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Subject: Recreational Trails Masterplan Development – Murrumbidgee Conservation Reserve: Submission from Canberra Bushwalking Club (CBC)

Dear Ms Watson

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Trail Master Plan for the proposed Murrumbidgee River Conservation Reserve. This club has a direct interest in the proposal, as several of our members periodically run walking events in the area. Our brief preliminary comments are below.

Our club is strongly of the view that any trail development in the area should not be shared use between cyclists, walkers and equestrian users. The experience from the development of the Centenary Trail clearly demonstrates the problems with shared use trails; some sections of the trail, such as that near One Tree Hill, are too narrow to accommodate both walkers and cyclists – many walkers feel unsafe on these sections, as numerous cyclists ride very quickly along them. If trails must be shared between walkers, they should be designed to be wide enough to safely accommodate both types of users and incorporate appropriate safeguards to slow down cyclists. Equestrian trails should be kept separate to those of other users for reasons of safety and sanitation (ie proximity to a large animal and horse droppings).

Your covering letter confirms that the Conservation Reserve contains areas of high heritage and conservation value that must be protected, but neither the letter nor the master plan outlines how these values will be protected as part of the development of the proposed recreational areas. We feel that a specific strategy to ensure the compatibility of recreational development with conservation/heritage values must be included, in line with current national and local environmental and land use management legislation – for example, how the incursion of invasive weeds into the reserve will be minimised or littering in the area of Ginninderra Falls will be avoided (a problem with vehicular access too close to the Falls in the past). In a related vein, we would discourage the development of new trails, as compared with upgrading existing tracks to preserve the natural beauty and values of the area.

Some CBC members have specific suggestions for ways to improve access to, and use of, trails in the area. We would suggest that a meeting be arranged, as mentioned in your covering letter, to share and further discuss these ideas.

Once again, the CBC would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide our views at this early stage of planning. We would be grateful to be kept informed of progress with the Trail Master Plan and any further consultative opportunities.

Yours sincerely

Lorraine Tomlins
President
CBC

1 December 2015