



ACT and Region Catchment Strategy

## Catchment Action Implementation Plan: 2016–21





Australian Government  
National Capital Authority



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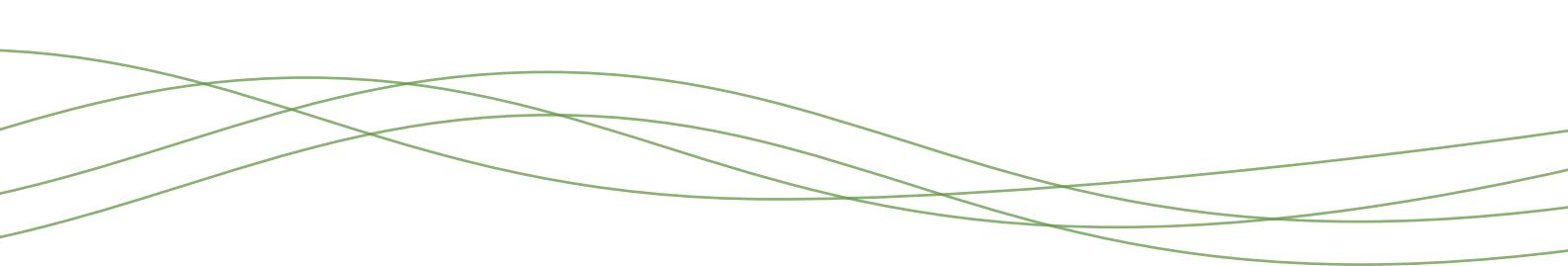
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*Big Badja River*





# 1. Introduction

The Catchment Action Implementation Plan 2016–2021 for the ACT and Region Catchment Strategy (Catchment Strategy) comprises the proposed actions to progress achievement of each of the five thematic goals.

The Catchment Action Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) has been released in conjunction with the Catchment Strategy. It is centred on adaptive management and implementation.

The Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) highlights:

- the actions, including activities' summaries
- who is involved
- resourcing status
- timeframes.

## 1.1 Vision

*Government, community and industry working together to produce a healthy, productive, resilient and liveable catchment region.*

## 1.2 Catchment themes, and actions

The draft Catchment Strategy contains five major themes and 19 actions and proposed activities. Details are provided at the end of this Implementation Plan.

### • **Governance, policy and planning — theme**

The governance, policies and planning theme aims to put into place the framework and processes to ensure all actions and activities are implemented more efficiently and effectively. The actions are targeted at developing collaborative relationships, sharing information and knowledge and aligning relevant legislation, policies and plan.

### • **Communities — theme**

The communities theme acknowledges the outstanding contribution played by catchment groups and volunteer programs in protecting our natural resources. The actions seek to harness a growing volunteer base, motivate people to become active in catchment management and increase the community's capacity to adapt and make informed catchment management decisions.

### • **Regional development — theme**

The regional development theme recognises that the catchment is a growth area and aims to support the prosperity of the region. Actions focus on developing sound catchment management planning principles to underpin sustainable patterns of settlements and provide the technical expertise to support sustainable growth.

### • **Water — theme**

The water theme focuses on the key issues of securing water supply at a regional level, maintaining water quality that is fit for the region's needs, and improving ecosystem health. It also focuses on increasing our knowledge about managing groundwater resources and understanding of Indigenous water values and uses, and incorporating these in water resource planning.

### • **Land and biodiversity — theme**

Stable, well-managed vegetation is key to sustainable management of catchments. The land and biodiversity theme involves an integrated and collaborative approach to deal with the degradation of the environment through human impacts and climate change. It focuses on improving landscape connectivity and coordinating responses to biosecurity risks. Identified actions include treating soil erosion at priority sites, contaminated land and contaminated waste.

## 1.3 How will the Catchment Strategy be rolled out?

The Implementation Plan provides a road map of the key actions required to establish the functions of the Coordination Group and lay the foundations for the achievement of the goals of the Catchment Strategy.

The timing to implement each action will depend on agreed priorities and availability of resources. The Coordination Group will focus efforts to secure resources for actions and activities that demonstrate cost effectiveness in terms of responding to catchment management priorities and achieving the greatest positive impacts.

