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Speech

Good morning

I'd like to thank you all for coming.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today, at this forum to discuss the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney next year. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to those who have come from interstate.

This is very exciting – to have the IUCN World Parks Congress coming to Australia next year, and only a few hours up the road from us. The congress being held in Sydney presents us with a rare opportunity – to enable our local conservationist community to better network with others from around the world who share these keen interests. It is also an opportunity for the ACT to showcase some of our protected areas that we work very hard to look after and are so very proud of.

I probably do not need to tell this audience about the important role that the IUCN plays internationally to achieve conservation outcomes – across geographic and political borders. It is certainly impressive that there are over 1200 member organisations from 160 countries, spanning government, non-government and independent members and member organisations. It is this meeting of roles, and meeting of skills and expertise, including people from specialist scientists and policy experts to land managers and volunteer organisations, that together creates a body which can act as both a think tank and an advocacy body. It is a neutral forum for governments, NGOs, scientists, business and local communities to find practical solutions to conservation and development challenges.

I was pleased that my ACT Government Directorate - the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (or TAMS), was nominated to join the IUCN as a government agency member. TAMS is the land manager for the ACT and manages around 53% of the land which comprises the protected area estate in Canberra. I know that TAMS membership of the IUCN would not only keep us informed of IUCN issues, and allow the ACT to be involved in these, it would also provide a range of excellent personal development opportunities for Parks and Conservation Service staff.

I think the role of the IUCN in enabling parks managers around the world to learn from each other, and share their stories – of trials and of success - is extremely important. It is many years of this kind of cooperation and cross-fertilisation of ideas that has enabled an

international standard for the management of protected areas and a world standard for biodiversity protection to be developed.

For this reason, it is important that the IUCN continues its important role as the key advisory body to UNESCO on World Heritage and also has a major role in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Many of you would be aware that I am a Greens Minister. It would come as no surprise that the Greens are strong supporters and advocates for conservation of comprehensive, adequate, representative and well-connected reserve systems for our precious biodiversity.

My federal colleagues were probably the only politicians in the recent election campaign to talk about the need for the protection of our endangered species and precious places.

During the campaign Tim Flannery, Professor David Lindenmeyer and Victorian Greens Senator Richard Di Natale called for a new Giant Forest National Park in Victoria to protect the endangered Leadbeaters Possum. The park would encompass a significant stand of old and regrowth forests in the central highlands of Victoria. The proponents are well aware of the long campaign required to see a new National Park successfully created in Australia but I believe they have the stomach for it. Please do get involved if any of you are interested in joining that campaign. Leadbeater's Possum has been declared extinct once before and it is incredibly important that we work hard to prevent making the same mistake twice.

Coming back to our little corner with the world...

Having the World Parks Congress in Sydney next year certainly creates an excellent opportunity to show off the ACT's protected areas and enable Congress attendees to come to the ACT to see how we do it. It would be great for the ACT to be featured in optional side excursions pre and post the Congress. There are quite a few unique and notable things about the ACT's natural areas and biodiversity management. For example: the fact that Namadgi National Park is such a large proportion of the ACT; Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve is an internationally significant ecological project; our endangered species breeding program at Tidbinbilla; the National Arboretum may be of interest to international tree conservationists; and the Australian National Botanic Gardens has the largest living collection of plants.

- It is remarkable that the smallest of all the Australian jurisdictions can boast such a remarkable variety of landscape.
- In the ACT we retain the largest and best remnants of natural temperate grasslands anywhere in Australia – almost all of which are protected within the parks system.
- The ACT protects the largest tract of the endangered yellow Box – Blakeley's red gum grassy woodland remaining on public land.
- The entire western spine of the Territory forms the northernmost reaches of the Australian Alps National Parks, a unique cross jurisdictional agreement, that seeks to preserve

that most under-represented of Australian environments - the alpine and sub-alpine ecological communities.

