

Conservation Council ACT Region Summary Report

Financial Year 2022/ 2023

YOU KNOW?
**CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED
GRASSLAND**

**SAVE THE
CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED
NATURAL
TEMPERATE
GRASSLAND**

HOME TO THE
VULNERABLE
STRIPED
LEGLESS
LIZARD



HOME TO THE
**ENDANGERED
GANG-GANG
COCKATOO**



**CONSERVATION
COUNCIL** ACT REGION

Conservation Council ACT Region

Our vision is for a healthy planet for humans and all other life, where the natural environment is protected and communities respect and live in harmony with the environment.

Our work

As the region's leading environmental advocacy organisation and hub for community groups, our mission is to protect nature and create a safe climate future in the ACT and region. Since 1981 we have been at the centre of the region's most important wins for wildlife, bushland and communities.

We run campaigns, promote and upskill local groups, undertake research, advocate passionately, and engage and inform our community.

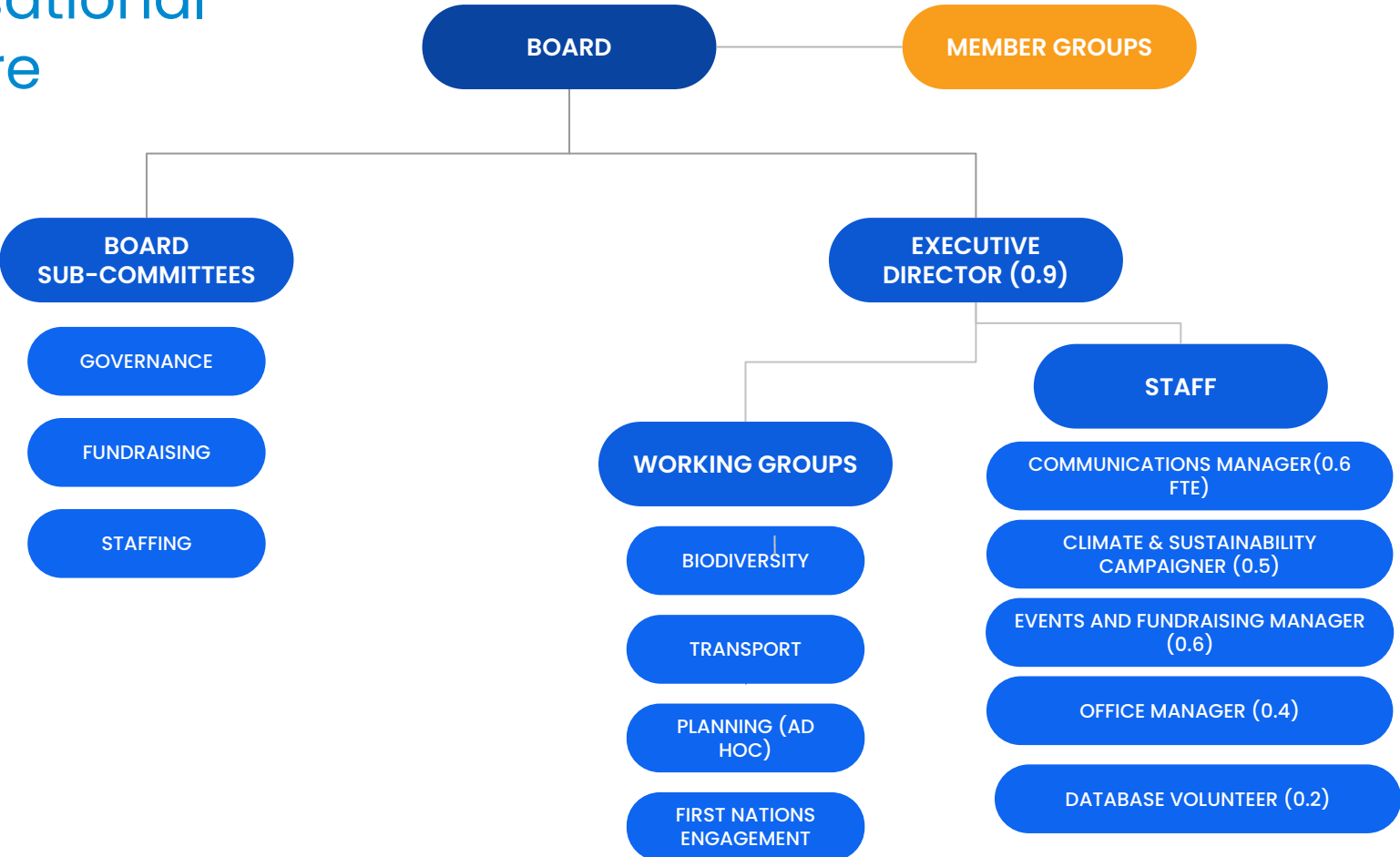
Climate change and nature destruction are the biggest challenges facing our region. We run a focused set of programs to upskill community led action, reduce emissions from gas and transport and to protect ecosystems in our region from development and deforestation.

