

SEPTEMBER 26 2016

SAVE PRINT

Labor wants Mulligans Flat to become eco-tourism destination



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The Mulligans Flat wildlife sanctuary would become an eco-tourism destination under a Labor plan to draw more visitors to the ACT.

Labor has announced it would spend \$1.6 million building a visitor centre in Throsby, near the Mulligans Flat sanctuary, and develop a new eco-tourism strategy to make better use of Canberra's natural assets.

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Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary, where Eastern Bettongs have successfully been reintroduced after becoming extinct on the Australian mainland. Photo: Supplied

The eco-tourism plan seeks to build on the arrival of international flights to Canberra, and on an agreement signed earlier this year between Mulligans Flat and Wellington's Zealandia, a large urban wildlife sanctuary that draws 120,000 visitors a year.

Mulligans Flat has had tremendous success reintroducing species such as the Eastern Bettong, but is far smaller in scale than Zealandia, and lacks the facilities to be a major tourist drawcard.



Zealandia, Wellington. ACT's Mulligans Flat has partnered with Zealandia, pictured, which is a Wellington nature conservation sanctuary. Photo: Supplied

The agreement between the two sanctuaries will see them exchange staff and cross-promote.

Woodlands and Wetlands Trust general manager Jason Cummings said the planned visitor centre would be a "big step forward" for the sanctuary.

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"At the moment access is only via Forde and limited, so is car parking and formal spaces to engage with the community," he said. "So developing a purpose-built centre will be a big step forward."



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The centre would be used for education, to engage with community groups, and work with universities. Mr Cummings said the goal was to have Mulligans Flat able to fund itself, and said it could learn a lot from Zealandia.

"There is a lot to learn, they are 15 years ahead of us, we can catch up as soon as is feasibly possible, we can learn from them," he said.

The government has in recent years made a concerted effort to boost the local tourism industry, an effort to diversify the economy and reduce its reliance on the federal public service.

That has been reflected in strong tourist numbers recently, and Labor says a focus on eco-tourism, including at Mulligans Flat, Tidbinbilla, and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, would bring further visitors to the territory.

Labor said it would pay to build the Mulligans Flat "nature centre", help with its operating costs and seek additional support from the federal government.

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