



# Impact report 2024 - 2025



## About Us

The Conservation Council ACT Region is the peak body for environment and climate groups in the ACT Region. We represent close to 50 member groups, bringing together a united voice on environmental and climate issues to government, businesses and the community.

Since 1981 we have been at the centre of the region's most important wins for wildlife, bushland, climate and communities. As a hub for the ACT Region's environment and climate movement and a not-for-profit, non government organisation, we run campaigns, promote and upskill local groups, undertake research, advocate passionately, and engage and inform our community.



**Nature Protection. Climate Action.**



## Message from the President

This past year has been a significant one for the Conservation Council. I continue to be deeply inspired by our environment movement here in the ACT and surrounds. Our resilience and our collective capacity to continue to do the work that is needed to protect our beloved bush capital is humbling.

Since the beginning of the 2024-25 financial year, we have employed our new Executive Director, Simon Copland, and through the support of our community, increased the financial sustainability of the organisation such that we have been able to hire our new campaigner, Aoibhinn Crimmins, and will shortly advertise for a policy officer.



Though times are financially tough for many, we continue to be grateful to those of you who have been able to contribute to the organisation. Either through one-off donations, regular donations, the donation of your valuable time or support for one of our campaigns.

It has not gone unnoticed - the ability for us to come together at the art auction, the 2025 Environment Awards, through one of our walks or information sessions or indeed one of our campaigns is in no small part to your contributions - and we thank you.

This impact report reflects on a number of highlights in the past year. I'd particularly like to highlight the protection of Bluetts Block as particularly special.



## Message from the President

The campaign to save this special patch was instigated by Jean Casburn and Alice Wells several years ago and involved sustained efforts through meetings, petitions, social media support and landcaring efforts to raise the profile of this block, and to advocate for its protection.

It often takes many years of advocacy to make a real difference to protect the places that we love, and Jean and Alice's work, together with many members of our environmental community, including ecologists and bird enthusiasts, has now resulted in Bluetts Block's inclusion into the ACT nature reserve system. This win for nature is an example of what can be achieved when we work together.

Protection of Bluetts Block is only the beginning, and the Conservation Council, with many other members of the community, community groups and stakeholders from all aspects of community and government, are directing efforts to protect the entire Western Edge from development. We look forward to the community's ongoing support.

We are certainly living in interesting times, and although the ACT and surrounds are a small part of a large country, we have a role to play in protecting what's in our patch, to living more sustainably and within our means, to make good choices when it comes to transport, and to continue to work with each other, in community, for better outcomes for nature.

We hope that our new strategic plan for the next 5 years will help to contribute to these better outcomes - it is achievable with your continued support.

With hope and gratitude,

**Steph Booker**  
**President**





## From the ED

The 2024/25 period was a big year for the Conservation Council ACT Region. At the end of the 2024 financial year The Conservation Council was facing significant challenges, specifically with increased costs having a major impact on our budget submission. This resulted in a contraction of the organisation in the latter half of 2024 as our costs were no longer sustainable.

We are pleased to report that this situation has now turned around, particularly following a successful end-of-financial-year campaign in 2025, and having received two bequests from respected members of our community. **We ended the 2024/25 financial year in a stronger position**, and are now beginning the process of bringing on more capacity to achieve positive outcomes for our community.

A lot has happened for our climate and environment as well. Over the year we had both an ACT and Federal election, which saw the return of two Labor Governments. **The Council played an important role in raising the environment and climate at both elections**, particularly through hosting highly-attended community forums. The council has also celebrated victory in the **protection of Bluetts Block and Coombs Peninsula**, and commiserated after a long and hard fight to stop the Northern Airport Road, which threatened the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon and ended in a loss.



This campaign was not in vain, however, as we raised the profile of this tiny lizard, and enabled more money going into habitat programs to increase numbers of this species. On the climate front, we successfully influenced the ACT Government to **commit to banning fossil fuel sponsorship in our schools** and are now working hard to ensure they maintain their ambition in the upcoming climate strategy.



