

Senior Manager
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DECCEW
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16 February 2011

RE: SEE-Change submission regarding review of the Nature Conservation Act 1980 (the Act)

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to attend your community forum held Tuesday 1st February 2011. A summary of our comments are provided below. We look forward to hearing the outcomes of the review including how community input has been considered and addressed.

Key Comments

- It is important that responsibilities for nature conservation in the ACT are integrated. At present, responsibilities are spread across a number of agencies as well as legislation and policies. This is not an effective or clear use of resources. Consideration of a central conservation agency is important
- Better integration of nature conservation, urban planning and development is fundamental to ensuring a holistic approach to conservation. Expanding decision making responsibilities under the Act to include, for example, development assessment and approval is an important aspect of this as are strategic assessments that engage different sectors of government and business
- The review should further define the role of community groups in nature conservation (including for example Indigenous groups, park care groups etc). This could range from: provisions to ensure early engagement of community on all licenses issued; to processes that ensure open and transparent decision making; to providing roles and resources for community groups to manage natural resources themselves
- Nature conservation measures proposed in the revised legislation must consider and address expected population growth in the ACT and climate change impacts (e.g. building resilience, restoring habitat, planting more trees)
- The Act must provide a suite of conservation tools that can be tailored for different situations and that can address a wide range of potential impacts (e.g. private land conservation agreements, land acquisition, development/activity approval requirements, strategic assessments, declaration of new reserves, declaration of 'no go' development zones, grant programs for community assistance)
- The use of these tools must be strategic and informed by conservation priorities (e.g. the work currently being undertaken by the ANU to identify areas of importance for connectivity and ecosystem sustainability)



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Additional Comments

- Inclusion of explicit legislative objectives is fundamental. These must be biologically relevant, ACT specific and measurable. Requirements to monitor and report on progress against objectives will be important
- Adequate resources must be provided or generated to ensure effective implementation of the Act. This must include a strong and effective monitoring, compliance and enforcement role
- Regarding strategic assessments, consultation with the federal environment department would be beneficial as officers have been implementing strategic assessments (including with the ACT) for the past 3-4 years. There are many lessons learned that could help build the ACT's framework
- Nature conservation in the ACT must be considered within the regional (biological) context not just within territory boundaries. This may include a concerted effort to work with NSW on a diverse range of projects
- Provisions for an ecosystem and/or landscape approach to nature conservation are important. Individual species must however not be ignored
- The Act would benefit from well-defined processes that ensure inclusion of independent expert advice
- The Act should include the requirement for action plans to have formal monitoring and review provisions that are informed by adaptive management principles (e.g. evidence based management)
- The Act should guide management of any public lands that are of biological significance (including for example special purpose reserves or water supply protection areas)
- The Act should include and be informed by environmental economics (e.g. market based approaches to nature conservation)
- Finally, the reviewed legislation should have broad community and government support to ensure that delegated powers have the confidence to effectively implement the Act and make bold decisions

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss our submission.

Kind Regards

Naomi Wynd
Executive Officer