The Woodland Learning Centre will be a state-of-the-art eco building that will become the national gateway to our nation's unique woodlands. The building will become a focal point for the community, land managers and scientists across multiple organizations nationally to work together to learn about and restore local woodlands, and inspire similar projects throughout Australia.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Woodland Learning Centre is a unique proposal for a research and exhibition centre that is aimed at telling the stories about an iconic and endangered Australian landscape – the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands.

Over 5 million hectares (over 93%) of the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands, which extended from southeast Queensland to central Victoria, has been cleared for agriculture. The remaining areas are now small and scattered through the eastern states and are in various states of environmental decline. The Australian Capital Territory has within the Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Reserves, some of the largest grassy woodland communities that are in relatively good ecological condition.

There is an imperative to preserve what is left of the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands and to understand more about these ecological communities in order to restore their environmental health. Because of these imperatives the research and educational functions of the Woodland Learning Centre are of national importance. Development of the Woodland Learning Centre is also urgent if successive generations of Australians are going to embrace the restoration of this characteristic Australian landscape.

The primary purpose of this report is to have a site for Woodland Learning Centre identified in the ACT Government’s relevant land use planning policies. The site recommended is at the edge of Canberra’s planned northeastern residential development on the boundary of an area reserved for environmental benefit.

The natural qualities of the site allow excellent opportunities to demonstrate innovative, inspiring environmental design.

In this report there is sufficient information to indicate a site area and to describe the nature and character of the Woodland Learning Centre. This material could be uplifted into a revised Structure Plan for Gungahlin and the Estate Plan for Throsby.

It is vital that the Board next invests in the development of a business case that sets out the capital and recurrent funding for the project as well as defines a corporate structure for its management. This information is necessary for the ACT Government and other potential partners to commit to the implementation of the Woodland Learning Centre.

Preparing an Outreach and Consultation plan concurrent with the Business Plan is also recommended. This plan will ensure there is consistency and focus in working with stakeholders and the broader community. It is an important plan to have to target potential partners. This report provides the basis and direction for these more detailed action plans.

Options for procuring a design for the Woodland Learning Centre have also been outlined. Again this report provides a substantial base from which to develop a full design brief.

Lastly, because the Woodland Learning Centre has national significance, it is recommended that consideration be given to reflecting this significance in its ultimate title – the National Woodland Learning Centre.
1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The primary purpose of this report is to:

- identify a site for the Woodland Learning Centre between the Mulligan’s Flat and Goorooyarroo Reserves; and
- for this nominated site to be included in the ACT Government’s approved Estate Plan for Throsby.

Identifying a site for the Woodland Learning Centre (WLC) in the Estate Plan demonstrates to key stakeholders and the broader community that the ACT Government values this initiative. This is an important milestone and significant to garnering further support and interest in the development of the Woodland Learning Centre.

This report sets out the site area, design objectives and proposed land uses for the WLC. These are important to include in the Estate Plan and Precinct Code for Throsby as they describe the intent, quality and character of the proposal to the community. These will also substantially help to inform the assessment and subsequent approval for the development of the Woodland Learning Centre.

The Board of Management for the Mulligan Flat Woodland Sanctuary should also use this report to inform the preparation of:

- a more detailed business case that recommends a corporate management structure and a strategy for raising funding for capital and recurrent costs
- secondly, an Outreach and Consultation Plan
- a detailed design brief.
2.0 A CRITICALLY ENDANGERED WOODLAND LANDSCAPE - THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WOODLAND LEARNING CENTRE

The Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands, of which only 5% is considered to be in good condition, are hugely significant to Australia’s natural and cultural heritage. These woodlands, arguably, epitomize the ‘Australian bush’. They caught the attention of the early ‘white’ settlers for farming and grazing and at the turn of the 20th century, the contrast of colours and light of the grassy woodlands, inspired painters like McCubbin, Roberts and Condor.

What characterises the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands is their richness and diversity, a quality that we are only just beginning to understand. Eucalypts, typically boxes and gums, provide an open canopy, below which, there is a sparse distribution of shrubs but a huge range of grasses, herbs and wildflowers. This vegetation creates a habitat and food source for a variety of birds and mammals, including parrots, finches, robins, the bettonas, podaroos and the antechinus.

