

CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP
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To: Rebecca Vassarotti MLA
Minister for the Environment
vassarotti@act.gov.au

26 February 2022

Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Planning and Land Management
gentleman@act.gov.au

Cc: Nicole Lawder MLA
Shadow Minister for Environment
lawder@parliament.act.gov.au

Peter Cain MLA
Shadow Minister for Planning and Land Management
cain@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Ministers Vassarotti and Gentleman

**Re: protection of Bluetts Block through inclusion in the ACT reserve system
with an adequate buffer zone**

Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) is a volunteer-based community group with around 400 members, and a mission that includes the conservation of native birds and their habitats. COG undertakes long-term surveys and monitoring of birds in ACT woodlands, analyses data for trends over time, and publishes reports of findings, including a recent analysis of trends over time in ACT woodland bird species. COG plays an active role in advocating for protection of native vegetation and bird habitats, and for the mitigation of threats to and impacts on native birds.

COG recently put in a submission to the EIS Exemption process for Block 12, Section 1, Denman Prospect, which adjoins and is part of Bluetts Block. In summary:

- COG does not support granting an EIS exemption to enable development of most of Block 12.
- COG does not support any urban development in Block 12.
- COG supports rehabilitation and restoration work on Block 12 to restore Box-Gum woodland, and retention of the entire area of Block 12 proposed for development as a reasonable buffer to mitigate indirect urban edge impacts on Bluetts Block and for strategic bushfire mitigation.

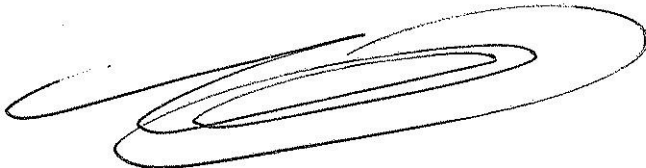
COG is also calling for Bluetts Block to be formally declared an ACT nature reserve as a matter of priority. Bluetts Block, also called Piney Ridge, pre-dominantly comprises Stromlo Blocks 402 and 403, and contains areas of grassland, high-value remnant dry forest, and native grassy Box-Gum woodland. The area has very significant local and regional biodiversity and connectivity values, and is the subject of increasing community attention. These biodiversity and connectivity values are complemented and buffered by Block 12, Denman Prospect, which has moderate to high-value remnant dry woodland, as well as Box-Gum woodland suitable for restoration and significant remnant mature Blakely's Red Gum trees.

COG notes that there is currently a view within Government that instigating nature reserve status for Bluetts Block and other potential areas must wait until completion of the Western Investigation Area Study. However this is some years away, and urban development around Bluetts Block is ongoing rather than being similarly delayed.

We put forward that there is enough information available now that establishes the high conservation value of Bluetts Block, and that warrants starting the process of reservation sooner than later.

A copy of our submission to the EIS Exemption Application for Block 12, Section 1, Denman Prospect is attached. The most recent woodland bird analysis undertaken by COG with support from the ACT Government can be found at canberrabirds.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Long-term-Trends-in-ACT-Woodlands-Birds-October-2021-FF-WEB.pdf.

Yours sincerely



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