

BELCONNEN LAKESHORE MASTERPLAN

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BELCONNEN LAKESHORE MASTERPLAN

1- Introduction

Belconnen Lakeshore is a most valued and valuable part of the Belconnen Town Centre and Belconnen generally. The Belconnen Lakeshore Masterplan seeks to bring out the best of Belconnen Lakeshore: both protecting and enhancing its natural attributes and introducing life (people), diversity and vitality to the lakeshore.

Development of the Masterplan has been a major initiative of the ACT Government (through the Planning and Land Management (PALM) Group of the Department of Urban Services) during 1997. This final Masterplan responds to comments received during wide community consultation (see attachment). The Territory Plan sets out an overall planning framework and determines land use policies for the whole of Belconnen including land around Lake Ginninderra (see Figure 1). The implementation of this Masterplan will ensure that the scale and type of built environment on the vacant Government land (see Figure 2) will create a sustainable and lively lakeshore.

The Masterplan is a first step towards the achievement of a lively and attractive lakeshore. Decisions on specific projects are to be taken according to the principles and vision of this Masterplan, together with the programming and budgeting of social and physical infrastructure. Nevertheless, it will be the people and businesses that will provide vibrant and interesting attractions at the lakeshore to give life to the Masterplan vision.

The overall vision of the Masterplan has been developed by the Masterplan Consultancy, Colin Stewart Architects, in consultation with the community and Government agencies.

2- Status of the Masterplan

The lakeshore Masterplan is adopted as *Guidelines* under the *Territory Plan* and will be required to be taken into consideration for planning and land release decisions.

3- The Vision

The Masterplan provides:

- an overall vision for the area and for its integration with the Belconnen Town Centre;
- guidelines for future uses;
- guidelines for land releases;
- directions for future studies; and
- the basis for creating a people and pedestrian oriented environment through:
 - timber boardwalks on the lake edge,
 - extensive new landscaped areas for passive recreation, and outdoor dining and leisure activities,
 - access to the lake itself with boat hire and associated recreation and leisure activities,
 - and
 - opportunities for businesses.

The aim is to create a friendly, safe and attractive outdoor pedestrian environment with a potential to fulfil the aspirations of the Belconnen community for this area.

4- Guidelines for Future Developments

4.1- Objectives

- Create, through good design and planned activities, an attractive and pleasant lakeshore where people will enjoy spending time and which will become a vital part of the town centre.
- Achieve high quality implementation of development and public space establishment for the Belconnen Lakeshore, with vacant Government land to be released in a way that provides greatest benefits for the community.
- Integrate existing uses along the lakeshore with proposed new developments, at the same time as improving the amenity of the public areas of the lakeshore.
- Reflect and strengthen the unique qualities of the natural environment and the identity of the community of Belconnen.
- Provide an environment which encourages local employment initiatives and community interaction.
- Plan for and accommodate the practical, spiritual and creative needs of the Belconnen community.

4.2 The five strategies of the Masterplan

The Masterplan has five main elements. Each element will be achieved by a number of strategies as follows (see Figure 3):

1- A foreshore promenade, boardwalk, Casuarina Park and main pedestrian paths & public places (see Figure 4)

- A **new boardwalk** on the foreshore with a footbridge (to link Emu Bank from Section 187 to the Water Police building) will be one of the main elements of the lakeshore Masterplan. The detailed design, costing and materials of the boardwalk will be determined through the detailed Landscape & Public Places Design Study (see Section 6).
- It is proposed to **expand the boardwalk** to the south side of the Emu Inlet after considering the public comments on the inadequate scale of outdoor space (about 3.5 m. width) which is not safe. This expansion will also be input into the detailed design of public places (see Figure 4).
- **Access under the boardwalk footbridge** will be provided for boats to enter the Inlet. This will also enable access for cleaning and the aquatic plant harvester (height-3m., width- 4 m.).
- The **function of the footbridge**, and whether it would be solely for pedestrians or also for cyclists, will be determined through the detailed Landscape & Public Places Design Study (see pg.8) which will provide clear routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Casuarina Park** will be made available for the use of art and craft markets and also as an open display and performance area to attract more people to this part of the lakeshore. Linkages between the mall and the park will be enhanced through the proposed pedestrian crossings on Emu Bank and also by landscaping elements. A small scale jetty may be permitted for boat and canoe hire facilities to provide safe activity for young children at the Emu Inlet (see Figure 4).