The Box-Gum Grassy Woodland communities originally extended from southern Queensland to central Victoria: Australia’s ‘sheep-wheat belt’. Clearing and modification of over 5 million hectares of Grassy Woodlands for agriculture has left remnant communities, typically in road reserves, stock routes, churchyards and cemeteries. The condition of these remnants is often quite degraded to start and is being further eroded by tree dieback, weed and feral animal invasion, soil erosion, salinity and continued over stocking of grazing animals.

Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Woodland Reserves are in relatively good condition and the largest in public ownership. Research and experimentation associated with these reserves has been critical to building an understanding of the whole ecosystem and how to redress species decline and improve biodiversity in the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands. The next step is to integrate this research with restoration, lifting the baseline and expectation on what is considered to be in a good environmental condition.

The WLC, integrated with Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Woodland Reserves, is critical to improving our collective understanding. Its national significance is in telling the stories about this threatened ecological community and inspiring all Australians to care, to act and learn more about this continent’s unique and fragile environment.
MISSION, OBJECTIVES, PROGRAMS

The Woodland Learning Centre will be a national ‘gateway’ through which excellence in conservation and learning will be achieved. It will be a threshold to lifting the understanding of all Australians to this continent’s unique landscapes and ecology. It will inspire people to become involved in the restoration of this nation’s iconic Grassy Woodland heritage.

The objectives for the Woodland Learning Centre are to:

**Restore** the value and integrity of Australia’s Box-Gum Grassy Woodland communities through
- continuing research that considers the whole of the ecosystem
- applying this research to reintroducing key missing elements and species and so improve the environmental health and condition of local woodlands
- raising people’s awareness of the significance of these ecological communities and the actions they can take to reduce the threats to the continued existence of these ecological communities.

**Learn** about a significant part of Australia’s natural heritage by:
- telling people the story about the of the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands
- showing visitors the diversity and richness of these ecological communities
- demonstrating how research and evidence-based environmental management can conserve and restore the woodlands in the landscape.

**Inspire** the community - all Australians – to take an interest in caring for the environment and particularly the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands, by
- promoting the success and value of the Mulligans Flat Woodland experiment
- demonstrating responsible, attractive environmental design in the architecture, the displays and landscape design
- creating a variety of reflective, meaningful opportunities for visitors to experience the woodlands, the centre and the continuing research
- developing a caring ethic for productive and restored woodland communities.
The **Woodland Learning Centre** will be a place where Australians can rediscover how enriching the experience of ‘nature and wilderness’ can be for the senses and the human spirit. There will be:

- exhibitions within the building to provide an informed and accessible introduction to the nature and dynamics of the Grassy Woodlands for residents and visitors to the region
- self-guided tours through the Box-Gum Grassy Woodland reserves allowing visitors to create their own experiences
- guided programs for groups that introduce participants to aspects of the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands
- arts and event programs that allow both Canberra residents and tourists to appreciate and participate in the ‘stories’ of the Grassy Woodlands and add to the ‘canvass of country’ through their own experiences
- programs designed specifically for school groups
- opportunities to meet friends and socialize and enjoy the backdrop of the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands
- support for other communities involved and working toward the conservation and restoration of Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands around Australia.
3.0 A “GATEWAY” TO THE GRASSY WOODLANDS OF AUSTRALIA

Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Woodland Reserves are on the north-eastern edge of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The Box-Gum Grassy Woodland communities in these reserves are near to woodland communities across the border in New South Wales. The ACT Reserves and their relationship with the woodlands in NSW provides an opportunity to make and strengthen ecological ‘links’ with other woodland habitats to give the better opportunities to redress the decline of the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands.

Establishing the WLC in association with the Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Reserves will create a main entrance to these Reserves, but more importantly, establishes a symbolic ‘entry’ to the Australia’s Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands. This centre will tell the story of a threatened, Australian ecosystem and the steps necessary for its conservation and remediation.

The recommended site for the WLC is in the ACT’s Gungahlin District, within the north eastern end of the planned open space system for the suburb of Throsby. The site would have a common boundary with the environmental offset area set aside under the Commonwealth’s Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act (1999). This again reinforces the ‘gateway’ symbolism and function of the WLC to an area of national interest and concern.

