



ACT Heritage Council

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Senior Manager  
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GPO Box 158  
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Dear Sir/Madam:

### **Review of the Nature Conservation Act 1980**

Thank you for inviting the ACT Heritage Council to comment on the Discussion Paper of November 2010 for the *Review of the Nature Conservation Act 1980: Enhancing nature conservation in the Australian Capital Territory*. The Heritage Council recognises the efforts of the Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water in addressing this Act in response to the changing conservation requirements of the ACT as it approaches its 'Second Century.'

The current Act focuses upon species and the Heritage Council is encouraged to see a focus upon ecosystems and a regional or whole-of-landscape approach to conservation. The Act needs to ensure the protection of habitats, to consider processes (eg invasives, fire and drought) and embed within the Act responses to climate change and its affect on ecosystems. The idea of creating a map or database identifying important areas of ecological connectivity and critical habitats as part of a bioregional plan for conservation is sound and strongly supported. In assessing natural heritage places for inclusion onto the ACT Heritage Register, the Heritage Council recognises features such as ecological connectivity zones, and ecological communities. An ecological connectivity and critical habitat map or database could provide a useful point of reference for future natural heritage assessments, assisting in identifying important landscape elements that may hold significant heritage value as well as intrinsic ecological importance. Conversely, the ACT Heritage Register could be a useful starting point in identifying places suitable for future incorporation into the ACT Reserve system.

Although beyond the role of the Council, there would appear to be great merit in strengthening the role of the Conservator, including her or his regulatory and compliance powers and resourcing to undertake research. These issues may be appropriately considered as part of the responses to the Hawke Review.

If these landscape-scale ecological zones are recognised by environmental and heritage legislation, then critical ecologies may be afforded additional protection and effective management, and their multiple values in the context of the ACT will be given recognition.

The Discussion Paper also raises the possibility of broadening the goals of the Nature Conservation Act by way of including an Objects clause. Also mentioned in this section of the Discussion Paper are the objectives of environmental legislation in other jurisdictions. These acknowledge aesthetic cultural conservation values, the compatibility of research with conservation management, and Aboriginal involvement in land management issues.

Recognising these elements as part of the goals of the Act would reinforce the connection between the ACT community and its natural surroundings, highlighting the need for ongoing community engagement with ACT ecologies and the landscape.

Yours sincerely



**Gerhard Zatschler**

**Secretary**

**ACT HERITAGE COUNCIL**

18 February 2011