## 1.4 Resourcing

Resourcing is fundamental to implementation. In this regard, the status of each action has been categorised as:

- **Resourced:** current resources are available but may need to be re-aligned.
- **Partly resourced:** relevant programs and actions and activities are already funded by a number of organisations, however, a more coordinated regional approach provides opportunity for achieving better outcomes. Additional resources may be required for full implementation of some actions and activities.
- **Un-resourced:** new resources are required and are subject to funding bids.

Action 2 in the draft Catchment Strategy will 'establish an inter-jurisdictional investment and resourcing framework' that will fund the core operations of the Coordination Group and design the cost-sharing arrangements for major projects on a case-by-case basis. Refer to Section 6. Funding Streams for further information.

Options for funding actions that are currently unfunded will be investigated through a range of potential funding streams (see Table 2).



Agricultural land in Cooma

## 1.5 Who is involved?

Partnerships and accountability underpin the Implementation Plan.

The Implementation Plan identifies possible roles and responsibilities for each action. Many actions will be carried out by task-specific inter-jurisdictional working groups, which will be set up to map operational plans for the actions.

The Environment and Planning Directorate (EPD) provides secretariat functions to the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group. As such, EPD will have a coordination role in establishing working groups. Lead agencies will be identified as the actions are scoped further and become operational.

Where specific projects are to be developed in relation to an action, the Coordination Group will agree on the lead agency.

Working groups will consist of officers from the various organisations that sit on the Coordination Group plus external expertise as required.

The implementation of actions will involve collaboration with community and peak bodies and will require proactive stakeholder engagement. Some actions and activities will also require specialist involvement of specific agencies within the Commonwealth, NSW and ACT governments that currently do not sit on the Coordination Group or, alternatively, involve external expert resources.

This may include engagement with the Australian Government Department of the Environment, NSW Department of Planning and Environment and NSW Department of Primary Industries and recognised research and educational institutions.

The ACT and Region is home to a number of major research institutions that could be involved in contributing to the implementation of the strategy and embedding quality science in the actions and proposed activities.

Engagement and consultation will be determined when scoping out each action and its related activities.

## 1.6 Criteria for determining timelines and priority for implementation

Table 1, which provides the criteria for determining timelines and priority for implementation, is referred to as the ‘timeframe to commence’. The ‘timeframe to commence’ specifies when the action is planned to start. However, it does not mean actions cannot start prior to this date. The criteria in this table were informed by the consultation for drafting of the strategy and consideration of how it fits into the framework of adaptive management and implementation.

Determining timelines and priority for implementation also looks at the value to the Coordination Group and/or its members’ organisations of carrying out these actions.



Canoeing down the Murrumbidgee River



Scrivener Dam



Vanity's Crossing on the Cotter River



*Murrumbidgee River at Tharwa*

**Table 1: Criteria for determining timelines and priority for implementation**

Timeframe	Criteria
<b>Short term to commence by 2016–17</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared high importance to the Coordination Group's members and their organisations' jurisdictions.</li> <li>Will have high positive impact on the catchment or ecosystem function.</li> <li>Capacity to change is high.</li> <li>Technologies, theories and concepts are available.</li> <li>High level of consensus on the carrying out of the action amongst stakeholders.</li> <li>Low level of negotiation required on strategy concepts with key stakeholders.</li> <li>Priority actions requiring immediate consideration in the short term to lay a strong foundation for the life of the Catchment Strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Medium term to commence by 2018 to 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some level of capacity to change is necessary with minor policy changes or resourcing required.</li> <li>Technologies, theories and concepts mostly exist with minor adaption.</li> <li>Minor levels of negotiation required with the action having high importance to the Coordination Group and medium importance to individual member organisations.</li> <li>High priority but will require more than the first two years to plan and implement.</li> <li>Actions may or may not be important to some or all Coordination Group members, key stakeholders and the wider community. Negotiation will be required and organisations may choose to act unilaterally on these issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Longer term to commence post 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity to change will require significant resourcing and/or policy development.</li> <li>Technologies, theories and concepts require a reasonable level of development.</li> <li>Reasonably high levels of negotiation required to provide optimal outcomes to those involved, may be of high importance to individual member organisations and medium importance to the Coordination Group.</li> <li>Some individual member organisations may see certain issues as major issues for their organisations but collectively the Coordination Group may see this as a medium issue that still needs to be addressed and implemented.</li> </ul>

## 2. Adaptive management and implementation

Adaptive management and implementation is the process to plan, implement, evaluate and learn, record and adjust. This process acknowledges that the climate and environment are always changing. It sees policy and project execution being improved by continual prioritisation of actions.