Figure 3 shows the **major pedestrian links** along the lakeshore and between the lakeshore and the town centre. The Belconnen Lakeshore Masterplan gives priority to creating a pedestrian scale and a pedestrian friendly environment throughout the study area. The Landscape and Public Places Design Study (pg.8) will determine the details for upgrading existing (where required) and providing new pedestrian and cycle paths along the lakeshore. At present the **links between the lakeshore and the town centre** are limited to the footpaths on Benjamin Way and three existing pathways (one formal, two informal) that run from Chandler Street through to Emu Bank. Any future development on or around these sites will include the development and/or enhancement of the pedestrian paths as shown on Figure 3. The detailed landscape and design study will explore options for raised pedestrian crossings and lane narrowing at the eastern end of Conservation House, adjacent to the Mirramar development, on the library/college pathway and at the existing crossing near the skateboard facility. That study will also consider options for a pedestrian-friendly crossing along the north side of Emu Bank at Beissel Street.

- The development of a **strong cultural presence** will be encouraged through good design and creating places where people wish to come together and contribute towards a pleasant atmosphere. The detailed designs for type and location of a variety of gardens such as a scented garden, opportunities for garden clubs, places for people to meet, sit and talk, congregate and socialise will be explored through the detailed Landscape & Public Places Design Study (see Section 6) with input from the community. Along the Lakeshore live performances, buskers and other activities will be encouraged. The Cultural Plan Group and Community Groups will need to be actively involved during the detailed design study to reflect the history and the cultural diversity within Belconnen including the Aboriginal culture.
- The Masterplan recognises the **significance of the provision of public transport** to increase amenity and provide better accessibility for people to visit the lakeshore. The planning of bus routes and stops will be reviewed as new upgrades and developments occur at the lakeshore.
- **Safety and Signage**—the Masterplan sees attention to detail as essential for its successful implementation, including for personal safety objectives. It is proposed that all paths in the lakeshore area, and particularly within Section 65, be illuminated with pedestrian-scale lighting and be signed with useful information about pedestrian promenades and pathways around Lake Ginninderra as well as any other useful information about Belconnen. To improve pedestrian safety all new development will be encouraged to have windows overlooking pedestrian pathways. The Landscape & Public Places Design Study will identify required signs in consultation with relevant community groups and will consider community safety urban design guidelines.

2- Entertainment, Recreation, Leisure And Culture Area - Sections 65, 149 and 187

This area stretches from the Skateboard Park at the east to the most predominant vacant piece of government land on Section 187, which is located opposite Conservation House. In addition, it includes part of Section 149 where the Water Police structure is currently located. Most of this area has been developed.

- The existing provision of landscape elements in Section 65 will be reviewed through the Landscape & Public Places Design Study. The study will respond to community comments on the current pedestrian/cyclist conflict.

- Additional development will be for active uses such as coffee shops, art galleries, restaurants, tourist uses, recreation and community spaces.
- All new buildings will be low-line (no higher than one-storey except the building next to the Skateboard Park).
- Specific attention will be given to the development of Section 187 (both in terms of design and the proposed uses) to ensure that this area would function as the heart of the lakeshore. It will provide for commercial and community type (small scale) uses which will facilitate large volumes of people to and from the area. A small 'cultural centre' will be encouraged on this Section as part of a commercial development. The central public open space will ensure that views across Lake Ginninderra through Section 187 will be retained.
- Additional car parking will be minimal (only under new buildings). There will be no more fast food outlets that are dependent on large amounts of on-site parking or drive through facilities. On-street parking along Emu Bank will be increased to allow convenient access to the lakeshore.
- The 100 year flood levels on Section 187 and Section 65 (blocks 27 & 78) together with the detailed landscape/boardwalk designs will play a significant role in the determination of block dimensions and subdivisions.
- Block 1 Section 149, (Figure 4) is zoned as "Municipal Services" Land Use Policy in the Territory Plan (where the Water Police structure is currently located). The Masterplan proposes more lively and vibrant activities on this block which can create pedestrian flows through the boardwalk/footbridge and thus create a strong link between the active and passive recreation areas of the southern and western sides of the lake. This will require a variation to the Territory Plan.

