

Bird study gets nod after housing ban

By Natasha Rudra

The ACT Government's 20-year moratorium on development in the Central Molonglo will be used to carry out environmental studies on threatened woodland birds.

The Central Molonglo area, next to Belconnen, had been earmarked for housing and could provide about 9000 residences.

Instead, the Government will now amend the Territory Plan to show the moratorium.

It will ask the National Capital Authority, the federal body which also has planning power over Canberra, to make similar changes to the National Capital Plan.

An answer from the authority is expected later in the month.

The ACT Planning and Land Authority and the Department of Parks, Conservation and Land will conduct natural resource evaluation in the valley, which is home to several threatened bird species.

Birds such as the little eagle and the brown tree creeper live in about 400ha of woodlands in the Molonglo valley.

The Department's Research and Planning section manager, Sharon Lane, said a three-year study into the



woodlands had started earlier this month.

"We just want to get a good understanding of how and when and which parts of the habitat are most critical for birds in the valley," she said.

"And that will help inform future planning for the valley and help inform things like how big a buffer zone we should have around nature reserves, or whether keeping individual habitat trees is of value."

In a statement, ACT Chief Minister

Jon Stanhope said current projections showed land releases in Gungahlin and the rest of the Molonglo district meant the Central Molonglo area would not be needed for housing for another 20 years.

Planning Minister Andrew Barr told ABC radio the supply of land for housing would not be affected by the moratorium.

"Much more work needs to be done before examining the impact of any housing in the Central Molonglo area," he said.

The Government would continue developing suburbs in North Weston and other parts of the Molonglo district near Belconnen.

Mr Barr said the Government would continue with plans to develop 25,000 homes in the area, which would support a population of about 55,000.

Greens MIA Deb Foskey said the decision was a sensible one and Canberrans were likely to have a different view of how the city should look and operate in 20 years time.

"Any new urban development needs to put climate change, peak oil and nature conservation at the forefront of our thinking, and I don't think ACTPLA, the LDA and the NCA are quite there yet," Dr Foskey said.

Farce tells story of Roman love triangle

By Ron Cerabona



SUBTERFUGE: Andy Burton, Georgia Pike and Michael Moore in a scene from the musical. Picture: RICHARD BRIGGS

It's comedy tonight with the opening of Canberra Philharmonic Society's production of the classic musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* at the Canberra Southern Cross Club.

With music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, and books by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart, based on the writings of ancient Roman playwright Plautus, the show tells the story of a love triangle manipulated by a crafty slave named Pseudolus (played by Tony Turner).

Philia (Georgia Pike), a dim-witted but beautiful courtesan, is being sold to Roman captain Miles Gloriosus (Michael Moore). But her heart belongs to the impoverished young Hero (Andy Burton), who's just as much in love with her.

Pseudolus, Hero's slave, makes his master a deal: if the slave can bring the two young lovers together, he will be freed.

Sounds simple, but, of course, it isn't. The stage is set for schemes, subplots, subterfuges, slapstick and songs. The production is directed by Geoffrey Bomy with musical direction by Andrea Clifford and choreography by Jo McKinley.

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum is on at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Woden, on May 15-17, 22-24, and 29-31, dinner and show 7pm (\$65), show only 8.30pm (\$25) with a 2pm matinee, May 24. Bookings 6283 7288.

Motorcycle crash brings territory road toll to six

By Noel Towell
Police Reporter

Police in NSW and the ACT are investigating two fatal road accidents on Tuesday night and yesterday morning.

A truck driver died after his vehicle hit a tree on the Hume Highway near Goulburn early yesterday morning.

Both southbound lanes of the highway were closed for about six hours in the wake of the single-vehicle crash, which happened at about 5.20am.

NSW Police said the semi-trailer was travelling north on the highway when the driver lost control near the first Goulburn exit.

The truck mounted an embankment dividing the two carriage ways, then dropped about 3m on to the southbound lanes.

The vehicle then destroyed a tree and came to a stop, blocking all southbound lanes.

The male driver, whose name has not been released, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Investigators said it was not immediately clear what had caused the driver to lose control and a report is being prepared for the NSW coroner.

In a separate accident, another motorcyclist died in Macgregor, less than 1km away from the spot where a rider lost his life last month.

Police said they responded to reports of a single-vehicle crash on Osburn Drive at about 11.30pm on Tuesday.

Officers and paramedics battled to revive the rider, a 32-year-old Lynham man, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

He was wearing black track suit pants and a green jacket and had been riding a blue and white Suzuki motorcycle.

ACT Policing's Collision Investigation and Reconstruction Team is investigating what caused the crash.

The accident comes less than five weeks after the death of 61-year-old Charnwood motorcyclist Alan Hodge on Florey Drive, Macgregor on Thursday, April 10.

Mr Hodge died after his scooter and a sedan collided at the intersection of Florey Drive and Handcock Crescent, just after 4pm.

Tuesday's accident brings this year's ACT road toll to six; the dead man is the third motorcyclist to die on the territory's roads in 2008, with a 27-year-old rider killed in Kambah on January 4, the first rider to die.

In the past three years, 27 per cent of ACT road deaths were motorcyclists, accounting for three of 17 deaths in 2007, four of 12 in 2006 and eight of 26 in 2005.

Police have asked anyone who may have witnessed the motorcycle rider in the Macgregor area last night to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

FATAL NIGHT: The driver of this semi-trailer was killed when his vehicle crashed near the Goulburn exit on the Hume Highway, forcing the road's closure for six hours.



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