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The Secretary  
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA CITY, ACT, 2601

Dear Dr Jaireth

**Re: Inquiry into Inquiry into Proposed Nomination of ACT as a  
UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to the Committee on its Inquiry into the Inquiry into Proposed Nomination of ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

The HIA has prepared a written submission, which is attached, for your attention. I can also arrange for it to be provided in an electronic format if that is required.

HIA hopes that its comments assist in the Committee's deliberations, so that the sustainable growth and development of ACT is best assured. I would be pleased to discuss this submission and answer any questions that may arise, at your convenience.

Yours sincerely  
Housing Industry Association Ltd

Caroline Lemezina  
Executive Director, ACT/Southern NSW

# **SUBMISSION TO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY- STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT**

## **Inquiry into Proposed Nomination of ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**

### **Background**

The Housing Industry Association in the ACT and Southern NSW represents 2000 members who are vitally concerned with the future of their working and living community. The members of the housing industry are responsible for delivering over 2,000 housing units each year in the ACT. They play a very important role in the economy of the ACT and the surrounding Region, and are keenly aware of its future development and growth.

HIA is also concerned about the need to sustainable design and building, and as a result established the GreenSmart programme for its members. It is a practical approach to sustainable building, which focuses on educating builders, designers, product manufactures and consumers about the benefits of environmental responsible housing. GreenSmart is an industry driven initiative which aims to encourage a mainstream application of its sustainable design and construction principles to contemporary housing. As a voluntary initiative it provides market recognition for environmental endeavours in the residential design and construction industry, and retains a high level of affordable choice for house buyers.

### **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Proposal**

However, HIA is also concerned about the increasing propensity of Governments to ramp up the level of regulations when new issues, such as environmental sustainability require addressing. It is due to this background of the current levels of environmental and heritage regulations which now exist in the ACT, that HIA does not support the proposal for the ACT to become a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

HIA believes that our trees, heritage sites and buildings, water and energy supplies are well protected under current rules and regulations. The requirements of the legislation are often very onerous and restrictive, and then are often managed and administered in contradictory, uncertain and time delaying manners. The ACT does not need another layer of restriction placed upon the Territory's future development.

Although the establishment of a reserve may not give rise to any more legislation, it is likely to become another step in the lengthy planning approval process. HIA is concerned that it would also likely be used by opponents in their objections to change growth and development.

HIA knows that Councils in the Mornington Peninsular and Western Port areas of Victoria, which are a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve have extended Victorian Government water and energy sustainability requirements, thus leading to an increased cost for new house buyers.

HIA believes that the current ACT planning system, with input from relevant agencies, adequately addresses the sustainable needs of Australia's largest inland

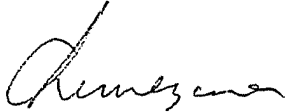
City. For example, the later stages of Gungahlin have been re planned to address the issues of woodland and grassland protection, while still allowing future growth. Also the future Molonglo development area is being rigorously planned to ensure a very environmentally sustainable outcome.

Current planning reform processes being undertaken by ACTPLA reflect the building industry's long term criticism of the ACT being one of the most complicated and uncertain systems in Australia. Industry is anticipating a vast improvement from the new legislation later in the year, which will allow quicker and more certain planning outcomes, and which could help alleviate the increasing problem of housing affordability.

There is also risk that by isolating such a reserve solely with the borders of the ACT, it will lead to an insular view of the environment. While a species may be rare within the ACT, it maybe very well populated across the border, and unnecessary restrictions could be placed on possible developments in the ACT. But development and growth of the ACT is not isolated, and the Territory's economic prosperity does positively impact throughout the surrounding region.

In summary, HIA does not support the proposal because we believe that the current regulations and planning systems adequately protect the ACT's environment. The impost of another layer into the development approval process will only add to a system that is now in critical need of reform.

Yours sincerely  
Housing Industry Association Ltd



Caroline Lemezina  
Executive Director, ACT/Southern NSW