Such a variation will enable the use of existing building for entertainment and leisure activities, addition of a new building, or redevelopment of the whole site to erect two new buildings for the purposes listed in Figure 3 (also see Figure 4).

See Figure 3 for detailed guidelines on the use and scale of buildings on specific blocks.

3- Outdoor recreation area - Sections 154 & 155

The area to the north of Beissel Street will be an open space and recreation precinct. The gazetted roads in the open space area will be removed and no major new development will be allowed for housing or offices. The area will be seen in three parts namely:

- *A lakeshore passive recreation area* (generally within 100 metres of the lake edge).
- *An outdoor recreation area* (the area between Joynton Smith Drive and the lakeshore area).
- *The area immediately north of Beissel Street.* This area may be used for low-scale development associated with community/recreational use (commercial land use policy area in the Territory Plan).

Community access to the precinct will be by sensitively designed rural-type access drives, which include small discrete parking areas within the landscape setting. The environmental surveys conducted in this part of the lakeshore did not identify any endangered species. Nevertheless, a detailed landscape study will be undertaken before releasing land in this part to understand the clear boundaries of the above three zones and to provide for access and landscaping.

The outdoor recreation area shall be for appropriate scale facilities which will be sensitive to the natural environment. Some possible uses are tennis courts, basketball and volleyball courts, mini golf, exercise equipment etc which may fit into the current landscape. However, detailed landscape planning will be required to determine the best uses, their scales and locations as well as access to the site. The management of these areas by Government will be detailed in Management Plans.

See Figure 3 for detailed guidelines on the use and scale of buildings on specific blocks.

4- Mixed use area - Sections 86, 151, 52 and 55, and Beissel Street

The northern end of the Beissel Street commercial zone is proposed for medium density residential accommodation, including serviced apartments. Commercial uses and accommodation will be encouraged at the south end of Beissel Street near Emu Bank. The mix of accommodation and commercial uses will help create a vibrant, lively mixed use area which is safer and more people friendly. The increased residential population will help ensure the viability of the Masterplan's concepts for a pedestrian precinct at Emu Bank.

- The **proposed car park in front of the sea scouts** in the draft Masterplan has been moved to north of Beissel Street from the north of Casuarina Park in response to community concerns about the existing vegetation. This parking will need to be designed and landscaped carefully, given its proximity to proposed residential and the lake.
- **Beissel Street** will be designed to discourage through traffic between Joynton Smith Drive and Emu Bank. In addition to the major car parking, street side parking will be allowed along both sides of Beissel Street.
- **Section 86** new multi dwelling residential and commercial accommodation will be restricted to a minimum of two storeys and maximum of four storeys. The residential land will be encouraged to be developed and released in stages to ensure there is a mix of scale, design and variety in the buildings.
- **Section 151** will not have specific height limits imposed to provide more flexibility for different proposals so the site could be used for a variety of purposes.
- On **Section 52** additional mixed use development will be encouraged. Ground floors will be encouraged for active frontages. Upper floors can be used for residential, hotel/motel or office purposes. Minimum height will be the height of the current car parking structure. Special consideration will be given to the design of building frontages to prevent continuous walls. Block 4 is currently leased by Westfield for office purposes. Any lease variation application will consider the principles set in this Masterplan.
- **Section 55** is suitable for a minimum two storey and maximum three storey multi dwelling residential or motel/hotel accommodation. Opportunities for relevant commercial uses as part of the overall development may be considered to support mixed use in this area. High standard pedestrian paths will be developed as part of the development. This will help ensure good access between the bus interchange and the lakeshore and also enhance the pedestrian path along Margaret Timpson Park, the library and the lakeshore.
- In these areas, most of the car park requirement is expected to be accommodated on site but when the development is located close to public car parks, contributions to car parking provision may be considered.

See Figure 3 for detailed guidelines on the use and scale of buildings on specific blocks.