## From the ED



We have also seen significant personnel movements. In July 2024 we said farewell to our Executive Director Elle Lawless and welcomed our new Director Simon Copland in August. We also said goodbye to long-term staff members Kirsten Duncan, Jahnavi Samprathi and Brooke Farr.

We've welcomed our new campaigner Aoibhinn Crimmins. Meanwhile, our Office Manager Grit Schuster has been a rock holding everyone together across this time. We also welcomed a new board, chaired by Stephanie Booker. We said farewell to long term board member and all around environmental champion, Rod Griffiths, who has moved interstate.

2025/26 is going to be even bigger. We have launched our campaigns to **save the Western Edge and push the government to keep its climate ambition**. We are also hiring a new Advocacy and Policy Officer, expanding our team and impact.

### **Simon Copland** **Executive Director**



# Goal 1 - Achieve positive environmental outcomes for the ACT and region



The Conservation Council has achieved big wins for our environment, climate and community in 2024/25. Some highlights include:

1. **Bluetts Block** was formally declared part of the Molonglo River Nature Reserve, following years of campaigning from the community.
2. The ACT Government announced its intention to incorporate the **Coombs Peninsula** as part of the Molonglo River Nature Reserve, with this expected to be formalised within the 2025/26 financial year.
3. We ran a high-profile campaign to protect **Canberra's Grassland Earless Dragon** and in particular to halt the construction of the Northern Airport Road.

While we were not successful in halting the construction of the road, we significantly raised the profile of the dragon and the need to protect its habitat. This contributed to the ACT Government announcing an additional \$4.5 million toward breeding and reintroduction programs.

4. A commitment from the ACT Government to establish an **urban boundary**, with consideration for protection of the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre forming a core part of this process.



# Goal 1 - Achieve positive environmental outcomes for the ACT and region



5. After grassroots advocacy, a commitment was gained from the ACT Government to **ban fossil fuel sponsorship** in ACT Schools.

6. The ACT Government began work on the new Nature Conservation Strategy and Nature Conservation Act.

Early drafts (which should be released to the public in the 2025/26 financial year) show the government has incorporated core ideas from the Council's and Friends of Grassland's proposal for a **Biodiversity Network**, which will significantly improve nature protection in the city.

7. Alongside community members in the area, we ran a campaign to **protect habitat trees** as part of the duplication of Drake Brockman Drive in Ginninderry.

While we were unable to protect all the trees, following engagement with developers we saw significant improvements to the road design and a reduction of environmental impact.



# Goal 2 - Speaking up for the environment in government and the community



## Submissions

The CCACT made 20 submissions on a range of topics and in collaboration with a range of member groups.

## Events

We held seven major events:

1. An **ACT Election Forum**, held online, with 60 attendees. Speakers at the event were current Minister for the Environment and Climate, Suzanne Orr; former Minister for the Environment and Climate, Rebecca Vassarotti; current Opposition Leader Leanne Castley; and candidate for the Independents for Canberra, Vanessa Picker.
2. A separate ACT Election Forum, held in conjunction with The Canberra Environment Centre, with a specific focus on **creating a Sustainability Hub for the ACT**. Speakers at the event included Greens MLAs Shane Rattenbury and Suzanne Orr, Labor MLA Suzanne Orr, Liberal MLA Peter Cain, amongst others.
3. The **ACT Environment Awards**, held at Capital Brewery, with 100 attendees. Awards were handed out by MLAs Taimus Werner-Gibbings, Shane Rattenbury, Peter Cain and Thomas Emerson.



## Goal 2 - Speaking up for the environment in government and the community



4. A fundraising **Art Auction**, held at Capital Brewery.
5. A Federal Election Forum held at Verity Lane, with 150 attendees. Speakers at the event were Labor MP Alicia Payne, Senator David Pocock, and Greens Candidate Isabel Mudford.
6. A highly-attended **webinar on nature law reform**, focusing on reforms both in the ACT and Federally.
7. A **rally to protect Canberra's Grassland Earless Dragon**, held in Garema Place following the Federal Election in May.