5 year plan – Strategic objectives

1. Achieve positive environmental outcomes for the ACT and region
2. Speak up for the environment within government and the community
3. Maintain a strong and resilient organisation



Organisational Structure



Member group representation 2022–2023

350.org Canberra
ACF Community Canberra
ACT for Bees
ACT Herpetological Association
ANUSA Environment Collective
Australian Association for Environmental Education ACT Chapter
Australian Electric Vehicle Association, ACT Branch
Australian Native Plants Society Canberra Region Inc
Australian Network for Plant Conservation
ASEN Canberra (Australian Student Environment Network)
Canberra Bushwalking Club
Canberra Environment Centre
Canberra Forest Alliance
Canberra Indian Myna Action Group
Canberra Ornithologists Group
Climate Action Canberra
Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group
Extinction Rebellion ACT
Field Naturalists Association of Canberra Inc
Food Cooperative Shop Ltd
Friends of Aranda Bushland

Friends of Black Mountain
Friends of Grasslands
Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands
Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra
Ginninderra Catchment Group
Ginninderra Falls Association
Invasive Species Council Inc
Kosciuszko Huts Association
Living Streets Canberra
Molonglo Conservation Group
National Parks Association of the ACT
Pedal Power
People's Climate Action Coalition (People's Climate Assembly)
Public Transport Association of Canberra
Red Hill Bush Regeneration Group
SEE-Change
Slow Food Canberra (Canberra Capital and Country Convivium)
Southern ACT Catchment Group Inc
Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park Inc
Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Network
Woodlands and Wetlands Trust
Zero Waste Revolution

Current Office Team

As of November 2023.

Top Row Left to Right: Kirsten Duncan
Climate Campaigner; Grit Schuster, Office
Manager; Brooke Farr, Events and
Fundraising Manager

Bottom Row Left to Right: Robert Hawes,
Database Volunteer; Elle Lawless, Executive
Director; Jahnvi Samprathi,
Communications Manager



Operations and culture

The Conservation Council ACT Region works to protect nature and create a safe climate. We work in line with our capacity and priorities through supporting the wellbeing of our team, organisation, community and environment.

Aimed to increase the professional and ethical practices of the organisation as a workplace.

- All staff moved under the SCHADS Award
- Internal Policy Review undertaken
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy written and approved
- Human Resources and Diversity and Inclusion Policy started



Climate Justice Learning

To face the challenges of the climate crisis and increases in biodiversity loss, we need collective and inclusive action where everyone is needed and everyone is welcome in order to make meaningful change. However, the Environmental and Climate Justice sector and space is predominantly occupied by White ideals and perspectives. This is due to the inherent rooting of the conservation movement in colonial and White beliefs.

By failing to meaningfully engage with, harness the talent, experience and distinctive knowledge of First Nations and People of Colour, environmental organisations are far less impactful in working towards climate justice.

- Launched a fundraiser to raise money for a professional development course
- Launched our learning journey. Please see more information, resources and readings on [the website](#).



Member Group Community

- 39 Member Groups across a broad range of topics
- Member Group Tool Box created
- Member Group Communications Guide created
- Held our first Member Group Workshop - “How to meet with Decision Makers” 29 attendees
- Territory Plan and District Strategies Joint joint collaboration 2 workshops
- 5 Community speeches and presentations including at schools and Probus clubs

Work closely with our Member Groups to backup and/ or collaborate on advocacy including writing correspondence to decision makers, sharing petitions, strategy advice, organising media releases, lobbying politicians, facilitating introductions, providing public liability insurance, hosting forums.



Communications

We engage in community debates to highlight the importance of environmental protection in the media and on social media. We communicate weekly with our member groups, and fortnightly with our supporters, facilitating their engagement in government consultations, sharing event information, and sharing information about environment and sustainability issues.