5- Emu Bank

A reduction of traffic volumes on Emu Bank is essential for improving the linkages between the lakeshore and the town centre. Reduced traffic volumes at Emu Bank will enable people using the mall to easily access lakeshore areas for recreation purposes.

- Reductions in traffic volume along Emu Bank will mainly depend on the construction of the Aikman Drive extension to link to Eastern Valley Way.
- Short-term minor improvements will be investigated, such as: raised pedestrian crossings or pinch points on Emu Bank, along main pedestrian spines between the lakeshore and the town centre.

4.3 Natural environment/water quality/waste management

Through the submissions received and public meetings, several concerns were raised about the potential impacts on the environment, water quality and waste management of further development planned in the area. Specialist analysis of these issues concluded that the level of additional development will not have adverse effects on water quality and the environment: The lake was designed for water quality control purposes and assumed residential development would occur at the western part of the lake (now open space) and the northern peninsula (now open space). Nevertheless, appropriate management practices should continue to be enforced. It is therefore important to ensure that the following factors are considered in the assessment of any proposal for this area:

- Address stormwater, wastewater flows and treatments before and after the proposed development.
- Address how the existing fauna and flora in and around the development would be best integrated and continue to establish.
- Plan for low water use gardens, investigate opportunities for using recycled water for this purpose and prepare landscape plans consistent with the broader strategies for this area.
- Address waste management before and after the development including additional cost to the government.
- Address potential noise problems as a result of locating residential with or close to commercial uses to ensure that buildings are designed and built to noise standards.

The Government will continue to monitor the water quality, cleaning of the lake and the shore, but will also investigate other mechanisms of how to involve other bodies such as businesses, the college and the general community in managing the area, especially in relation to litter.