We also attended other community events, including having stalls at the Rising Tide Canberra Wave and Schools Climate Action Conference, having a presence at other rallies, and attending a Sustainability Hub Forum.



# Goal 2 - Speaking up for the environment in government and the community



## Media engagement and communication statistics

**64** media appearances, with various outlets, incl. ABC Radio and ABC Canberra, the Canberra Times, The Guardian, RiotACT, 2XX, Canberra daily/weekly etc.

FB likes	2.8k
FB follower increase	+49 followers
Instagram follower increase	+ 193 followers
Website hits	36,985
Blog posts	40
Newsletters/EDMs sent	113
Yellow Box - average recipients / average open rates	4771 / 21.14%
Members Memo - number of recipients / open rate (July to April)	137 / 65%



# Goal 2 - Speaking up for the environment in government and the community



## Working groups

The Conservation Council maintains four policy working groups.

We continued the work of the biodiversity and environmental justice working group, re-established the climate working group, and reinvigorated the transport working group.

These groups are highly active, with the following membership and meetings:

- **Biodiversity Working Group:** 32 members, 12 meetings
- **Climate Working Group:** 20 members, 7 meetings
- **Transport Working Group:** 14 members, 7 meetings
- **Environmental Justice Working Group:** 8 members, 6 meetings

## Member and community groups

At the end of 2024/25 we had a total of **48** member groups, with **42** of these having renewed their memberships and **6** new member groups joined.

Our team regularly engages with our member groups, alongside other community groups, both locally and nationally.

In total we had **60** meetings and other engagements with community groups across the year.



# Goal 2 - Speaking up for the environment in government and the community



## Government engagement and promotion

The Conservation Council regularly engages with the Government on issues relating to the environment, climate, waste and transport.

We sit on a range of other ACT Government and independent policy forums, including:

- The **ACT Government's Biodiversity Conservation Forum** (which we co-chair, alongside Landcare ACT and the Conservator for Flora and Fauna)
- The **Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee**
- **Environment and Planning Forum** (EPF)
- **Light Rail Community Reference Group**
- **Ginninderry Bush on the Boundary**

Over the year, we had **39 meetings and other engagements with Government agencies**, including meetings with the heads of ACT Directorates, the Executive Director of the National Capital Authority, and the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, amongst others.

We also had **24 meetings with ACT Ministers, MLAs and members of Federal Parliament**. We have a regular, quarterly, meeting with the ACT's Minister for Environment and Climate.



# Goal 3 - Maintaining a strong and resilient organisation



The Conservation Council ACT Region has made important steps to ensure we maintain a strong and resilient organisation.

## Fundraising

We had a very strong fundraising year. Highlights include:

- Launching our regular giving program, the **Gang-Gang Guardians**. We now have over 50 regular givers and are raising \$2,272 per month in regular donations (\$27,264).
- Brought in a total of \$142,557.96 in one-off donations.
- Hosted a successful **art auction**, bringing in \$9,555.
- Received two bequests, totalling approximately \$150,476.
- Received one sponsorship for our ACT Environment Awards, totalling \$5,000.
- Negotiated two grants with philanthropic organisations, auspicing the **Duty of Care** Campaign and running the **EPA Now!** Campaign.

## Board

We welcomed a new board in November 2024. This board included significant turnover from the previous board, including the election of a new President, Stephanie Booker. A major focus for the board has been in developing a **new Strategic Plan**, which is due to be finalised by the end of 2025.

## Staff

The CCACT's Executive Director (Elle Lawless) as well as the Fundraising (Brooke Farr) and Communications (Jahnvi Samprathi) Officers and Climate and Sustainability Campaigner (Kirsten Duncan) resigned or their contracts expired.

