

My Cotter, My Place

Community consultation on the values
and visions for the Cotter Precinct

July to October 2008

Executive summary

The ACT regional community values the variety of activities and facilities available at the Cotter Precinct and wants the area to retain its characteristic understated development and natural environment. The community also identified two key improvements to the precinct:

- *The ability to purchase food and beverages near the existing picnic area; and*
- *Improvements to and additional amenities such as BBQs, shelters, toilets and change facilities.*

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to report on the strategy and outcomes of the three month Cotter Precinct community consultation program, conducted by ACTEW's Water Security-Major Projects (WS-MP) from 7 July – 27 October 2008.

The community consultation program was undertaken to provide ACTEW with an informed view regarding community attitudes towards the Cotter Precinct restoration in the context of the construction of the Enlarged Cotter Dam (ECD), and to identify opportunities for the improvement of the precinct.

Context

ACTEW undertook the community consultation program while the development of the Environmental Impact Statement and early design and geotechnical works for the ECD was being undertaken. The consultation program was limited to a focus on the ACT community's views about the recreational area known as the Cotter Precinct.

This report provides input to the design of mitigation measures associated with the construction of the ECD and informs the development of options to improve the precinct.

Outcomes

The key findings of the My Cotter, My Place community consultation program are that the community believes it is essential to:

- Maintain the existing natural landscape.
- Provide unstructured play spaces.
- Provide safe access to water for swimming.
- Maintain and enhance the provision of shade trees.
- Avoid 'over managing' the area.

The community did request enhancements to the precinct, the two most prominent being the ability to purchase food and beverages near the existing picnic area; and improvements to, and additional amenities such as BBQs, shelters, toilets and change facilities

A random telephone survey, the only statistically valid representation of the community's perceptions, demonstrated that, of the people who had visited the Cotter in the last five years:

- 31 per cent rated the Cotter Precinct as their favourite outdoor recreation area in the ACT.
- 57 per cent would like to have facilities where they could purchase food and beverages, such as a kiosk / pub / café.
- 38 per cent would like to have improved or additional toilet and change facilities.
- 36 per cent would like to have additional BBQ areas.
- 28 per cent would like improved playground areas.

Of the non visitors (people who had not been to the Cotter in the last five years):

- 57 per cent said they would like improved BBQ and picnic areas.

- 35 per cent would like to have additional and improved toilet and change facilities.
- 31 per cent would like to have facilities where they could purchase food and beverages, such as a kiosk / pub / café.
- 28 per cent would like to see more playground equipment.

Additionally, based on the information collected through the consultation process, key outcomes were:

- A total 932 individuals were consulted and contributed to the outcomes.
- The majority of people value the Cotter Precinct as a recreation space.
- There is very strong support for the Cotter Precinct to retain its current natural state with minimal development.

In summary the community appears to desire some cosmetic improvements to facilities and a place to purchase food and beverages, but ultimately want the area to remain in its current form.

Next steps

This report is a combination of community views, opinions and concerns expressed about the short term impacts of the construction of the ECD and long term use and access to the Cotter Precinct.

Next steps in the process include:

- Providing this report to the public via ACTEW's web site.
- Using this information in the development of mitigation measures during the construction of the ECD.
- Using this information in the development of an options report for the enhancement of the Cotter Precinct recreational area

Constraints

Any management plans or options developed for the Cotter Precinct must comply with existing management plans for the catchment, as detailed in two documents: *The Cotter Catchment Strategic Management Plan (Draft May 2006)* and *The Lower Cotter Catchment Recreation Strategy (July 2008)*.