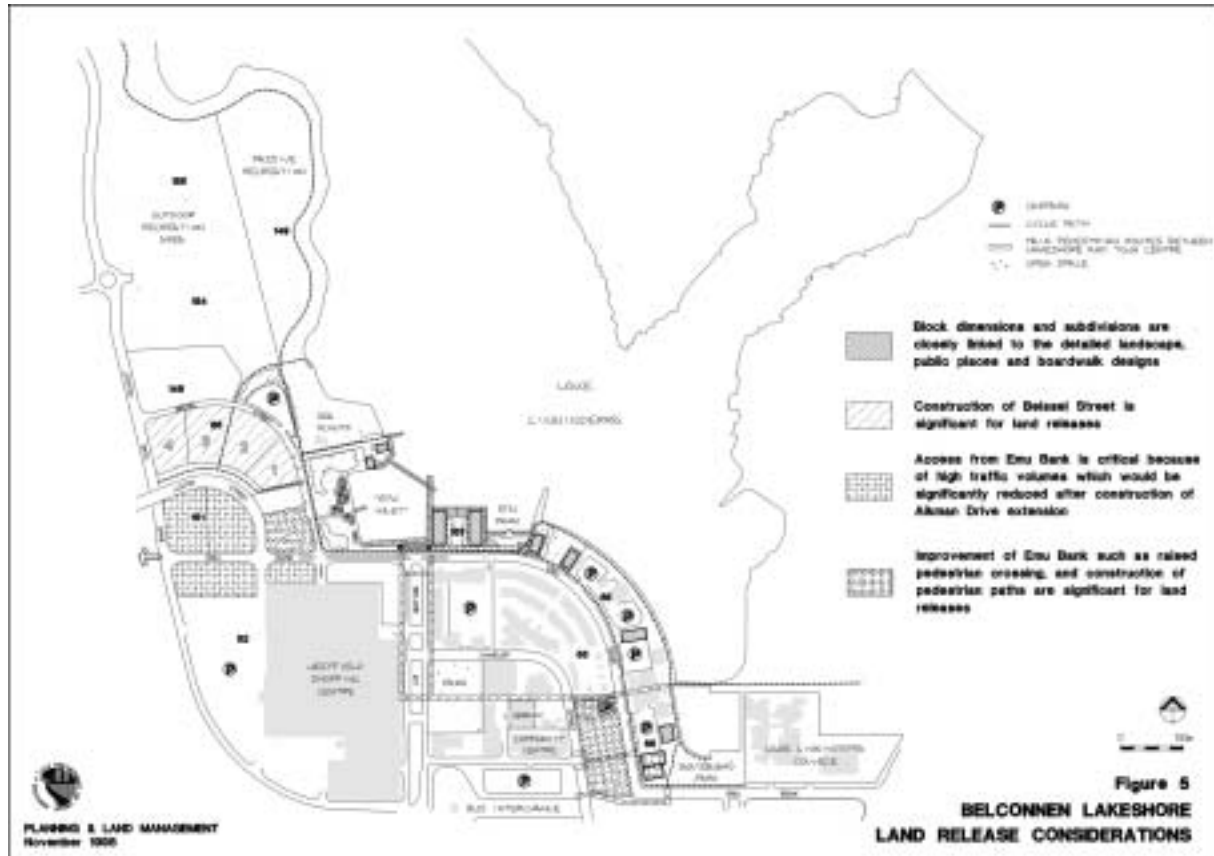
4.4 Land releases

The Masterplan provides opportunities for additional developments as well as including a substantial amount of public space as an essential part of the development concept for the area. Staged release of land for development will be programmed. The following points should be noted:

- Some of the proposed public places will be required to be developed and maintained as part of new developments.
- Some of the land releases will be closely linked to the availability of detailed landscape and public place designs and road infrastructure.

- Depending on the market demand and the availability of other requirements such as clearance of any engineering restrictions, the sites will be placed into the Government's Land Release Program, or released by other appropriate mechanisms.

See Figure 5 for land release considerations for specific blocks.



5 Belconnen Town Centre Masterplan

The Belconnen Town Centre Masterplan will integrate the recommendations of the lakeshore Masterplan and facilitate the coordination of other continuing studies/issues such as public transport and bus interchange, car parking study, landscaping, Commonwealth office block redevelopment, the proposed aquatic centre, etc. This will ensure the planning and land management strategies are in line with the objectives of other studies.

6 Detailed Landscape & Public Places Design Study

This study will respond to comments from the submissions on the current conflicts in using public space by pedestrians, cyclists and others. It will also assist in the determination of dimensions and subdivision of land especially on sections 65 and 187. This study will aim to provide design principles and details for:

- the boardwalk/footbridge;
- pedestrian paths and crossings;
- cycle paths;
- types and location of seats, lightings, pavings, bins, soft landscaping and planting;
- art elements, signage;
- best location for water recreation activities (boats etc); and
- general colour scheme for the new buildings.

Input will be sought from relevant interest groups or individuals and continuous consultation will be ensured between PALM and relevant Government Agencies such as Canberra Urban Parks, Office of Asset Management, Infrastructure, Roads and Transport, Environment ACT, ACT Landscape, and ACTION. The management of all public areas and the lake will be undertaken by Canberra Urban Parks through relevant Management Plans.

ATTACHMENT

Consultation

Development of the Belconnen Lakeshore Masterplan took place over nine months from May 1997. It involved considerable consultation with the Belconnen community, through the Belconnen Community Council and through a community survey/questionnaire, and displays at the Belconnen Mall and Belconnen Library. Lessees and others with a stake in the area were also consulted.

The following steps were undertaken during the public consultation.

- **Pre-consultation; to collect ideas before design.** The Belconnen Community Council was briefed on the project in April 1997. In mid-June 1997 a display was placed for a week at Westfield Plaza (included the study area maps and questionnaires about the use and future of lakeshore). An article was placed in the *Chronicle* and interested people were invited to the Community Council's June meeting to discuss the study and any proposals before starting the actual design study. Advertisements placed in the *Canberra Times* and the *Chronicle* invited people to input into the study. The consultant met with all the lessees/tenants at the Lakeshore and along Emu Bank to understand the issues and develop design ideas.
- **Consultation on draft designs.** During the Community Council's July meeting the consultant presented his first designs and a healthy discussion took place at this meeting. This draft proposal was also published in the 29 July *Chronicle* and opportunity was given for comments on the proposal. A display was placed at the Belconnen Library for a week in early August together with questionnaires about what people liked or disliked about the proposed draft.
- **Final consultation.** All comments from the second stage were assessed for the preparation of the draft Lakeshore Masterplan which was launched by the Minister for final comment on 29 October 1997. This stage of consultation included a display at the mall, an article in the *Chronicle* and advertisements in the *Canberra Times* and *Chronicle*.

