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Mulligans Flat Sanctuary Draft Strategy 2020-2045

The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) wishes to provide comments on this document.

COG is a volunteer-based community group with around 400 members, with a mission that includes the conservation of native birds and their habitats in Canberra and the surrounding region.

COG is a long-standing community stakeholder in the Mulligans Flat Reserve/Sanctuary where over three decades it has maintained a long-term (citizen science) bird survey and monitoring program. Surveys by COG for the ACT Bird Atlas in the mid-1980s laid the foundation for the community campaign to save Mulligans Flat from urban development. Furthermore, COG was one of the community groups that proposed in the early 1990s that Mulligans Flat become a reserve, and COG bird data, particularly on threatened birds recorded there, was important evidence underpinning the case for reserve status.

Long-term bird monitoring by COG continues to inform land use and land management actions at Mulligans Flat. COG has also had an important role in specific Sanctuary projects, such as reintroduction of the Bush Stone-curlew, and was a significant contributor to the success of this project. Lastly, COG bird data informs education initiatives and ACT Parks and Conservation pamphlets such as the Mulligans Flat Bird Walk/Bird List.

COG's interests in the Reserve/Sanctuary are therefore long-standing, and we wish to have a continuing involvement in and input to its development and management. This includes opportunities for engagement and a meaningful and acknowledged role moving forward.

COG has the following comments on the Draft Strategy 2020-2045 document:

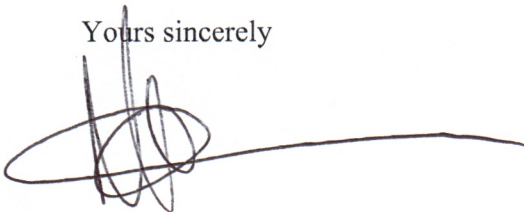
- The document presents a strong vision that describes where the four (key) partners would like the Sanctuary to be in 2045, including the welcomed Indigenous involvement.

However, the document does not describe any strategy or strategies for *how* that vision will be achieved: the document is a vision statement, rather than a strategy.

- little detail is provided about the actual mechanisms or actions which will achieve the vision, or which will guide the future development under the four key strands presented (conservation, culture, community, education).
 - as suits a vision statement rather than a strategy, the language in the document has a public relations focus, and uses generalist and popular language. There are various general references to community engagement and community partnering, but no detail is provided or explanation of what is intended.
 - no detail is provided on how community interest groups/citizen science groups will be involved and be able to contribute in a meaningful way.
 - the document as presented should therefore be renamed Mulligans Flat Sanctuary Draft Vision 2020-2045, as it does provide a strong vision for the Sanctuary. The document could then be used to assist in creation of a strategy for the Sanctuary, laying out how this vision is to be achieved.
- Importantly, there is a lack of acknowledgement in the document of the future and ongoing role that community groups and citizen science groups will play in the future development of the Sanctuary. This role will of course leverage the historical and current efforts of these groups, which were key to creation of the Sanctuary and its successful development, and which actively support current Sanctuary projects.
 - COG and The Friends of Mulligans Flat are examples of community groups/citizen science groups that merit individual mention, amongst others.
 - the Principles section of the current document should therefore make clear the importance of the continuing involvement of community/special interest groups and the future role of citizen science, and this component of ongoing Sanctuary activities should also be woven more explicitly into Pillars 1 to 3 of the document.

COG is happy to discuss and provide more detail on any of the above, and can be contacted at cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Neil Hermes

President, Canberra Ornithologists Group
22 February 2021