It adapts to unfolding events and decisions and reflects changing community attitudes and values. Review of priorities also allows for active participation by key stakeholders to continually adapt the Implementation Plan. Table 1 explains some of the criteria that will influence adaptive management and the considerations that have been taken into account in determining commencement dates for certain actions.

The criteria allows for change over time meaning actions will move up and down the priority list allowing us to adapt and adjust actions in a changing environment.

The Coordination Group has identified three major factors that will influence the catchment in the coming years. The release of the Catchment Strategy and Implementation Plan showcases a willingness to implement the identified priority actions to achieve the goals and vision of the Catchment Strategy. The adaptive management and implementation approach allows us to evaluate and learn. This will be done through a formal monitoring, evaluation and review process.

Recording the Catchment Strategy's success, lessons learnt and the effectiveness of actions and activities will involve reporting findings and recommendations of evaluation. It is important to record this information to allow for effective transfer of knowledge and information. Adjusting actions and activities will be required over the lifetime of the strategy to enhance the effectiveness.



### 3. Funding and resourcing streams

Resourcing is fundamental to carrying out the actions. The Implementation Plan identifies actions as resourced, partly resourced or unresourced. An inter-jurisdictional investment and resourcing framework will be immediately established and continually adjusted as new funding becomes available.

A number of funding streams and environmental trust programs are available in the ACT and Region including, but not limited to, those listed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Examples of current funding streams and environmental programs**

Commonwealth	ACT	New South Wales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Cleaner Environment</li><li>• Emissions Reduction Fund</li><li>• Green Army</li><li>• National Environmental Science Programme</li><li>• National Landcare Programme</li><li>• On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program</li><li>• Restoring the Balance in the Murray–Darling Basin</li><li>• Solar Towns</li><li>• Australian Biological Resources Study</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ACT Environment Grants</li><li>• ACT Basin Priority Project (joint funding agreement between the Commonwealth and ACT governments)</li><li>• Actsmart</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NSW Environmental Trust</li><li>• NSW Climate Change Fund</li><li>• The Aboriginal Land Clean Up and Prevention Program</li><li>• The Combating Illegal Dumping: Clean Up and Prevention Program</li><li>• The Householders' Asbestos Disposal Scheme</li><li>• NSW local council grants (various) such as community small grants.</li></ul>

Note: The information above was correct at the time of publication and there may be other funding sources not listed.

Accessing grant programs from a regional approach to support the actions will be strategically advantageous as it will demonstrate value for money with a favourable cost-to-benefit ratio as it is applied across the region. Working collaboratively across borders will influence and connect related planning and environmental programs



## 4. Themes and actions

### Governance, Policy and Planning

**GOAL:** Governance decisions take into account the values of stakeholders, the evidence base, and the benefits of cross-jurisdictional collaboration, and are undertaken for the collective, long-term good of the catchment and its residents.

Actions	Who is involved?	Resources	Timing
<b>BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS</b>			
<b>Action 1: Build an inter-jurisdictional decision making framework related to catchment policy and planning</b>  This will be achieved by a collaborative decision making framework for decisions to be made at the appropriate level (including community).	Coordination Group	Resourced	Short term
<b>Action 2: Establish an inter-jurisdictional investment and resourcing framework</b>  This will be achieved by developing a strategy for permanent resourcing for the Coordination Group and its core activities, including investment in regional catchment management and agreed cost sharing principles.	Coordination Group	Resourced	Short term



