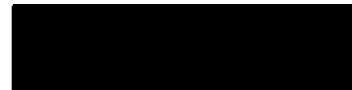


Rec'd 5/12/07
MMW



COPY

Dr Maxine Cooper
ACT Commissioner for the Environment
Office of the Commissioner for the Environment
P.O.Box 356
DICKSON A.C.T 2602

28.11.07.

Dear Dr Cooper

MOLONGLO VALLEY DEVELOPMENT PLANS
THE CENTRAL & WEST MOLONGLO VALLEY AREAS

As a member of the public and an amateur naturalist I am extremely concerned about the ACT Government's plans to expand urban development into the central and West areas of the Molonglo Valley (south of The Pinnacle Nature Reserve and the suburbs of Hawker, Higgins and Holt). Many members of the public share this concern and although the ACT Planning and Land Authority's and the National Capital Authority's draft variation and planning documents show what is proposed few people with a knowledge of the local ecology and its flora and fauna are convinced about the appropriateness of the proposals even though they are couched in impressive language.

References to the Canberra Spatial Plan (2004) and the State of the Environment Report (2003) show that the principles and guidelines of the former are not adhered-to and the wisdom and recommendations of the latter are ignored.

Building in the Central and West Molonglo Valley will cause "*irreversible ecological damage*", will destroy "*valuable ecological communities*" and consign many species to local extinction in contravention of the recommendations of the ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy.

Additionally, community well-being will be affected by the erosion of iconic open space and bush capital features if the views to the Brindabellas are interrupted by the roofs of houses. Plans to further dam the lower Molonglo River for a scenic lake, to use habitat protection buffers for fire abatement zones and to protect Kama Woodlands show the complete ascendancy of the perceived needs of people over the essentials of habitat-protection for native species.

Although several studies have been commissioned in the lead-up to the documentation the results in the planning documents do not "*ensure that biodiversity conservation is always integral to ACT Government planning and management of land-use changes*".

Please would you, as ACT Commissioner for the Environment and as an acknowledged environmentalist, become involved in the efforts** to stop development in these areas?

Further comprehensive, independent studies are essential before this valley is 'given away' and "*the options and opportunities open to future generations*" are destroyed in this totally unsustainable land-grab.

"...it is time to forgo the time limited benefits from further property development, land sales and rates..."

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Blemings

Rosemary Blemings

* Quotes from the ACT State of the Environment Report 2003.

Sargent, Narelle

From: Rosie - Internode [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 10 January 2009 7:34 PM
To: Sargent, Narelle
Subject: Grassland

Narelle

Thank you for your phonecall about the apparent silence relating to submissions to the Commissioner for the Environment & Sustainability and her work on Lowland Grasslands.

If this apparently informal submission attempt is permissible I would like to add further comments:

- In the recently released document ***The Canberra Plan: towards our second century*** there are references to 'natural temperate grasslands' and 'yellow box-red gum grassy woodlands on page 96. On this page & elsewhere in the document, the impression is given that these ecological communities are being protected through Government initiatives. I would suggest that this protection is actually an illusion as those in environmental and conservation groups are constantly having to 'go into battle', write submissions and (usually voluntarily) research, survey and gather details about species populations, threats and impacts in order to protect areas of native grassland. IT would seem that the rhetoric of the theory of sustainable planning fails to match what is occurring 'on the ground'.
- The above mentioned document is yet another publication which is commendable in its intent or as the result of skilled, professional research. Yet when development is proposed many surveys, Action plans, scientific papers, research documents are ignored or 'sidelined' as irrelevant. In other words governments need to act on recommendations received.
- Many of the Lowland Temperate Grassland sites which remain are small fragments. They are often within the boundaries of suburbs or in areas of Urban open space. Some are within Nature Reserves as part of Canberra Nature Park. Most share the dubious distinction of being ignored, poorly maintained, subject to threats (domestic animals hunting, weed invasion, mowed inappropriately, disturbed for infrastructure development and under-appreciated). In these areas species are subject to local extinction because their habitats are destroyed by piecemeal 'death of a thousands cuts'. Their gene-pools and biodiversity are destroyed when areas are fragmented, isolated or damaged.
- It is vital that a census & survey of all ACT and regional grassland areas be initiated urgently. This will obviously be expensive but there are several community organisations in the region who already have species lists, local knowledge & extremely capable volunteers who could assist government agencies with such surveys.
- Several areas of native grassland which are close to houses should be assessed to establish whether it is possible to leave them to flower and seed naturally. Obviously there needs to be a balance between fire-hazard, safety and ecological preservation. It would be imperative that residents' possible fears and concerns are allayed through a process of public education about the value of native grasslands and aspects of their maintenance.
- There would also need to be closer co-operation, co-ordination and understanding between government agencies so that those who are charged with organising mowing and maintenance routines understand the needs of grassland communities. This relates, for example, to inappropriate mowing programs and the spread of invasive grass seeds on machinery.

Thank you again
Rosemary Blemings

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Please note my new email address - [REDACTED]