

**Mick Gentleman MLA**

Manager of Government Business  
Minister for Planning and Land Management  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for Corrections  
Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety

Member for Brindabella

ref: 23/75957

Dr Marisa Paterson  
Chair, Standing Committee on Environment,  
Climate Change and Biodiversity  
[LACommitteeECCB@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:LACommitteeECCB@parliament.act.gov.au)

Dear Dr Paterson, *MARISA*

Please see below responses to questions taken on notice during the private briefing between the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity on Bluetts Block and Western Edge.

**1) Burrowing animals – Are there assessments of burrowing animals in Molonglo Valley?**

The Molonglo Valley District is not within the Western Edge investigation area. At this stage there are no current studies in the Western Edge Investigations for burrowing animals. In relation to assessments of burrowing animals in the Molonglo Valley District, please refer to the answer to the question taken on notice by the Suburban Land Agency during Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023 hearing of 2 September 2022, [QTON number 309](#).

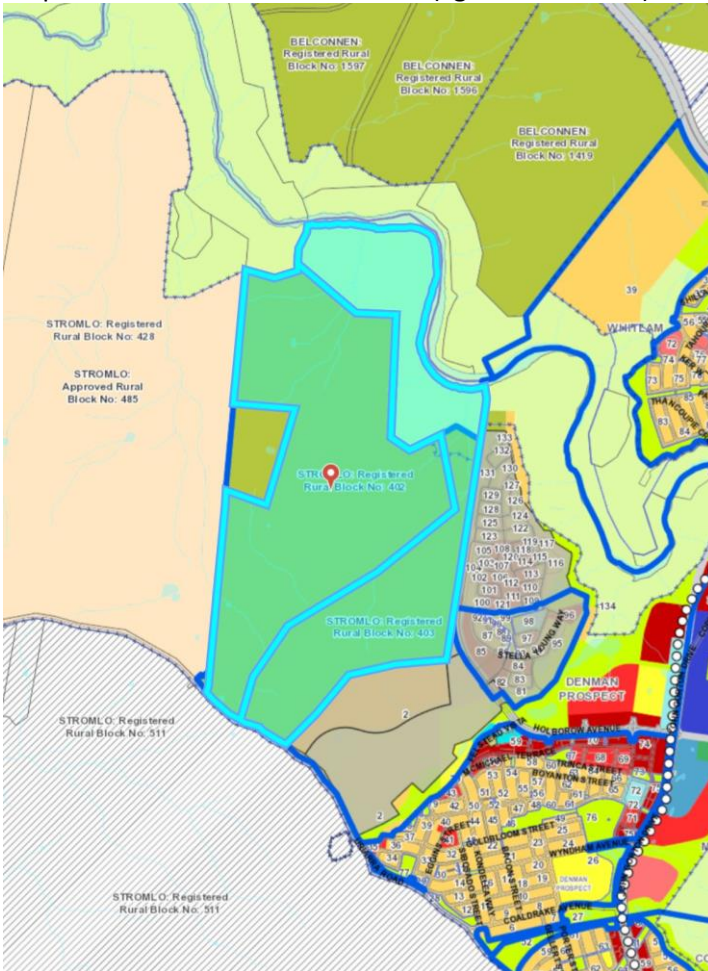
**2) In relation to [Petition 11-22: Protection of Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge](#) – could the Committee please get an update on the four matters the petitioners have put to the ACT Government (the Committee acknowledges the Government response provided in November 2022, and would like for updates on any matters since then). These are:**

- **1. Ensure that Stromlo Blocks 402/403 undergo full ecological assessment;**
- **2. Ensure that urban development is not pursued on Block 12, Section 1 Denman Prospect until there is sufficient information to decide on the environmental significance of the block;**
- **3. Ensure that the ecological considerations of Stromlo Block 402/403 and Denman Prospect Block 12, Section 1 include the impacts on threatened species, critically endangered Box-Gum Woodland, old-growth trees, landscape connectivity, and consideration of urban edge effects; and**

