



Submission by the Belconnen Community Council on National Capital Draft Amendment 86 proposed rezoning of the Ginninderra Field Station

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) is pleased to make a submission on the proposed rezoning of the Ginninderra Field Station (GFS) site from 'Hills Ridges and Buffer Spaces' to 'Urban Area' under National Capital Draft Amendment 86.

The CSIRO has already consulted with the BCC and outlined its broad intentions for the GFS, and the reasons underpinning its decision to relocate its operations and seek an alternate use for the GFS. The CSIRO presented a detailed vision of its proposal at a community consultation forum convened by the BCC on this topic in September. Many questions were asked by local residents and answered by the CSIRO representatives. The BCC are pleased at the community consultation process to date, and look forward to ongoing consultation as the GFS is developed, if the rezoning proposal is approved.

While the GFS has long been an agricultural and research facility, urban encroachment has been steady for several decades. The BCC accepts the operational decisions regarding the proposal and notes that research currently taking place at the GFS will be continued at the Boorowa farm site.

The BCC supports the rezoning subject to CSIRO and the ACT Government reaching an agreement on the timeline and type of redevelopment proposed by the CSIRO. We recommend that a binding Memorandum of Understanding (or similar) be the vehicle for this, supported by a Master Plan with significant community input.

Proposal for Memorandum of Understanding between the CSIRO and ACT Government

As the CSIRO, or any other developer of the rezoned site, would not be subject to planning approvals under the ACT Territory Plan it would be a demonstration of good faith for the CSIRO to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CSIRO and the ACT Government. This MOU would have the dual function of providing certainty to the ACT Government's land release program, and avoid some of the issues that have arisen as a result of the unplanned development that has occurred at the Canberra Airport.

The proposed MOU could also cover areas of concern to some community members over the provision of infrastructure, the pace at which development will occur, the areas subject to preservation and protection, potentially protecting some of the natural buffer area, and the possible implications if the CSIRO elected to onsell the site to a private developer.

As planning approval is under the control of the National Capital Authority, it is important that the NCA be consulted with or be a party to this MOU.



Ginninderra Field Station Master Plan

The developers of West Belconnen (Riverview) collaborated with the ACT Environment Planning Directorate (EPD) on a Master Plan for Kippax. The CSIRO could offer to finance or collaborate with EPD on a Master Plan for the GFS.

Master Plans provide a vision for development that can address community concerns and provide certainty to private developers and those seeking to invest in an area. Although they do not have the binding authority of a precinct plan, they are an important part of the planning system in the ACT. From our involvement in Master Plans, their success is dependent on being an accurate reflection of community views.

Impacts to surrounding areas of Belconnen

The BCC expect that the rezoning of the GFS to 'Urban area', if approved, will have impacts in the following areas:

- The ACT Government's land release program
- Infrastructure in the immediate area
- Transport (public and roads) infrastructure
- Community facilities
- Heritage and environmental protection

Although the long term land release program issues are outside the remit of the NCA, we ask that the CSIRO and the ACT Government consider them in a proposed MOU.

The surrounding suburbs to the GFS are low density and largely well served by infrastructure. Housing trends in greenfields developments and urban infill lean to medium to high density housing. As there are established local retail, education, recreation and health facilities in suburbs either side of the GFS, the developer of the GFS should indicate what equivalent facilities would be planned under its proposed development.

The BCC note that the CSIRO representatives made a commitment at a public meeting to contribute to the ACT Government in respect to transport issues that would arise as a result of residential development, and the traffic pressures that would be added to surrounding roads. The BCC would have an expectation that this would help Belconnen avoid the traffic congestion issues that have befallen Crace residents as they attempt to access the Barton Highway.

The Barton Highway, William Slim Drive and Kuringa Drive already experience significant road congestion. This pressure would be exacerbated by an additional 10,000 households and accompanying vehicles. The developer of the GFS should



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provide binding indications of how it would contribute to upgrading existing transport facilities to cater for residents to whom it hopes to market the residential property.

We would expect a commitment to public transport facilities be part of this.

The CSIRO has already provided a map to the BCC of the areas within the GFS that are unable to be developed due to heritage and environmental concerns. We would ask that, if the rezoning proposal is approved, these areas be placed under a covenant equivalent to the protections afforded these areas under the equivalent ACT Government heritage and environmental protections.

Entrance to the nation's capital

Several residents in the adjacent suburbs to the GFS have expressed the view that the entire site be retained under the existing 'Hills Ridges and Buffer Spaces' zoning due to its location along the Barton Highway, and its special place as the entrance to the nation's capital.

The BCC does not see this as reason enough for the entire GFS to be denied rezoning as 'Urban area'. The BCC acknowledges that this is a factor which needs to be considered and would support a buffer zone along the Barton Highway which could be landscaped and used as a road noise buffer zone.

We are aware that the CSIRO has already identified a large area of the 701 hectares of the GFS that is unable to be developed due to environmental and heritage factors. Adding this buffer strip along the Barton Highway side of the GFS could link existing heritage areas such as Palmerville Heritage Park and the environmentally sensitive areas along Ginninderra Creek and provide a large area of green space that could also be utilised as future walking, cycling and recreational space.

One such area along Owen Dixon Drive contains established stands of pine and other trees. This is a popular walking area for local residents, even though no current footpath exists. Thought needs to be given to retaining this community access in any redevelopment.

In addition, there are other areas which might provide natural buffer zones if retained, such as areas that have well established and attractive plantations. Community consultation on this is essential.

The CSIRO advised at the September BCC meeting that the rezoning of the GFS was being sought before all environmental impact reports had been completed. Although this may not impact the rezoning, it may impact the scale and nature of the redevelopment and perhaps the environmental impact reports should be completed prior to the NCA decision.



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National Capital Authority planning control of land no longer required under the National Capital Plan

Broader issues of development on land administered by the National Capital Authority and not the ACT Planning and Land Authority are outside the scope of the BCC. We broadly believe that land that is excess to the National Capital Plan should be released to the market and sold (like all other property in the ACT). We would prefer that the land then come under ACT planning controls.

Commercial development

The options for development under the 'Urban' development conditions can include commercial and light industrial, as well as residential. The BCC believe that large scale commercial development, on the scale of Brindabella Business Park, on the GFS site would not be appropriate. This was not a feature of the CSIRO presentation at the community consultation sessions, although we note it is an option that could occur if the rezoning amendment is approved. Some clarification from the CSIRO on any commercial development plans prior to the NCA decision would be of community interest.

Support for the rezoning proposal

The BCC does not oppose the rezoning of the GFS to 'Urban area'. Community consultation and input will be key to its success. We would like to see a sensible accommodation reached between the NCA, the CSIRO, the developer and the ACT Government on a schedule of development of the area.

The BCC recommends that the best way to achieve this be with a binding MOU (or similar) and a willingness to enter into a Master Plan process with EPD. This would ease community concerns surrounding development of the site and provide certainty to the ACT Government and community.