- 40 blog posts
- 2662 Facebook Followers year end June 2022 → 3178 Facebook Followers end June 2023
- 1049 instagram followers. Have not previously recorded this statistic. Far more engagement including post likes and comments on Instagram. Successfully growing this new audience.
- 8955 website hits
- 4784 Yellow Box Newsletter Recipients
- 49 media appearances (radio, print, online)



Fundraising

- A very big thank you to all of our donors and supporters
- \$70,441 raised in donations in the 2022/ 23 financial year
- Previously relied on large one off donations. Have not been received recently. This is not a sustainable fundraising model.
- Aiming to have sustainable fundraising model and income
- Completed development of new fundraising strategy - diversifying approach
- Have seen the recent success of peer to peer fundraising including the Canberra Times Fun Run
- Online shop made live



Events

- 16 events, with a total of 917 attendees

Events serve a campaign and advocacy purpose. Facilitated community discussions on topics including: biodiversity protection, making the switch to an all electric home, reducing climate emissions through active and sustainable transport, protecting South East Forests and endangered species.

Some event highlights:

- CBR 360 Circular Economy Symposium attended by business and community.
- Launched Bush Buds
- Launched the Biodiversity Network Paper
- Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon Environment Exchange
- World Environment Day Dinner 2023 with guest speakers Richard Swaine and Millie Southerland Saines



Working Groups

Transport Working Group expertly led by Warwick Cathro

Biodiversity Working Group expertly Chaired by Hugh Coppell

First Nations Engagement Working Group established 2023, led by a strong group who share chairing

- All meet monthly with regular strong attendance and representation across Member Groups.
- All wrote work plans and set group norms.
- Currently developing policy platform for 2024.



Photo: Hedda M.

Advocacy

In 2022-2023 lodged 34 policy submissions on a range of issues including waste reduction, feral horses in Kosciuszko national park, Nature Repair Market Bill, Inquiry into cost of living pressures in the ACT, Federal Safeguard mechanism reform, regulation to prevent new gas connections, national fuel efficiency standards, inquiry into promoting and fostering the national capital and feral cats.

We met with ministers, members of the Legislative Assembly, and ACT Government officials on a range of environmental and sustainability matters. We liaised with other non-government organisations to best align environmental, social and economic matters, and reach out to business where appropriate to advocate for better environmental outcomes. We wrote correspondence, held protests, facilitated connections, spoke to the media. Beginning of 2023 saw a focus on planning reform in the ACT to ensure better outcomes for nature, climate and community.



Safe Climate

- Mandatory energy efficiency requirements for rental homes
- Gas phase out success
- No new gas connections announced for November 2023
- [Make the Switch](#)
- Progress on wood burning heaters, phase out announced August 2023
- Circular Economy Symposium 360 CBR
- Reduce transport emissions advocacy through formal submissions and promoting the [Make the Move](#) resource
- MLA meetings and correspondence
- Championing the continued plastics phase out



Key grant-funded project



Make the **Switch**
from gas to
an all-electric
home!

- Save money
- Improve comfort
- Go green

maketheswitch.org.au

Additional \$45k grant awarded for 2022-2023 to focus on giving up gas cooking



Make the Switch

- Held 9 workshops and community engagement stalls on electrification at local libraries, clubs and events till June 23.
- Make the Switch website has received more than 54,000 visitors since launch in 2020

Current Update:

- 3 new videos on induction cooking, health impacts of gas in homes, and tips for renters (more on that later)
- New page of advice and resources for landlords, renters and apartment residents
- Have now as of November 2023 completed 25 stalls and workshops
- Conversations with 1150 people



Circular economy

- Held CBR360 Circular Economy Symposium attended by 198 people
- Hosted a Circular Economy Webinar to collaborate with community and Business on the ACT Government Circular Economy Strategy
- Won the Sustainable Event Award for the Symposium



Protect Nature

- Contribute to local and national efforts to protect nature.
- National nature law reform
- South Coast Forest logging public forum, correspondence with decision makers, success on ACT wood heater phase out
- Supported the formation of the Friends of Bluetts Block group.
- Western Edge Investigation Area advocacy including community awareness posters across the city, decision maker meetings and correspondence, stakeholder meetings, supporting community actions through tactics and growing the participation
- Launched Biodiversity Network Paper February 2023 at an event attended by 46 people including decision makers. Followed by a webinar in April attended by 37 people.
- Held public forum attended by 42 people on the plight of the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon. Continue to advocate through lobbying, formal submissions, the media and community education to protect this species.





