

Proposed Centenary Trail Route through Canberra Nature Park

Brief for the meeting with the Chief Minister, 11 May 2012

Issue: Canberra Nature Park (CNP) is managed primarily to conserve the natural environment and secondarily to provide for research, education and recreation opportunities ⁽¹⁾. ParkCare groups request the adoption of principles in accordance with the prime management objective of CNP to support conservation values when designing, constructing and maintaining the Centenary Trail.

Background: The Centenary Trail (CT) is a Centenary of Canberra project aimed at providing recreational and environmental attractions for residents of Canberra and visitors to Canberra. A Feasibility Study and a Ground-truthing Report were prepared with input from user groups and industry. ParkCare groups, which were excluded from the development of the Feasibility Study, submitted comments during the community consultation stage ⁽²⁾.

Conservation takes precedence over recreation

ParkCare groups request that the Chief Minister

1. Confirms that conservation is the top priority of CNP;
2. Accepts that the CT and other tracks in CNP are designed, constructed and maintained to improve, or at least to maintain, conservation values in accordance with the management objectives of CNP;
3. Accepts that the CT and other tracks are not constructed in sensitive conservation areas in order to increase recreational use in CNP;
4. Accepts that all aspects of the CT are sustainable in terms of protecting remnant biodiversity and other conservation values in CNP;
5. Ensures that the proponent of the CT is required to prove that all aspects of CT are sustainable in terms of protecting biodiversity and will not result in future degradation of the natural environment;
6. Arranges for an independent assessment of the Recreational Carrying Capacity of CNP.

Large-scale events in CNP proposed to increase with Centenary Trail

ParkCare groups request that the Chief Minister

7. Arranges for independent studies to be conducted that assess the impact on the environment of large-scale events such as the Capital Punishment mountain bike race (issues: track proliferation, short-cuts, erosion, impact on flora and fauna, rubbish, use of scarce ranger resources);
8. Accepts that large-scale events are not staged for the purpose of raising revenue and without regard to the impact they would have on the environment;

9. Ensures that there are no large-scale events at night in CNP.

Management Board – Membership, ToR to reflect protection of conservation values in CNP

ParkCare groups request that the Chief Minister

10. Ensures that membership of the proposed Management Board includes independent conservation / environment expertise with the right to veto proposals that have the potential to compromise conservation in CNP;

11. Ensures that the Board has Terms of Reference that

a. include the obligation to assess and provide evidence that any proposed CT action or development in CNP would not have negative impacts on the natural environment;

b. include a schedule for monitoring items, such as proliferation of informal tracks and short-cuts;

c. require the Board to maintain ongoing consultation with relevant ParkCare groups;

12. Ensures that the Board is in place and empowered to supervise the final planning and implementation phase of the CT.

Ongoing maintenance

ParkCare groups request that the Chief Minister

13. Ensures that appropriate levels of ongoing funding are provided to manage the track and monitor its impact.

14. Ensures that dedicated funds are not allocated at the expense of all other current and future management needs of CNP.

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⁽¹⁾ Planning and Development Act 2007; Canberra Nature Park Management Plan 1999

⁽²⁾ Comments of the ParkCare groups are available at <http://majura.org/2012/01/11/fomm-comments-on-the-proposed-centenary-trail/>