



National Parks Association of the ACT Inc.

conservation education protection

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Submission on the Review of the 1998 Murrumbidgee River Corridor Management Plan, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Review of the 1998 Murrumbidgee River Corridor Management Plan, 2021 ('the Review').

The National Parks Association of the ACT ("NPA ACT") is a community-based conservation organisation with more than 60 years of experience in helping to protect our natural environment. We have keen interest in the management of the ACT and region's national parks and nature reserves of which the Murrumbidgee River Corridor is a key component.

Key Points

The NPA ACT notes that a revised plan of management (PoM) for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor (MRC) is well overdue with the current PoM being released almost 24 years ago. As recognised in the *Nature conservation Act 2014*, it is best practice to have reserve PoMs reviewed at least every 10 years. This ensures that the PoMs recognise emerging values and takes into account ongoing scientific research. The Review is only the first stage in achieving a new POM for the MRC and the NPA ACT recommends that a focus remains on the results of the Review to facilitate a timely and comprehensive update of the MRC PoM.

The NPA ACT also notes that there are two other ACT reserve PoMs that have been in place for more than 10 years; being Namadgi and Jerrabomberra, while Tidbinbilla reaches its 10 year anniversary in 2022. It expects that actions are underway to update these PoMs as part of EPSDD's establishment of an integrated planning framework (page 3).

The 1998 PoM was important in that its objectives covered not only the public lands in the MRC also all other relevant land tenures, particularly rural leases. The interplay of all land tenures on the PoM's objectives has become even more relevant as large sections of the MRC are part of the Western Edge Investigation Area (WEIA). The WEIA has the potential to disrupt existing conservation corridors with a resultant detrimental impact on the values of the MRC. It is vital that the Review ensures that the revised PoM addresses the connectivity of the MRC's natural values across the broader landscape and stresses

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the importance of action outside of the MRC to ensure its natural values are preserved and enhanced. This is only partially addressed in the old PoM's objective 8.

The NPA ACT concurs with the Review's recommendations (Section 4.3) with the following additional comments:

- the revised PoM should include discussion on the role of the Ginnindery Conservation Trust in respect to the northern most section of the MRC, which is a separate entity to the Ginninderry development (referred to on page 12); and
- as noted above the revised PoM should also address how to avoid or mitigate the potential impacts of the WEIA on the MRC (referred to at page 12).

The NPA ACT also concurs with the assessment of the strengths and particularly the weaknesses that the Review identifies with the old PoM (page 3). The lack of biodiversity values is particularly limiting to users of the old PoM.

Other Detailed Comments

Page 1 1.1 Objectives of the Plan

The old PoM did not specify whether its objectives were listed in order of importance. It is recommended that this is the case in the revised PoM and that the conservation objectives are given primacy.

Page 4 2.2.1 Legislation

The new legislation introduced since 1998 should include the *Emergency Management Act 2004*, as this is a key piece of legislation supporting the Strategic Bushfire Management Plans and BOPs which directly affect fire management in the MRC.

Page 5 2.2.2 Policies

The Review states that it "will be critical for any new plan for the MRC to incorporate directions and actions from these strategies and for appropriate mechanisms to be established for evaluating management effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes for relevant ecosystems and other values within the Corridor". The NPA ACT agrees with this statement noting that need to prioritise and coordinate the multitude of actions identified in the referred strategies must be a priority across the board and not just in respect to the MRC PoM.

Page 12 Objective 1: to conserve the endemic aquatic, riparian and riverine ecosystems - 3.1.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues with the following comments:

- any revised PoM should address the work of the Ginnindery Conservation Trust, particularly in light of its management of part of the northern section of the MRC; and

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- There should be the ability to update the values listed in the revised PoM on an on-going basis for outcomes identified through the scientific research programs, instead of waiting until the next PoM review period.

Page 14 Objective 2: to provide for recreational activities appropriate to rural and natural river settings - 3.2.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues with the following comments:

- recreation must be considered in light of the conservation objectives of the PoM; and
- The proposed trail to link Stromlo Forest with the Cotter recreation area should not be sited within Stony Creek Nature Reserve.

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Page 15 Objective 3: to conserve natural landforms and the valley's scenery - 3.3.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues with the following comments:

- any additional sites identified as being worthy of inclusion in the conservation reserve estate be gazetted as soon as possible and that the gazettal is not delayed in order to meet offset considerations;
- this section note that expansive tree plantings have been completed to achieve scenery protection objectives. Another issue for the new PoM would be to review the success of these plantings and the management of weeds in the regeneration areas.

Page 15 Objective 4: to conserve and enhance habitat links through the regional landscape - 3.4.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues with the following comment:

- the first issue should be amended to state "Connectivity strategy for the MRC in a changing climate and in light of the potential impacts of any western edge developments".

Page 17 Objective 5: to maintain water quality - 3.5.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues with the following comment:

- an important consideration is that urban developments cause a tripling of the runoff volume into streams. Water Sensitive Urban Design can reduce peak flows and contaminants, but total volume is not significantly affected. Since this runoff from any future western edge development will go into the Murrumbidgee, the MRC needs to be protected from it.

Page 18 Objective 6: to provide formal and informal educational opportunities; and Objective 9: to provide educational and interpretative opportunities associated with water issues relevant to the Corridor - 3.6.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues.

Page 19 Objective 7: to conserve the cultural heritage landscapes, areas and sites - 3.7.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues.

Page 20 Objective 8: to maintain a corridor of open rural and natural land on the western edge of Canberra, and to give clear definition to the transition from the urban landscape to the rugged forested landscape of the mountainous skyline to the west of the city - 3.7.2 Issues for consideration in a new plan

The NPA ACT supports consideration of the listed issues.

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Should you require any further information on our comments or our organisation, please do not hesitate to contact the NPA ACT office, attention of Mr Rod Griffiths, convener, NPA ACT Environment Sub-committee.

Yours sincerely



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31 January 2022