There are other attributes of this site that reinforce the goal for the NWLC to be a real and symbolic ‘gateway’ to the Grassy Woodlands and to understanding more about the Australian environment:

- the site is central to Mulligans Flat and the Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves. From this point visitors can get to either but more importantly this location will align with any expansion of the Mulligans Flat Sanctuary Fence to link with the Goorooyarroo Reserve.
- the landform can be used in conjunction with the building to screen and then reveal sweeping views up the valley to the woodlands and the hill ‘Old Joe’.
- exemplary environmental design can be demonstrated. The building can take advantage of a north easterly orientation and the site development can incorporate stormwater management, tree, grass and sedge planting to reflect and extend the woodland community.
- access is very good. Being within the open space system there is an excellent opportunity to promote access via cycling and walking. There is the possibility to link with the Centenary Trail. The access road to the centre from the proposed main distributor road could be developed to showcase responsive environmental design and begin to herald what the visitor to the centre will learn and experience.
4.0 A HUB FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN NORTHERN CANBERRA

The proximity of Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves to Canberra’s northern residential development is not without implications for the management of either the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands or the urban development. However, as evidenced in Forde, responsible and responsive planning and design, in conjunction with investing in community awareness, can reduce potential conflicts and turn the association into a benefit.

Establishing the NWLC in north Canberra in the planned suburb of Throsby will extend the benefits of the two nature reserves, beyond the aesthetic and environmental values.

The WLC has the potential to become a national attraction because of its association with woodland research and recovery as well as the stories it can deliver on a significant part of Australia’s natural and cultural heritage. There is no doubt that the WLC could substantially build on the program of the National Museum of Australia.

A national attraction outside Canberra’s Central National Area the WLC:
• could help to encourage tourists to stay overnight or longer and visit other natural attractions in the ACT; and
• will provide an employment opportunity in north Canberra.

As with any institution, the WLC would include facilities and ancillary uses necessary to support its function and attractiveness to visitors. Function and meeting rooms, a café or restaurant are envisaged as integral to the WLC and these would add to the ‘community assets’ in Throsby.

For Throsby the WLC would give:
• a heart to the suburb being a place for the community groups to meet as well as people to gather socially
• an identity by creating a beautiful and memorable ‘destination’ for learning, for community and social events.

The impact of the WLC on the residential development is minimised because:
• the site is to north east, within the open space and separated from adjacent residences
• the access road can be designed to minimize the impact of traffic
• any extension of the Mulligans Flat Reserve fence can be set back from residential development
• continuous fire access to the edge of the suburb can be provided.
A Hub for the Environment within the Hills, Ridges and Buffers

The recommended site for the Woodland Learning Centre is at the northeastern end of the central open space spine planned for Throsby. This site has a north eastern boundary contiguous to the environmental offset area set aside under the EPBC Act 1999.

Because the WLC is a unique development and one that is focused on telling the stories - the threats to, the research on, the conservation and restoration of a critically endangered ecosystem, it is appropriate that is sited within the hills, ridges and buffer zone. The two nature reserves are also part of the National Capital Open Space System. The WLC and its associated site development will provide the ‘front door’ for Canberra residents and tourists visiting the Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo reserves.

There is alignment in the Zone Objectives below with the role and function of the WLC:

- Conserve the environmental integrity of the hill system as a visual backdrop and a unified landscape setting for Canberra
- Provide opportunities for appropriate recreational uses
- Conserve the significant cultural and natural heritage resources and a diversity of natural habitats and wildlife corridors
- Provide predominantly open buffer spaces for the visual separation of towns and to provide residents with easy access to hills, ridges and buffer areas and associated recreation facilities
- Provide opportunities for appropriate environmental education and scientific research activities.

It is appropriate to identify the site for the WLC in the Throsby Estate Plan. From this report it is possible to delineate and include in the Estate Plan:

- the extent of the site required
- what land uses will be associated with the NWLC
- the design intent, proposed quality and character for the building(s) and site.

It is acknowledged that this is a building development within an open space land use zone and that the community may express concerns. These concerns can be addressed by:

- the clear identification and description in the Throsby Estate Plan that the proposed future development is only for the Woodland Learning Centre
- early information and consultation on the Estate Plan (more specific information and consultation with the community by the Capital Woodland and Wetland Conservation Trust about the proposal for a WLC.)

