



inner south canberra
community council

Mr. Andrew Smith
Chief Planner
National Capital Authority

Dear Andrew

Please find attached the submission of the Inner South Canberra Community Council to the Review of National Capital Open Space System.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Kent'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Gary' and the last name 'Kent' clearly distinguishable.

Gary Kent
Acting Chair

28 October 2011

**Review of National Capital Open Space System (NCOSS)
Submission of the Inner South Canberra Community Council**

The Inner South Canberra Community Council would have wished to have more time to make substantive comment on the review of the National Capital Open Space System. The comments below are preliminary and we would request that the NCA keeps us informed of any further rounds of consultation to be undertaken before the finalisation of the review.

1. Which areas does the NCOSS cover?

Our understanding from the discussion paper and the National Capital Plan is that the National Capital Open Space System includes the following open spaces:

- Lake Burley Griffin
- Hills, ridges and buffer spaces
- River corridors
- Mountains and bushlands

The survey on the NCA website seeks community views on the following specific NCOSS elements in the Inner South:

- East Lake and Jerrabomberra Wetlands
- Stirling Park and other Lake foreshore in Yarralumla
- Weston Park
- Yarramundi Reach
- Red Hill

2. What are current principles under the National Capital Plan?

The current stated principle in the National Capital Plan for Lake Burley Griffin and foreshores is:

“To conserve and develop Lake Burley Griffin and Foreshores as the major landscape feature which unifies the National Capital’s central precincts and the surrounding inner hills; and to provide for National Capital uses and a diversity of recreational opportunities.”

The current stated principle for hills, ridges and buffer spaces is:

“Hills, ridges and buffer spaces are to remain substantially undeveloped in order to protect the symbolic role and Australian landscape character of the hills and ridges as the scenic backdrop to the Parliamentary Zone, Civic and other National Capital precincts, to maintain the visual definition and physical containment of the surrounding towns and to ensure that their landscape, environmental and recreation values become an integral part of the National Capital.”

3. Is there a need to change these principles?

To date, these principles and the NCOSS as a whole have served Canberra well in maintaining Canberra’s character as the “bush capital”, a city within the landscape. These principles are just as relevant in the 21st century.

Trees, open space and wildlife play a central role in our city of Canberra. Recognising the impact of heritage and Indigenous culture, we would like to see the value of meaningful open space more readily accommodated in planning decisions, particularly in plans for creating a more high-density capital. Green urban infrastructure (trees, vegetation, bushland and waterways) needs to be valued as vital city infrastructure that requires planning, maintenance and investment.

Planning that looks only at economic values misses the wider values of community wellbeing associated with green infrastructure. The greater the increase in urban density, the greater will be the need for increased quality of green infrastructure.

The NCOSS plays a vital role in nurturing biodiversity and providing wildlife corridors. It also contributes significantly to Canberra's resilience in the face of drought and heat waves, including by helping to reduce the heat island effect.

4. What sort of development opportunities should be supported in the NCOSS to provide for future land uses without undermining landscape and amenity values?

The discussion paper poses the question above, and also refers to opportunities for education, nature based tourism and recreation. It would appear from the current policies of the National Capital Plan that such activities are already provided for, so one must conclude that other types of development are also being contemplated.

One of the ideas put forward in the discussion paper is investigating a degree of community "ownership" or "community title" as "a way of building partnerships or a sense of community stewardship for areas outside of the Canberra Nature Park." While community engagement is to be encouraged and applauded, it is not clear what community "ownership" or "title" would actually mean and entail in practical terms. It would seem inappropriate to transfer actual ownership from the Commonwealth to unspecified community organisations for these elements of NCOSS, certainly not if these organisations could later sell this land for development purposes.

It is also not clear what is meant in the discussion paper by the suggestion that "everything should be on the table and tested with the community to identify what is the 'must not' position in terms of land use and development." If this is envisaging that large swathes of the NCOSS should be redesignated for high-density urban development, then one must consider whether this would be compatible with retaining the essential character of the "bush capital". There are real risks here. At the very least, it would be critical to identify the high value sites in terms of biodiversity, amenity and landscape values and ensure their protection, and provide for wildlife corridors across districts, the ACT and the region.

5. To what extent should the National Capital Plan guide planning and management of areas within the NCOSS?

Given the pivotal role of the NCOSS in safeguarding the essential character of Canberra as the national capital, then it is logical that the National Capital Plan should have provisions to ensure appropriate land management.

We have seen the effective use of Master Planning approaches by the NCA to develop proposals for areas of open space in the Inner South, for example the Master Plan for the Yarralumla Bay Recreation Hub. That Master Plan has been valuable in setting out clearly, and in consultation with the community and other key stakeholders, appropriate uses of urban open space. It could be a useful model for other key elements of the NCOSS.

6. Conclusion

The NCOSS review, and action arising from its outcome, has very major implications for the essential character of Canberra. We know that many Canberrans have not been aware of the review and of the timeframe for provision of comments. We hope that there will be further opportunities for comment as the proposals for the future of the NCOSS are fleshed out.