- This diversity of landscape, brings with it a special biodiversity which continues to persist today despite the inevitable pressures of the largest human population centre away from the coastline.
- So, the challenge faced by the land management community in the Territory is significant. How to preserve our ecological legacy, ensure it is able to thrive and evolve, and to make it relevant to the many hundreds of thousands of people who live and visit the Territory.
- I say “land management community” because the effort in the Territory to manage our natural and cultural estate is undergoing a transformation begun in the eighties with the arrival of ParkCare.
- Whilst the legislative responsibility to manage our protected areas might rest with the Parks and Conservation Service in TAMS, in practice there is a much wider range of practitioners.
- To start with TAMS’ works program is supported by 36 (at last count) ParkCare groups with over 400 active volunteers deploying to all corners of the Territory every week. ParkCare’s capacity to deliver thousands of hours of pest plant and animal control, habitat restoration, track maintenance, and

wildlife survey and monitoring continues to transform the local environment.

- Other initiatives such as TAMS' partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia, operates out of Tidbinbilla and Namadgi National Park to provide an excellent interpretive service to visitors, complementing the work of Park Rangers.
- The Territory's scientific community has established strong links with TAMS and ESDD to a point where today we are able to harness a network of the very best scientific minds in the country.
- This relationship feeds a science-based management philosophy and serves to address some of the most difficult questions around habitat restoration, population management and climate change resilience in our protected areas.
- The latest partnership iteration is in the shape of the Capital Woodland and Wetlands Conservation Trust – a bold initiative that looks to draw on the expertise of the scientific community, the broader public and the Parks Service to go beyond what might otherwise be possible to be delivered by a Parks agency working on its own.
- The showcase achievement is of course the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary, protected by over 11km of predator proof fence in Canberra's north.

- The Sanctuary is now home to the re-introduced eastern bettong, making a return to the limestone plains for the first time in nearly one hundred years.
- After being decimated by foxes and bounty seeking hunters, keen to protect the potato crops of the fledgling Ginninderra village, the Territory is now planning for the day bettongs might survive outside the protective confines of the predator proof fence at Mulligans Flat.
- Work is also progressing at Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve with a concept plan – outlining options for renewing and improving this unique wetland habitat well under way.
- The *Parks, People, Planet* theme adopted by next year's IUCN World Parks Congress is alive and well in the Territory and continues to find new ways of expression.
- In fact this afternoon, I will be joining our University of Canberra and SMEC Australia partners in the translocation of endangered golden sun moth larvae to a site near the National Arboretum.
- The golden sun moth is a critically endangered species whose larvae live in soil for several years and feed on the roots of perennial grass species, before emerging as adult moths and surviving only a few days – long enough to breed and for the female to lay the eggs of a new generation.

- If successful, this will be the first time anyone in the world has been able to translocate a critically endangered insect that spends the vast majority of its lifecycle as a larvae in the soil.
- So to the upcoming World Parks Congress
- I am aware that TAMS is working with its Australian Alps partners to submit a proposal to Congress organisers that might look to showcase the Territory's practical contributions to biodiversity conservation on a broader landscape scale.
- Many of you may not be aware of the captive breeding work undertaken at Tidbinbilla which is directly influencing the recovery of two alps species – the northern corroboree frog and the southern brush-tailed rock wallaby.
- Tidbinbilla currently manage a larger population of northern corroboree frogs in captivity than is thought to exist in the wild.
- Early generations bred at Tidbinbilla have already been released into the sphagnum bogs of Namadgi National Park, with research continuing to evaluate their survivability and the viability of future releases.
- The plan is of course that frogs will become self sustaining and re-establish viable colonies which will give them a greater buffer against threatening processes.

- Another Tidbinbilla success story is the captive breeding program being undertaken for the southern brush-tailed rock wallaby.
- Tidbinbilla, together with Victorian, South Australian and New South Wales partners, is looking to bring this most elusive of macropods back from the brink of extinction, with less than 40 individuals thought to persist in the wild nationwide.
- Tidbinbilla cares for approximately 70% of the captive breeding population in Australia and continues to lead the captive breeding way with 16 joeys born in 2012, a record number, using innovative breeding techniques.
- Tidbinbilla has now supplied 14 captive-bred southern brush-tailed rock-wallabies for release into the Victorian alps, as part of the national recovery breeding program.

So, as you hear, there is a lot of parks management going on in the ACT.

I look forward to hearing more detail about the side excursions which will be offered next year.

I would like to thank the organisers of this forum today for their work – particularly Hanna Jaireth, who has been a keen advocate for our involvement in the IUCN.

Thanks also to the ACIUCN for their work so far in convening next year's the World Parks Congress.

I look forward to hearing about the outcomes from today, as well as hearing about the conservation issues which will arise next year at the Congress.

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