It should be noted that because it is recommended that the site be zoned, hills, ridges and buffers, all land (and sites) within this zone is gazetted as ‘public land’. A lease or a license for the use of any public land can be granted provided it is agreed to by the land custodian and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and the land has not been set aside as a wilderness area.
5.0 THE DESIGN CONCEPT FOR THE NATIONAL WOODLAND LEARNING CENTRE

A key objective for the WLC is to inspire people to care for the environment. This is a key driver for the design brief. The building and site development must be ambitiously ‘green’ but more importantly they must create a memorable experience for visitors that will capture their imagination.

It is envisaged that a site area of 9,500 square metres will be required to accommodate a built area of 1,000 square metres, attendant landscape development, parking for 40 cars and 3 coaches.

5.1 The Design Principles

The recommended site has many features to drive an innovative architectural and landscape design response for the WLC. These design principles respond to these site attributes and give spatial effect to the mission and broader objectives for the WLC.

To create a gateway to the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands and a symbolic marker between what was, what is now and what will be the future, the site and building design will:

- respond to the ‘urban edge’ of Canberra and the Box-gum Grassy Woodland systems. It will face to the west present to the built area of Throsby a contemporary, urban character that transforms to an open, pavilion set in the landscape
- use the landform, the ridge and drainage lines, to create a unique entry experience, through framing and revealing the views to the Grassy Woodlands as well as interpreting the role of water in the landscape
- integrate any extension to the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary (predator proof) fencing with the architecture
- demonstrate how the building and site can be adapted to address changing climate and environmental conditions. The NWLC will be ambitiously ‘green’ and it will be a centre that inspires current and future generations – it will be a centre of timeless quality.

To restore the value and integrity of Australia’s Grassy Woodland communities the:

- research and management facilities are to be integral allowing visitors the opportunity to witness the application and success of evidence based environmental management
- site development will extend the Grassy Woodland habitat through its use of tree, grass and sedge species as well as through sensitive integration of car parking, drainage and lighting infrastructure.

To learn about a significant part of Australia’s natural heritage the:

- building and site development will respond to the natural features of the site, interpreting for visitors how these have influenced the layout, form and materiality
- entry, exhibition and outdoor observation areas are to be the focus of the Centre and the starting point for the trails into the Grassy Woodland Reserves.

To inspire the community - all Australians – to take an interest in caring for the natural environment

- this will be an exemplar environmental development
- the design of the entry, exhibition and observation area will allow for a variety of arts and event programs themed on the woodlands.

These principles are illustrated in the concept diagrams.
SITE PLANNING OBJECTIVES

Establish threshold

Potential wetland ‘display’ habitat outside fence

Establish a generous arrival point. Buildings create a hold point and as visitors move through allow expansive views to be revealed

Pedestrian and cycle access brought up to centre and beyond

Create outdoor display incorporated with entry and fence

Entry drive and car park to use WSUD features and pavement

Wildflower planting to create interest and foreground detail to broader view

Formal avenue planting to distinguish residential area and provide some screening to centre

To Mulligans Flat Reserve

To Goorooyarroo Reserve

RESIDENTIAL AREA

OPEN SPACE

OFFSET AREA

Fence
16 Woodland Learning Centre

display entry/admin research rangers

stage 2 service yard

'wetlands' walkway/deck (organises site and building relationship to offset area)

predator proof fence
distant views to nature reserve from entry point

cafe display deck

research entry/admin

rangers service yard

stage 2

wallway/deck (organises site and building relationship to offset area)

WSUD carpark (40 cars + 3 coaches)

retain existing trees

site boundary approx. 140 metres
site boundary approx. 60 metres
site boundary approx. 100 metres

predator proof fence

BUILDING PROGRAM RELATIONSHIPS
5.2 The Performance Objectives

The WLC is a singular development to be located within the ACT's open space system. Because of this, and its proximity to residential areas, it is important to be clear about the quality of development that is being aimed for. These Performance Objectives augment the Design Principles and give greater guidance on the desired outcomes.

Access and circulation are critical. There must be:

- direct access to the WLC from the Throsby distributor road
- good connection to the cycle and pedestrian path systems within the open space spine
- a main entry that is the focus of the building with associated site development giving primacy to that entry and the visitor experience
- an obvious ‘start’ point for further exploration from the exhibition and outdoor observation areas
- separate car and bus circulation as well as a clear designated service entry
- a commitment to good accessibility to encourage people with various levels of mobility to explore the WLC and parts of the Reserves
- provision for safe after dusk access to the woodland sanctuary for both night time research and visitor activities.