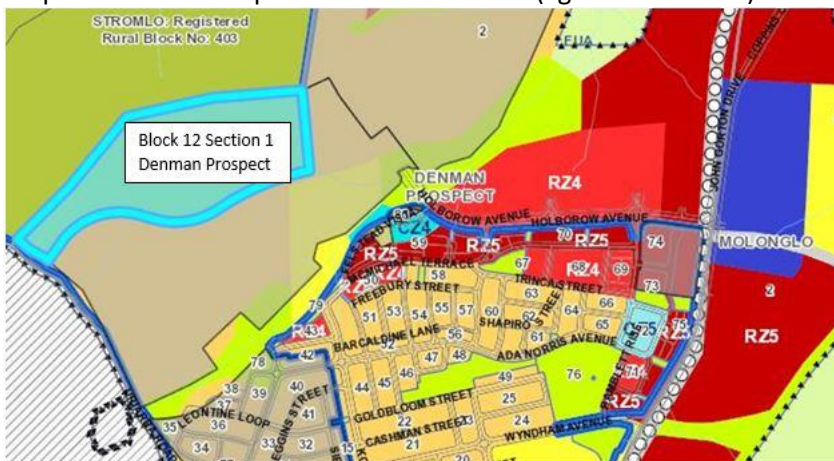
- **4. Following full ecological assessments, ensure areas which have nationally outstanding ecosystems, and species, formed mostly by non-human factors are declared a Nature Reserve**

The [Government response](#) to this [petition](#) acknowledged the considerable public interest in the future of Stromlo Blocks 402 and 403 and Denman Prospect Block 12 Section 1, due to the high ecological values outlined in the petition. These blocks are outlined on the maps below.

Map 1: Stromlo Blocks 402 and 403 (light blue outline)



Map 2: Denman Prospect Block 12 Section 1 (light blue outline)



The ACT Government takes environmental protection seriously and undertakes a range of environmental studies before decisions on whether land should be set aside as a reserve for environmental conservation, or whether the land is suitable for other uses including development. The future land use decision for the Stromlo sites is subject to consideration under the Western Edge Investigation Area. Early studies are underway for the 'Western Edge investigation area' which includes Blocks 402 and 403 Stromlo. There are no further study findings available since the previous correspondence provided in November 2022.

Denman Prospect Block 12, Section 1 does not form part of the Western Edge investigation area and is being considered through associated approvals as part of the Denman Prospect estate. On 12 June 2023, I agreed to grant an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) exemption for the proposed Denman Prospect 2 development at Block 12, Section 1. The EIS exemption application included consideration of these matters within Block 12. I note that as Minister, I have discretion to grant an exemption if satisfied that recent studies have adequately addressed the expected environmental impacts of the proposal. In this instance I was satisfied this had occurred.

Additional detailed consideration and mitigation of particular impacts has been requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna as part of the Estate Development Plan process.

**3) In relation to [Petition 11-22: Protection of Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge](#) – will there be any developments occurring on Stromlo Blocks 402/403**

I am not aware of any proposals, environmental issues or planned developments on Stromlo Blocks 402 and 403.

**4) Aboriginal heritage – will the cultural heritage studies/assessments involve Ngunnawal and Ngambri heritage?**

An Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment of the entire Western Edge investigation area is still underway. This work involves representatives of both Ngunnawal and Ngambri heritage.

**5) Aboriginal heritage – how many Aboriginal people are involved/engaged on this? (*this refers to the above question*)**

The current Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment has sought broad engagement with Ngunnawal people. The ACT Government also recognises other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. Invitations to participate in the work were distributed to 63 NSW Registered Aboriginal Parties, the ACT Representative Aboriginal Organisations, the Dhawurra Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee (DNCCC), the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, and the three adjacent NSW Local Aboriginal Land Councils with a request that they share the invitation across their respective networks. Eighteen individuals and the DNCCC initially registered their interest and fourteen individuals and the DNCCC have actively participated in the engagement.

**6) Ecologists – how are we capturing outside expertise (e.g., Friends of Bluetts Block, Conservation Council ACT Region ecologists) in these environmental studies?**

The way expertise is captured can depend on the nature and time of study or survey. In some instances, data from citizen scientists and other databases is captured and informs these studies. The ACT Government also employs and utilises the expertise of experienced ecologists including many staff who have Doctorate level expertise in their relevant field of ecology.

I trust this information assists you with your queries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'MG', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Mick Gentleman MLA  
Minister for Planning and Land Management

*25/8/2023*