



**Mick Gentleman MLA**

Manager of Government Business  
Minister for Planning and Land Management  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for Corrections  
Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety

Member for Brindabella

22/647

Mr Tom Duncan  
Clerk, ACT Legislative Assembly  
[tom.duncan@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:tom.duncan@parliament.act.gov.au)

Dear Mr Duncan *Tom*

I refer to your letter of 2 August 2022 providing petition No. 11-22 Protection of Bluetts Block – Piney Ridge.

I note that the petition received more than 732 signatories and has also been referred to the Standing Committee for Planning, Transport and City Services (the Committee), consistent with Legislative Assembly Standing Order 99A.

The ACT Government acknowledges the considerable public interest in the future of Stromlo Block 402 and 403 and Denman Prospect Block 12 Section 1, due to the high ecological values outlined in the petition. The blocks contribute to significant habitat corridors for native fauna, bridging the Murrumbidgee and Molonglo River Corridors, the Lower Cotter Catchment and several conservation reserves.

The ACT Government takes environmental protection seriously and undertakes several environmental studies before deciding whether land should be set aside as a reserve for environmental conservation, or whether the land is suitable for development. Early studies are underway for the 'Western Edge investigation area' which includes Blocks 402 and 403 Stromlo. The Western Edge investigation area spans approximately 9,800 hectares and includes land generally bordered by the Murrumbidgee River to the west and the existing urban areas of Belconnen, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek, and Kambah, to the east. Further information about this work is available at:

[www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-our-city/planning-studies/western-edge-investigation](http://www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-our-city/planning-studies/western-edge-investigation)

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A preliminary ecological review and assessment was undertaken in 2021 and is publicly available online. Further ecological condition and habitat surveys are expected to commence soon. Ongoing environmental and aquatic surveys are expected to be needed to identify the ecological values associated with this area.

Denman Prospect Block 12 Section 1 is zoned with a future residential development overlay and associated fire fuel management. It is part of the Molonglo Valley development area and is not considered part of the Western Edge investigation area.

Denman Prospect Block 12 Section 1 is subject to pre-development consideration currently underway through the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. Environmental values are a central part of these considerations.

The future land use decision for the Stromlo sites is subject to consideration under the Western Edge Investigation Area. As part of these investigations, a small mammal survey was completed covering the Stromlo Blocks. The survey found Common Dunnarts, which suggest other small mammal species may also be present. In response to this important finding, fire and feral management controls will be implemented on these blocks, and ongoing monitoring and further ecological investigations will continue. The findings are also helping to inform understanding of habitat connectivity requirements for the Western Edge Investigation Area. If this investigation finds the need for environmental protections, then the planning system allows for these to be put in place.

As more information becomes available in the coming years, I will work to make sure that the biodiversity and conservation values are appropriately considered in future deliberations about the use of land in the Western Edge.

I thank you for referring this petition for my consideration. I trust this information clarifies the ACT Government's position in relation to the matters in the petition.

Yours sincerely



Mick Gentleman MLA  
Minister for Planning and Land Management

*10/11/2022*

CC: [LAPetitions@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:LAPetitions@parliament.act.gov.au)