The landscape design of the contiguous site development will:

- extend the Box-Gum Grassy Woodland ecological community through the use of endemic species
- harvest and manage stormwater
- use porous pavements to encourage water infiltration
- establish a landscape character that will invite visitors to reflect and appreciate the subtle, detailed variety of the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands.

The **scale** and **form** of the building must be commensurate with its role and the site. The building:

- volume will be articulated to reflect the various functions
- layout and footprint will take best advantage of the north easterly aspect
- height and scale will respect and reflect the low horizon and undulating landscape.

**Sustainable design** and **management** will be incorporated into every aspect with the:

- process of construction minimising building waste and recycling material
- use of low energy/carbon building and site materials
- exploring and employing techniques for energy production and the re use of grey water
- design of the building taking into account potential adaptation, extension and re-use of rooms with future changes in the role and function of the NWLC.

**Variety** and **accessibility** in the **learning program** will be supported through:

- the exhibition area being capable of accommodating different media for interpretive material
- flexibility in the built and outdoor spaces to host art and event programs based on interpretation of the woodlands
- incidental spaces, in the building and within its contiguous site development, for group and class discussion
- creating opportunities in the site development to interact with the Grassy Woodland environment and observe changes in its management.
Fire protection is paramount. The building will incorporate fire protection measures and the site design will allow contiguous access for emergency access.

Research and its continuing importance to evidence-based environmental management is to be highlighted by creating the opportunity for visitors to observe less sensitive research/dangerous activities.

The WLC should also be a significant meeting place. It must be a place that allows for people to interact with the information, the woodland sanctuary and with each other in a manner that is relevant to their knowledge and familiarity. The performance objectives described are important to establishing this.

5.3 The Land Uses and Building Program

Appendix 2, Functional Brief, provides a detailed breakdown of the anticipated uses and the area required to support them.

The primary land uses are for learning and research. These include the entry, an exhibition area, theatrette, study spaces, an observation area, laboratories and workshops.

To support these uses and make the WLC more attractive to users and visitors meeting rooms and a café have been included.

The WLC will develop over time, changing and expanding as research continues and its learning program grows. It is envisaged that the first ‘footfall’ will include the entry, an exhibition area, meeting room, outdoor observation area and limited workshop facilities.

The anticipated building footprint is 1,000 square metres.

5.4 Site Development and Area

To support the building uses and program there will need to be:

- parking for 40 cars
- access and parking for 3 coaches
- attendant space for pedestrians and cyclists.

More importantly, because the site development should interpret and extend the Grassy Woodland ecological community the site should be sufficient to establish opportunities for allow for:

- stormwater harvesting
- art and play sculptures
- observation and viewing areas.

The nominal site area is 9,500 square meters.

5.5 Probable Order of Costs (figures obtained from ACT Government Architect)

Building
- Allow $7,000 per sq.m (inclusive of building/fitout/landscaping and design consultant fees) x 1,000 sq.m = $7,000,000

Carpark
- Allow $15,000 per car space x 40 spaces = $600,000
- Allow $30,000 per coach space x 3 = $90,000

Themed playground
- Allow $1,000,000

Therefore, the possible cost would be in the order of $8,690,000.
Organised by walkway

Water sensitive urban design

Building elements frame view

Integrated predator proof fence
Sustainable

Educational

Organic form
PROCURING A DESIGN

There are several options for selecting a design team and design for the Woodland Learning Centre. These options range from an open tender process through to a design competition.

An **Open Tender** is aimed at selecting the appropriate design team. Firms and consortia are asked to submit a ‘statement of claims’ outlining their experience and capacity to undertake a project of this nature along with a fee proposal. This process would allow for an emphasis to be placed on the environmental performance of the building and an innovative solution can be achieved. As the outcome of the design process will evolve after the team is commissioned, it is important for the representatives of the Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Conservation Trust.

Using a **design competition** has the advantage of selecting a concept that has, from the outset, the consensus of the Capital Woodlands and Wetlands Conservation Trust. A competition also fits with the objectives, to inspire and involve the community, not just in the outcome but in the process of delivering the initiative. The **Australian Institute of Architects**, in their Guidelines for Architectural Design Competitions, state:

The competition process is adaptable. Competitions can generate a wide range of solutions to a variety of design problems. The format, rules and details must be tailored for each competition to accommodate the particular requirements of each project.

