



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

Chief Minister Misrepresents the Environment

The Chief Minister of the ACT yesterday claimed that very large scale competitive events in Namadgi National Park would not damage the ecological values of the park because an orienteering event to be held next Easter is to be held on the site of an old sheep station. "The Chief Minister claims the Gudgenby Valley is degraded in order to justify putting hundreds of cars, trucks, toilets and tents 50 metres away from the Gudgenby River," Ms Christine Goonrey of the National Parks Association of the ACT said today.

"In fact this area is highly valued for its complex ecological systems, its bogs and swamps, its rich bird life, granite outcrops, forests and woodlands. There are dozens of Aboriginal and European heritage sites in the immediate area which the Chief Minister seems to have overlooked in his haste to support this large scale competitive event in our national park."

"Namadgi National Park is regularly used for smaller orienteering events but the scale of this one next Easter is unsustainable," Ms Goonrey said. "The national park is very suitable for low impact recreation and thousands of people walk and run and cycle in the area each year. But not all at once."

"The damage to the soil surface and subsequent erosion would never be acceptable in our water catchment but what the Chief Minister appears to have forgotten is this area is an important part of the Murrumbidgee catchment and equally deserving of protection," Ms Goonrey said.

"His promised environmental monitoring will only be superficial," Ms Goonrey said. "It will just whitewash the damage done by a thousand competitors running across drought affected grasslands, though bushland and up granite ridges still recovering from fires."

"To claim that this large scale competitive event is striking the right balance with conservation values is disingenuous," Ms Goonrey stated. "It ignores the complexity of the vulnerable eco-systems which operate there. There is no 'good time' to have a thousand people thundering through this fragile and drought affected valley."

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