resourcing are dependent on available budgets, government priorities and current conditions (including environmental challenges that may arise and not be anticipated by management plans). Management plans guide development of Annual Operations Plans for reserve management which are aligned with the annual budget appropriations.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that consultation reports for this and future management plans present all comment provided during consultation phase of the draft management plan process and that the current consultation report for the draft reserve management plan be amended to reflect comments provided during the consultation phase.

Response

NOTED

Future consultation reports will take into consideration whether it is appropriate to include responses to individual comments or to summarise and group them based on similarity of the issues raised.

Many of the more than 570 comments in the 99 public submissions received on the Canberra Nature Park Draft Reserve Management covered similar issues. All comments were considered and amendments made to the plan where appropriate. Rather than preparing a consultation report that included every individual comment, as many of them were repetitive, comments were grouped according to the issues raised, and responses were directed to these issues and then related to relevant chapters of the Plan.

Rewriting the current consultation report at this stage is not considered to be a productive use of the limited resources available and would delay finalisation of the Plan. It is likely that any further delay would receive a negative community response as stakeholders that have contributed to the development of the Plan are eager to see it finalised.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Parks and Conservation Service continually monitor the Reserve Management Plan for Canberra Nature Park, taking into account significant bushfire and pandemic events which have occurred since the 2019 release of the Plan for Consultation.

Response

NOTED

Monitoring of the implementation of reserve management plans is undertaken every five years. The actions in the plan form the basis for the preparation of annual operations plans by the Parks and Conservation Service and five-yearly implementation plans. These subsequent plans provide the appropriate mechanism for prioritising works and programs and monitoring progress in achieving outcomes. Monitoring of conservation outcomes is also undertaken through the Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program (CEMP) and specific program and activity evaluation. EPSDD has a performance evaluation framework in place to support evidence-based evaluation and decision making.

The Canberra Nature Park plan articulates that fire management is undertaken within reserves in accordance with documents prepared under the Emergencies Act 2004, namely the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, Regional Fire Management Plans and Bushfire Operational Plans. These plans are monitored independently of the reserve management plan.

The ACT fire management planning documents reflect best practice and are updated more frequently than reserve management plans (for example, annually for Bushfire Operational Plans and five-yearly for strategic fire planning). Reiteration of their requirements in the Canberra Nature Park Plan would be a duplication of information which is likely to be outdated within a short period of time.

In relation to the pandemic, the revised draft plan noted that *“Canberra Nature Park became a wellbeing hub for the people of Canberra during the COVID 19 lockdown in 2020, with the highest ever recorded level of visitation as people used the park for recreation, as respite and a place just to get outside”*.