A Competition is appropriate when the project:
- is of public significance
- will benefit from a wide degree of design investigation
- is to be on a significant or unusual site
- will benefit from the public interest that a competition can generate
- where design excellence is a high priority.

Competition is inappropriate when:
- the project is required as a matter of expediency or urgency
- it is not possible to appoint an appropriate jury
- the budget is insufficient to cover the total cost of the competition
- an adequate brief is not available
- the Sponsor is unwilling or unable to ensure that the competition conditions provide for competitors to retain their intellectual property and moral rights in their designs.

*The National Aboretum Canberra was delivered through a design competition. This has produced an innovative, inspiring design but more importantly, the competition piqued the interest of the community from its commencement.*
TYPES OF COMPETITION

Ideas competitions
Ideas competitions are held for projects that may or may not be built. They are useful to explore significant design issues or design opportunities.

Project competitions
Project competitions lead directly to the construction of a specific project on a specific site. The objective in holding such a competition is to select the best design and architect for the project who will be commissioned to develop the design and complete the project. The following are the various forms of competitions used to deliver projects.

Open competitions
Open competitions permit any architect to enter the competition and are appropriate where:
- all competing architects have an equal opportunity to be selected on the basis of design merit
- the design objectives can be clearly stated
- the project requires the widest exploration of potential solutions.

Limited or select competitions
Limited or select competitions restrict entry for specific reasons, such as:
- the architect residing within a specified area
- budget restrictions
- awareness of and sensitivity to local, regional or cultural issues
- small projects.

Commissioned competitions
Commissioned competitions are appropriate where the client wishes to have the design options for a project investigated by a small number of architects whose work is of interest. The architects are paid a fee to cover the costs of their work.

The last two forms of competition are most suited for the Woodland Learning Centre given the importance of meeting a limited budget as well as having the security that the design team has the experience and capacity to deliver an appropriate design.
6.0 THE NEXT STEPS TO REALISING THE CENTRE

Investing in the preparation of a Business Case is the vital next step to seeking the ACT Government’s commitment to reserving and granting a lease for the site recommended for the NWLC.

It is critical that the Business Case:
- determine what capital investment and recurrent funding will be required
- set out potential revenue streams
- identify potential partners
- define a corporate structure.

This information is important to clarify for potential partners the return on sponsorship and if there is any ongoing financial liability/risk. The business case should demonstrate that the WLC can be ‘self-funding’.

It is also important that the business case set out a corporate structure to define the nature of the ‘public’ entity responsible for the development and management of the WLC. Again, the business case should outline the self-sufficiency of the NWLC and how it can complement the current functions of ACT Government Directorates.

Concurrent to the preparation of Business Plan, the Board should also consider preparing a Learning and Outreach Plan.

This plan is important to remaining consistent and focused in:
- ‘marketing’ the initiative to partners
- consulting the broader community
- developing the briefs for the design of the Woodland Learning Centre and interpretative/exhibition material.

The Board of Management for the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary already has a lot of material and many success stories in relation to Mulligans Flat. It is now appropriate to give priority, clarity and in turn ‘longevity’ to this material, for there is a risk that overtime and with any change in the Board membership, the inspiring and directional messages may be lost.

The preparation of a Learning and Outreach Plan will complement the Business Case and is important to gaining the confidence of potential partners.

Getting to a design for the WLC is a step subsequent to the Business Case. There are several options from an ideas competition though to an open tender. However, it is recommended the Board go to a Commissioned Design Competition because this process can:
- deliver innovation and quality
- give priority to consultant teams that have a track record in outstanding environmental design
- provide a realistic solution to match the project budget
- be used to engage and inspire a broader audience by displaying and/or publishing the entries.
7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

A ‘gateway’ site
Paramount for the Board is a site that presents the opportunity to create an actual gateway to the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary and Goorooyarroo Reserve, as well as to symbolise a shift in our environmental responsibility for endangered ecological communities. The site preferred by the Board and recommended in this siting/design has the best natural features, views and is in the best location to achieve this.

A unique development in the Hills, Ridges and Buffer Zone
The 9,500 square metre site identified should be zoned Hills, Ridges and Buffer. The WLC is a unique environmental hub, its role and function and the uses to support it can be clearly described. It is a public asset, the objectives of which align with the Zone Objectives for Hills Ridges and Buffers and the National Capital Open Space System.

