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P&E Committee Secretary  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
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**Urban Open Space Network  
Submission on the Final Draft  
Variation no 165**

**Valuing Canberra's Urban Open Space**

I welcome this Variation and its attempt to resolve ambiguities relating to some green spaces. Too many are not clearly seen as either future higher density residential infill or as permanent green spaces to be managed either for conservation or for public parks.

When I moved to Aranda in 1974, the area around Catchpole Street, Macquarie was signed as space for flats, townhouses, etc. This was good planning and seen as such.

In contrast, in the last eight years the battleaxe corner block Nettleford Street/Coulter Drive was tabled as a public park in the Assembly then sold for a grog shop. It had been blue (commercial) not green on the Territory Plan. This was a major loss to the community with respect of the conservation value of the stand of a dozen 100 to 350 year endangered Yellow Box/Red Gum trees and the landscape value of a landmark entry into Belconnen town created by those trees.

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The various patches that make the Canberra's Urban Open Space network form a key element of our Bush Capital and Garden City. It is what makes Australia's capital a 'city like no other'. These green spaces are beloved by residents, envied by visitors. In today's stressful world they provide breathing space for the spirit and outdoor exercise.

Consequently, this open space contributes much to the health and wellbeing of our people. It does so in ways that bean counters find difficult to calculate and include in the economic equation. Your Planning and Environment Committee should be able to weight social and environmental considerations to prevent excessive residential infill that will concrete over our city and eliminate healthy and desirable lifestyle choices.

I am pleased that this project confines itself to unleased 'developable' land in established suburbs that is probably perceived as part of the formal open space network, but not classified as such in the Territory Plan. My comments on specific sites relate to those I know.

**Conder 4A (sites 28, 29 & 30)**

This is a stunningly beautiful and diverse grassland/grassy woodland in full flower in spring with swathes of many different grassland wildflowers. At other times it has a subtle beauty and has what ecologists call 'cryptic diversity'. The plant diversity in Conder 4A was documented by Michael Bedingfield and others in Friends of Grasslands. Following that a subsequent report by Joe Baker, Commissioner for the Environment a moratorium was placed on the site.

I strongly support the recommendation that Conder 4A moratorium site 28 (56,180 m<sup>2</sup>) be changed from Residential Land to Hills, Ridges and Buffers with a Pc (Public Land, category c, nature reserve) overlay. This makes it part of the distributed Canberra Nature Park and should ensure that it is managed by ACT Parks and Conservation Service primarily for the conservation of the natural environment.

I strongly support part of Conder site 29 (18,581 m<sup>2</sup>) be changed from Residential Land to Hills, Ridges and Buffers with a Pc (Public Land, category c, nature reserve) overlay. I would prefer to see all of site 29 in that category rather than some in Urban Open Space.

I also prefer to add Conder site 30 (707 m<sup>2</sup>) at the edge of Conder 4A moratorium to Canberra Nature Park - ie to Hills, Ridges and Buffers with a Pc overlay. The recommendation to make it Urban Open Space seems unnecessarily stingy and does not provide sufficient protection. From a management perspective, it seems sensible to have it managed by Parks and Conservation and legally part of Canberra Nature Park.

There may, however, be practical considerations if site 30 and part of site 29 are seen as buffer areas containing infrastructure such as powerlines, water mains and fire trails. In that case the Urban Open Space classification may be satisfactory as long as the area is managed as much as possible for its conservation values. If there is no buffer outside the nature reserve, then the edge effect of weeds and rubbish ensures that part of the reserve becomes a buffer

#### **Fisher Parkland (site 49)**

Fisher Parkland (365,843 m<sup>2</sup>) is a lowland corridor linking Mount Taylor and Cooleman Ridge that is large enough to be part of Canberra Nature Park and worth restoring over time. It has been managed by Canberra Urban Parks and Places. There is an enthusiastic parkcare/landcare group that is keen to enhance its conservation values.

I strongly support the addition of Fisher Parkland to Canberra Nature Park as Hills, Ridges and Buffers with a Pc overlay. This would result in it being managed by Parks and Conservation with conservation of the natural environment given priority over recreation. The recommendation of a Pe (Public Land category e, urban open space) overlay is not strong enough, nor is it in keeping with the qualification on the Pe overlay for small sites that need not be defined by enclosing symbols on the Territory Plan.

#### **Aranda (site 2 - 10,416 m<sup>2</sup>)**

A landscaped site within Aranda Primary School

I support the change to Community Facility Specific Policy 4E.

**Belconnen** (site 189 - 7,972 m2)

I support the change to Urban Open Space. The site is more suitable for recreation than conservation or community facilities. Urban Open Space around the Lake Ginninderra seems to be highly threatened and we should keep as much as we can.

**Bruce** (sites 172 & 171 - 12,758 m2 & 13,447)

Change from Commercial Land to Urban Open Space supported - there is too little public green space in Bruce.

**Campbell** (sites 18, 19, 20 - 17,973 m2, 34,901 m2 & 11,794 m2)

I strongly support removing the X overlay from these former Monash Drive road reservation sites. I trust that this will actually prevent the road from ever being built.

**Cook** (sites 36, 37 & 156 - 8,804 m2, 8,804 m2 & 1,270 m2)

I strongly support removing the X overlay from the small corner sites which have great landscape value and changing Commercial Land to Urban Open Space near the local centre. These green spaces appear to be integral design elements in the suburb. In addition, it is unlikely that the commercial space would now be taken up by developers requiring commercial space in that locality.

**Gordon** (site 63 - 653 m2)

Jim Pike Avenue is the route to Pine Island or Angle Crossing and thus a main entry point to the Murrumbidgee. Open Space is highly appropriate.

## **Unlisted anomalies**

**Percival Hill**, Nichols (unlisted)

This hill on the corner of Barton Highway and Gundaroo Road seems to be Hills, Ridges and Buffers - Urban Open Space but is not Canberra Nature Park as it is not enclosed with the triangle symbols and not shown as Pc. About four or five years ago Parks and Conservation became the land manager after an Assembly motion raised by Kerrie Tucker asked for it to be added to Canberra Nature Park.

Changing this site to Pc seems to fall within the broad objectives of Variation 165. It would rationalise another ambiguity in the Open Space/Nature Reserve network.

**Stirling Park**, Yarralumla (unlisted)

This site was targeted as an addition to Canberra Nature Park in 1989 but that has never come to pass. It is still a worthy addition, but complications as it on national land may make it difficult to change at this late stage.

**Aranda**, Section 51 (unlisted)

This section is the green space between Aranda and Caswell Drive just north of and adjoining Aranda Bushland. Although it is Urban Open Space, it has been managed by Parks and Conservation and Friends of Aranda Bushland for the last 15 years to my knowledge. It has been a casualty of pipeline changes for Gungahlin Drive Expressway but still retains a place within the reserve as a buffer area. The other green spaces along Caswell Drive (Sections 49 and 50) and ones along Belconnen Way have been managed by Canberra Urban Parks and Places.

Section 51 Aranda could be a possible last minute addition to Canberra Nature Park as it again removes another anomaly.

## **Conclusion**

I was pleased to find that the majority of changes are to increase public open space for the good of the community.

My recommendations for further changes on specific sites are given above.

There remains the problem of green spaces in Civic and the town centres. They very small are under threat. Just listing them on an Asset Register is not good enough - too easily overlooked. I recommend that the Standing Committee address this problem either as part of Variation 165 or in a future project.

Jean Geue