Assessment of Comments

By the end of January 1998, eleven written submissions were received. The following points have been synthesised from the submissions and meetings with agencies and community groups, and were identified as important in developing the recommendations for finalisation and implementation of the Masterplan.

A- Environment/water quality/maintenance/landscape/funding

- Urban Parks and Canberra Places in City Operations/DUS are responsible for the cleaning of the lake and the lake edge. The frequency of their cleaning service together with their management in involving community, traders and the college to take responsibility in 'preventing' littering and also 'assisting in cleaning' would be significant in resolving current community concerns. Efficiency of current stormwater pollutant traps and the assessment of need for others is also an issue for the management of the litter problem in the lake.

- The Belconnen Community Council and the Conservation Council submissions strongly opposed the proposed residential commercial development at the west part of the Lakeshore due to concerns it would increase pollution problems.
- The lakes in Canberra have been purpose-built for the management of stormwater flows before flowing into the river systems. These areas, however, also function as major recreation nodes. There are a number of stormwater pollutant traps around the lake and the run off water from several suburbs flow into the lake. Therefore, the housing/development in close proximity to the lake is not considered to be particularly significant in contributing pollutants to the lake. Water quality monitoring is a continuous task of the Government. Necessary environment protection measures will be required from future developments.
- Current landscaping, pedestrian and cycle paths in the established parts of the lakeshore have been identified as areas which need to be reviewed in terms of safety in providing sufficient space for pedestrians, cyclists, roller blades, skate boards etc. The planning and role of the proposed board walk around Section 187 and its linkage to the Water Police point is a significant element of the Masterplan which needs to be looked at in more detail. City Operations is intending to replace current lighting poles along the lakeshore with different styles which would have more resistance against vandalism. A detailed design study for the lakeshore will seek to resolve the issues raised in the submissions and also to achieve detailed designs of proposed public places for implementation purposes.
- Another significant issue is the ownership and maintenance of landscaped areas between the proposed structures.

B- Traffic/parking/access

- High volumes of traffic along Emu Bank have been identified clearly as one of the most important issues which needs to be tackled as soon as possible. It is believed that good interaction between the lakeshore and the rest of the town centre can only be achieved by reducing these volumes. The Aikman Drive extension has been identified as the main solution for reducing traffic volumes along Emu Bank, and the Masterplan will assist in determining the timing and need for this extension. In submissions, several short term and simple solutions have been suggested, such as building raised pedestrian crossings or pinch points at significant connection points which would slow down the traffic in the interim.
- There were comments in most of the submissions on the proposed car park in front of the sea scouts which affected existing casuarina trees. This car park has therefore been relocated.

C- Land use/design and layout/land release

- Additional structures and their scale in the proposed Masterplan were generally supported, but some comments were included about the removal of some structures, heights, access etc. In the light of these comments more flexibility was incorporated concerning uses and heights. The development of Section 187 (a block of land which has a strategic location in the middle of the study area with prime views and exposure to all areas) in terms of incorporation of community purposes was raised in the submissions. PALM supports a 'community showcase concept' as part of a commercial development.

D- Coverage/consultation

- There have been several comments on the adequacy of community consultation and also about the importance of having a larger picture for the whole Belconnen Town Centre and reflecting those principles in the lakeshore.
- The Draft Lakeshore Masterplan proposed the establishment of an Advisory Committee to provide advice on implementation issues comprising members from LAPACs, Community Council, etc. and this was supported by some of the submissions. The intention of an advisory committee is to ensure that the vision would be implemented over time by also incorporating community representatives' and other experts' views through overseeing detailed development projects, release timing and other considerations such as environment, landscape, public arts etc. It is now proposed to establish a Reference Group which will assist in the preparation of the proposed Belconnen Town Centre Masterplan study as well as the Belconnen Lakeshore Masterplan implementation rather than a separate Advisory Committee for the Lakeshore development.