Simon Copland started as the Executive Director in August 2024 and Aoibhinn Crimmins joined us as a Campaigner in March 2025. The Office Manager (Grit Schuster) **extended their role to encompass community and member group engagement** with an increase of hours. We were also very happy to have Henry Adam work with us on a short-term contract on our EPA Now! Campaign in the lead up to the Federal Election.

# Goal 3 - Maintaining a strong and resilient organisation



## Volunteers

We'd like to give a huge thank you to all our staff for their dedication, compassion and commitment to Canberra's environment and to The Council.

We could not have achieved all we have done without our dedicated staff.

We have also seen a significant growth in our volunteer numbers in the past year. We now have **32 regular volunteers** and many more ad hoc volunteers.

Volunteers help with policy development, campaigns, events, graphic design, social media, writing/editing and office administration.

Thank you in particular to those who have stepped up to **convene our Biodiversity, Transport and Climate Working Groups**, this is a huge amount of work.

We could not survive as an organisation without our volunteers, and we thank you all for everything you do for our environment and climate.



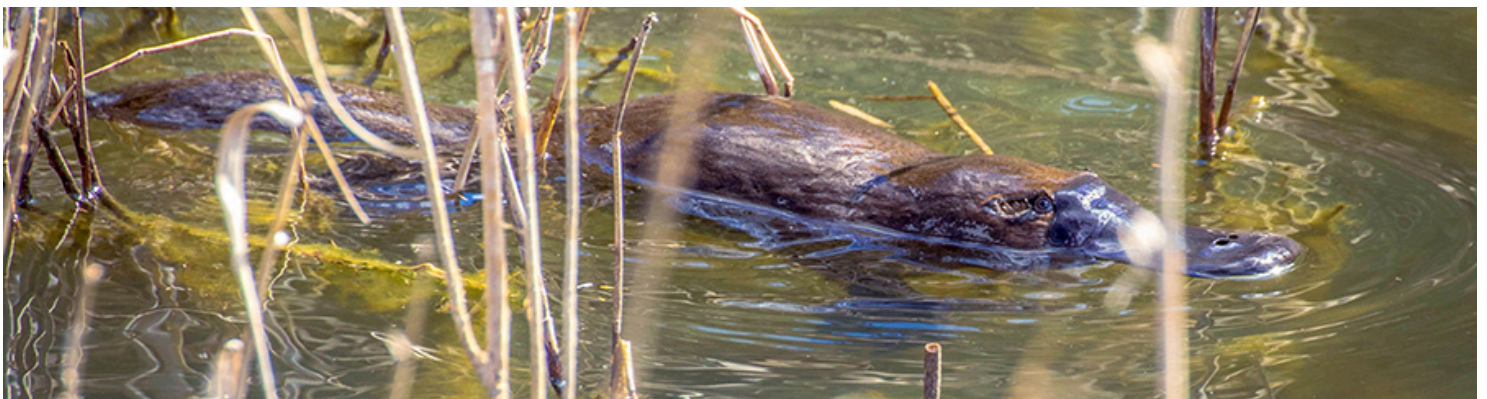
# CONSERVATION COUNCIL ACT REGION

*"This year has shown the true strength of our community – that even in challenging times, passion and perseverance can turn the tide. Together, we've protected precious habitats, amplified the voice of nature in our elections, and called on governments to take action for our climate.*

*These wins remind us that real change is possible when people stand united. With renewed energy, growing support and a stronger organisation, we have the power to achieve a healthy and sustainable environment, a safe climate, and a just society.*

*Thank you to our members, our staff and our many supporters throughout the community for everything you have done to stand up for nature and the climate"*

**Stephanie Booker, President, Conservation Council**



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We acknowledge the Ngunnawal (Ngunawal), Ngambri and Ngarigo Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, extending respect to all other First Nations people with connection to this region. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and we benefit from stolen Country. We recognise the deep and continuing connection that First Nations Peoples have with land, sea, culture and community. We are striving to stand in allyship with First Nations communities for self-determination and environmental justice.