Investing in a Business Plan
This must be a priority next step. Developing the Business Case to demonstrate how the WLC can be funded and will be managed into the future is necessary to gain the confidence of potential partners. It will be vital for gaining the further commitment of the ACT Government.

Preparing an Outreach and Consultation Plan
Realising the WLC is going to take time. There will be changes in the Board and those who are champions for the project. To ensure there is consistency and longevity in the aspirations and messages it is important to develop an outreach plan. This should set out who and how partners are targeted, stakeholder and the broader community consulted.

Using a Commissioned Competition
Getting innovation, proven environmental design and remaining realistic as to what can be delivered for a fixed budget are all important for the Board. Going to a limited competition where design teams with a track record of good successful projects is recommended.
APPENDIX A - THE SITE AREA, DESIGN AND SITING DESCRIPTION

A 9,500m² site, zoned NUZ3 - Hills Ridges and Buffers, will be identified within the open space corridor of the proposed suburb of Throsby. North east of the main road and directly interfacing with the nature reserve and environmental offset area, the site will accommodate a Woodland Learning Centre and its ancillary functions.

The Woodland Learning Centre will be a state-of-the-art eco building that will become the national gateway to our nation’s unique woodlands. The building will become a focal point for the community, land managers and scientists across multiple organizations nationally to work together to learn about and restore local woodlands, and inspire similar projects throughout Australia.

The centre may comprise a low scale building up to 1,500m² containing administrative, educational, research, retail, café (limited to 120m²) and workshop spaces to facilitate and support learning, regeneration and species repopulation activities.

The existing Predator Proof Fence around the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary may be extended to meet the centre, which may integrate with the fence allowing uninterrupted access from the centre into the sanctuary.

A formed pedestrian walkway may be constructed within the nature reserve to afford access from the centre to both the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary and the Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve.

Inner asset protection zone. Fire treatment etc. access for vehicles.
APPENDIX B - FUNCTIONAL BRIEF

Entrance

Function: Gateway to nature reserves
Building entry
Control point for visitor access/egress

Requirements: Provide a 'wow factor' by concealing then revealing expansive nature reserve views
Adjacent to administration area

Approx. area: 60m²

Laboratory/classroom

Function: Space for 'hands-on' learning

Requirements: Flexible space
Work tables
Chairs for 30 people
Blackboard/whiteboard
Audio visual facilities
Brown-out capability
Storage (under bench)
Wash-up facilities

Relationships: Views to nature reserve
Direct external access to nature reserve

Approx. area: 50m²

Display area

Function: Information display and story telling (guided and self guided)

Requirements: Controlled lighting and sound
Space for display cabinets
Extensive space for posters and graphics

Relationships: Close to building entry
Distant views
Close to lecture theatre

Approx. area: 100m²

Study spaces for children

Function: Space for computer based self-learning/research

Requirements: Flexible space
Study carrels/spaces with computer/laptop for 12 people

Approx. area: 50m²

Shop

Function: Sale of gifts and souvenirs

Requirements: Display racks
Sales point (cash register etc.)
Storage
Able to be secured with screens etc. (or shop front)

Relationships: Access for supplies
Near building entry
High visibility

Approx. area: 80m²
### Café

**Function:** Sale of beverages, snacks and light meals  

**Requirements:** Flexible seating (table and chairs) for up to 40 patrons  
Tea and coffee facilities  
Cold drinks fridge  
Ice creams freezer  
Cooking facilities (microwave, pie warmer, grill, deep fryer etc.)  
Cool room  
Washing up  

**Relationships:** Views to nature reserve  
Indoor/outdoor areas  
External access for supplies and waste  

**Approx. area:** 120m²

### Elevated viewing area/balcony

**Function:** Viewing of distant woodlands  

**Requirement:** The proposed location of the WLC between, and some distance from, the two reserves would make viewing difficult in the early years of the centre until habitat is renewed  
Other building elements café terrace etc. would provide excellent distance views to Goorooyarroo and the nature reserve areas. The landform prevents views of Mulligans Flat from the WLC however, excellent views would appear along a formed pedestrian route  