Bush Buds

- Launched our [“Bush Buds”](#) program designed to engage and educate politicians and the public on threats to biodiversity, especially local threatened listed species, and led walks in local habitats. Please see the [webpage](#). Purpose:
 - To raise public and political awareness of nature loss in the ACT Region.
 - To increase public and political awareness of the relationship between climate change and nature loss
- Launch at Mulligans Flat attended by 9 MLAs
- 12 Territory and Federal decision Makers have signed up to the program
- Held 2 habitat walks: Woodland and Alpine (and 2 more post June 2023: River and Grassland)
- Linking program back to campaign and advocacy calls to action
- Collaborating with local experts and community members as walk leaders
- Collaborating with local artists
- Reaching new demographic and audience



Save Lawson Grasslands

Project assessed under EPBC Act. Determined as “Controlled Action.” Now subject to next stage of assessment under the act. Currently awaiting the release of an Environmental Impact Statement at which stage the public will have 20 business days to respond. Then the Environment Minister will approve or approve with conditions or reject the project.

- Decision maker meetings including Finance Minister Katy Gallagher, Senator David Pocock. Alicia Payne MP
- Stakeholder engagement including with invasive species management on site
- Held Lawson webinar and EPBC submission writing workshop
- Held public Lawson Grasslands community forum
- Undertaking legal stream
- Threatened Species Day protest outside Defence Housing Australia
- Painted signs as a community event and attached them to the grassland fence
- Working to remove the social license, create the political will, build community awareness



Stakeholder and Partnership work

- Biodiversity Conservation Forum
- Energy Consumers Reference Council - Evoenergy
- Environment and Planning Forum
- Technical Advisory Group - ACT Planning Reform
- NRM Advisory Council
- State and Territory Conservation Councils
- EPBC Reform - Places You Love Alliance
- Energy Policy Consortium with ACTCOSS, Better Renting and CARE Financial
- Hands off our Charities Alliance (HOOC, now renamed as
- Healthy Homes Alliance
- National Gas groups



Formal Submissions FY 22/23

- Active Travel
- EV Strategy
- GHG Bill amendment
- Right to Healthy Environment
- Urban Development at Lawson North
- Inquiry into Urban Forest Bill 2022
- Whitlam DA
- Native forest biomass
- Caring for Dhawura Ngunnawal: A natural resource plan for the ACT
- Reconsider coal and gas projects for climate impact under EPBC Act
- NSW Container Deposit Scheme discussion paper
- Safeguard Mechanism Reform
- Inquiry into Cost of Living Pressures in the ACT;
- ACT Planning System Review and Reform – Draft New Territory Plan and Draft District Strategies;
- Collaborative submission: ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project Draft Territory Plan and Draft District Strategies;
- Queanbeyan Palerang Council Review of Cat Containment Policy
- Regulation to prevent new gas connections
- Fish Stocking Plan 2022 – 2027
- RedHill DA
- Veolia’s Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Facility, Tarago NSW

Formal Submissions FY 22/23

- Impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps;
- Budget Consultation – Priorities for 2023/2024 ACT Budget
- National fuel efficiency standards;
- Proposed crematorium near Callum Brae Nature Reserve;
- Evoenergy Electricity Network Regulatory Proposal 2024–29;
- Works approval & Development Application for Light Rail Stage 2a
- Inquiry into fostering and promoting the significance of Australia’s National Capital
- Nature Repair Market Bill
- Draft Design Guide: Best practices for urban intersections and other active travel infrastructure in the ACT
- MRF & FOGO facilities;
- Environment Ministers Meeting – ACT Priorities;
- Upcoming Environment Ministers Meeting and feral horse management in the Australian Alps
- Draft ACT Circular Economy Strategy
- Single-use plastics – Tranche 3

Challenges

- Our organisation has a broad scope and many competing demands.
- Expectations from Government and community remains high.
- Constrained financial resources and staff capacity.
- Lack of working technology.
- Increased costs and financial pressures due to inflation, an increase in the award wage and super, rising insurance costs, complexity of work, business compliance, operational costs, financial accountability, management of risk, competitiveness in the ACT labour market, and reduced donations.
- The Conservation Council is currently facing serious financial pressures. This has resulted in the inability to employ further staff, including filling the Biodiversity Campaigner role. Consequently, the Conservation Council cannot continue to operate at the capacity level required to contribute fully to environmental and climate action in our region. However, the team are still contributing above and beyond - but this level of output is not sustainable for staff and organisational wellbeing.



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conservationcouncil.org.au