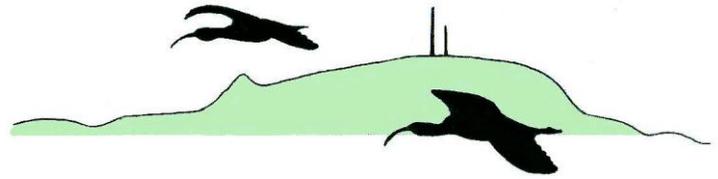


ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST &
CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.
PO Box 359
ORANGE NSW 2800



The General Manager
Orange City Council
P.O.Box 35
Orange NSW 2800

11th February 2011

Dear Sir

PROPOSAL TO RECLASSIFY PARKS

The Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society Inc is strongly opposed to the proposal to reclassify as operational land 28 of Orange's smaller parcels of community land, including parkland. The principal basis for our objection is the impact this action would have on the biodiversity of the Orange district due to the loss of habitat (existing and potential).

The society is also concerned with the lack of future amenity for Orange residents, particularly in the light of proposed increases in population abundance and density with the local government area.

Biodiversity

Urban parks are extremely important for wildlife. Even when small, they can provide critical habitat for all groups of animals and even for plants. For example, in areas where eucalypts are seen to be not suitable for street planting due to interference with infrastructure, they can be planted in open spaces and provide habitat. These trees may already contain or will eventually develop hollows, which are integral for the breeding of many species of bird and mammal.

They also provide the following resources: nectar for birds, arboreal mammals and insects; fruit (seeds) for parrots, as well as roosting and nesting spaces for many species. And that's just the eucalypts. If native wattles, shrubs and groundcovers are also present or planted, then the habitat value is further enhanced.

Orange City Council recognises the need for urban greenways, but is perhaps not aware of the significant contribution small open spaces can make to these. Greenways should be more than simply narrow walking trails (Hay 1991) and the objectives should go beyond the recreational and aesthetic to encompass the needs of urban wildlife, particularly those species known to be declining in the region or sensitive to urban intensification.

Parks do not necessarily need to be physically joined but can also be valuable as 'stepping stone' potential for mobile species such as birds and bats. Some species can and do cross quite hostile environments. However the ability to cross landscape 'gaps' to reach the safety of large trees or native bushes for roosting and breeding varies according to the species, particularly with birds, and large gaps can be quite a deterrent (Robertson & Radford 2009). Little parks, suitably revegetated can help to minimise the gaps for these species.

Urban areas can also present considerable obstacles in the natural dispersal routes for migratory species. Corridors and stepping stones can provide those species with the means of overcoming those obstacles.

In the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (2007) formulated by Dubbo, Orange and Bathurst Councils, it is stated that:

Alliance councils will encourage forms of urbanisation that have less impact on biodiversity and will work together to encourage an appreciation of the biodiversity and the natural values of the region.

It is suggested that to achieve this aim, a good first step would be to retain all possible open space as a community asset.

Lack of future amenity

It is clear from the proposed LEP, that OCC is intending to increase the population abundance and density of the local government area. This will put increasing pressure on existing parks and other open spaces. These areas currently provide, or have the potential to provide opportunities for recreation such as sport, appreciation of nature, walking, activities with pets, as well as quiet places to get away from the busyness of the city.

Cities all over the world are recognised for the open space and natural beauty and Orange uses the possession of these assets in their tourism marketing.

We are conscious of the cost of maintaining the parks, some of which are considered to be under-utilised. However, if the community was more involved with the decision-making process of the park management, it is likely that

- a) the parks would be more valued and
- b) some of the management tasks could devolve to community groups eg 'Friends ofPark'.

Any open space that is not retained is lost for ever, so this is a very short-term proposal. A council that cared about long-term planning would not even be considering such a move.

References

Ecolens (2007), *Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (2007)* formulated by Dubbo, Orange and Bathurst Councils, accessed 8/2/2011. Available online at http://www.orange.nsw.gov.au/client_images/824585.pdf.

Hay, K.G. (1991), Greenways and biodiversity. In *Landscape Linkages and Biodiversity*. W.E. Hudson (ed.). Defenders of Wildlife.

Robertson, O.J. & Radford, J.Q. (2009) Gap-crossing decisions of forest birds in a fragmented landscape. *Austral Ecology* **34**, 435–446

A.N.G.SMITH
Hon Secretary
Orange Field Naturalist and Conservation Society Inc.