**Approx. area:** Nil (incorporated within building elements)

### Theatrette

**Function:** Presentation and lecture space  

**Requirements:** Tiered seating with slide away writing tablets for 100 people  
Lectern  
Full blackout  
Audiovisual facilities (projector etc.)  
Whiteboards  
Wheelchair accessible  
Hearing loop  

**Other:** Queuing/breakout space outside entry  

**Approx. area:** 150m²

### Meeting/event space

**Function:** Flexible space capable of a number of different configurations  

**Requirements:** Storage space for tables and chairs to seat approx. 100 people  
Folding tables for 8 people (x 12)  
Stackable chairs (x 100)  
AV equipment  

**Relationships:** Close to building entry  
Views to nature reserve  
Good indoor/outdoor access  
Adjacent to outdoor terrace/deck area  

**Approx. area:** 200m²
**Mudroom**

Function: Change/clean up space for workers

Requirements: 1 x male showers
1 x female showers
2 x unisex toilet
Hand washing basins
Lockers
Drying racks

Relationships: Direct access to nature reserve

Approx. area: 25m²

**Kitchenette**

Function: Tea/meals area for staff (Note: The WLC may be located remotely from the Throsby local centre so the eating/tea coffee etc. needs of staff must be accommodated in a space where they can sit removed from the daily activities of the centre.)

Requirements: Kitchen bench and storage
Sink
Boiling/chilled water
Fridge
Microwave
Stove
Oven
Dishwasher
Table + 6 chairs
Lounge
Coffee table

Approx. area: 20m²

**Toilets**

Function: To accommodate the needs of staff and visitors (consider separate staff area)

Requirements: As per Building Code of Australia requirements

Approx. area: 40 - 50m²

**Admin office**

Function: Administration and access control

Requirements: Reception counter
Desk + office chair
Storage

Relationships: Adjacent to entry

Approx. area: 16m²

**Trust office**

Function: Meeting space for Trust, Committees and others

Requirements: Conference table and chairs for 12 people
Storage

Relationships: Views to nature reserve
Close to tearoom

Approx. area: 20 - 25m²
**Rangers space**

**Function:**
- Workspace for rangers
- Storage of equipment
- Maintenance/repair of equipment

**Requirements:**
- Workbench and tool storage
- Equipment storage
- Space for two vehicles
- Desk + office chair
- Hand washing facilities

**Relationships:**
- Direct vehicular access (secure and discrete) from Throsby side of development
- Direct vehicular access to nature reserve
- Close to staff facilities (e.g., mudroom, toilets, tea room etc.)

**Approx. area:** 70m²

**Friends of Mulligans Flat space**

**Function:**
- Workspace for the Friends of Mulligans Flat

**Requirements:**
- Lockers
- Lounge + coffee table
- Equipment storage

**Relationships:**
- Direct access to nature reserve
- Adjacent to mudroom
- Close to ranger space (to access equipment)
- Close to tearoom
- Views to nature reserve

**Approx. area:** 20m²

**Night viewing room**

**Function:**
- Nocturnal habitat study

**Requirements:**
- Adjacent to habitat area (Note: the proposed location of the WLC between, and some distance from, the two reserves could make nocturnal viewing difficult in the early years of the centre until habitat is renewed adjacent to the WLC and the predator proof fence is extended.)

**Approx. area:** Nil

**Carpark**

**Function:**
- Parking for cars and coaches

**Requirements:**
- Parking is required in accordance with the Parking and Vehicle Access General Code and is a function of the size and function of the development. The provision rate is 4 per 100m², therefore a 1000m² building would require 40 car spaces. Bus parking for 3 coaches should cater for general demand.

**Relationships:**
- Direct access from main road through Throsby
- Well landscaped (add 20% to space requirement)
- Safe pedestrian route to building
- Queuing space for coach passengers

**Approx. area:** Basic car park approx. 1750m² + 20% for landscaping = 2100m²
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<tr>
<th><strong>Themed play park</strong></th>
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Acknowledgements

In preparing this report the authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance and contribution of:

Dr David Shorthouse
Dr Adrian Manning
Stacey Quayle, from the Land Development Agency, the Economic Development Directorate, ACT Government
Stephen Gianakis, from the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government
Tait Waddington – Architecture, Planning and the Urban Landscape

Images in this report courtesy of:

Dr Adrian Manning
Territory and Municipal Services Directorate
NSW Department of Environment and Planning
Craig Egle Architecture