Queanbeyan River



Scottdale farm along the Murrumbidgee River

Actions	Who is involved?	Resources	Timing
<b>INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT</b>			
<b>Action 3: Promote evidence based decision making for improved healthy catchments</b>  This will be achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a knowledge management strategy to facilitate ready access to current information and future data acquisition</li> <li>• implementing a cross jurisdictional catchment monitoring program</li> <li>• establishing an advisory group (or a partnership with research organisations) to support access to, and build capacity for, ideas and innovation.</li> </ul>	Working group involving the key inter-jurisdictional research agencies and external expertise as required.	Un-resourced	Longer term
<b>Action 4: Continue to inform a catchment wide assessment of vulnerability to climate change</b>  This will be achieved by conducting a gap analysis of existing work carried out by governments and utilities on their vulnerability assessments to climate change and recommend further work as required.	Working Group including EPD, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Icon, Emergency Services Agency (ACT) and external expertise as required.	Un-resourced	Short term
<b>POLICY, LEGISLATION AND PLANS</b>			
<b>Action 5: Review and align catchment management legislation, regulations and policies to improve consistency</b>  This will be achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• undertaking an audit of relevant legislation, policy and plans and prioritise a review and alignment program to identify conflicts or inconsistencies</li> <li>• developing agreed catchment targets and/or key performance indicators on catchment health indicators or activities.</li> </ul>	Inter-jurisdictional working group to work together to develop the package.	Un-resourced	Short term
<b>Action 6: Align enforcement between NSW and the ACT on catchment management practices</b>  This will be achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coordination of compliance and enforcement programs and resources</li> <li>• regularly updating compliance guidelines and standards to adapt to a regional approach.</li> </ul>	Access Canberra (Environment Protection Authority), NSW Environment Protection Authority, and ACT Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) in conjunction with the local councils would work together to provide advice on this project.	Resourced	Short term

## Communities

**GOAL:** The community values and remains strongly connected to the catchment, and has the capacity to quickly adapt to environmental, economic and policy changes.

Actions	Who is involved?	Resources	Timing
<b>ADAPTABILITY</b>			
<b>Action 7: Strategically support the role and work undertaken by peak stakeholder groups, volunteers and land owners and managers</b>	Coordination Group in consultation with community and industry representatives.	Partly resourced	Short to medium term
<p>This will be achieved by activities such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing stakeholder leadership skills in catchment management</li> <li>• resourcing and co-investing in catchment management volunteering organisations and regional forums and groups</li> <li>• continuing to work with and support community groups and peak bodies to develop industry specific best practice catchment management principles.</li> </ul>			
<b>Action 8: Develop an integrated catchment emergency response plan</b>	Emergency Services Agency (ACT) and NSW equivalent, Conservation Planning and Research (EPD) with advice from the local councils, TAMS, EPD and community organisations and stakeholders.	Partly resourced	Longer term
<b>EDUCATION AND PROMOTION</b>			
<b>Action 9: Build community understanding about catchment health to promote behaviour change through a broad range of communication and education strategies</b>	Coordination Group with specialised input from local government; South East Local Land Services (LLS); EPD, Icon Water; TAMS and Health.	Partly resourced	Short term
<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• urban and peri-urban catchment wide advisory programs and campaigns focused on education</li> <li>• raising awareness among recreational users of sensitive use of the region's waterways and water supply catchments.</li> </ul>			

## Regional development

**GOAL:** Human settlement and regional development across the ACT and region is resilient and sustainable.

Actions	Who is involved	Resources	Timing
<b>SETTLEMENT PATTERNS</b>			
<b>Action 10: Provide an integrated catchment management planning approach for growth and settlement patterns in the ACT and Region</b>  This will be achieved by activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• developing agreed cross border catchment planning principles to be incorporated into detailed planning documents such as development control plans and development codes</li><li>• supporting continued cooperation for a cross jurisdictional approach to management of waste and recycling.</li></ul>	<p>Inter-jurisdictional working group consisting of EPD, local government and NSW Department of Planning and Environment to develop the package.</p> <p>Note: In the case of waste management the Coordination Group acknowledges the work by CBR Region Joint Organisation, which is leading this initiative and with NSW and ACT EPAs.</p>	Partly resourced	Medium to longer term
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION AND RENEWAL</b>			
<b>Action 11: Develop regional capacity to implement and manage sustainable water infrastructure</b>  This will be achieved by activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• endorsing the adoption of living (green) infrastructure across the region</li><li>• investigating the adequacy of water and sewerage infrastructure in Cooma, Queanbeyan, Palerang and Yass and identifying coordinated renewal and replacement options</li><li>• trialing Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) projects across the region</li><li>• assisting developers, designers and builders (through guidelines, partnered projects and incentives) to implement design solutions that support the WSUD principles</li><li>• developing regional technical capacity for innovative WSUD outcomes.</li></ul>	Coordination Group drawing on specific expertise from EPD, local governments, TAMS, Icon Water and developers.	Partly resourced	Medium to longer term

## Water

**GOAL:** Water is managed in a total water cycle management regime

Actions	Who is involved?	Resources	Timing
<b>WATER USE</b>			
<b>Action 12: Secure long term water supplies for the ACT and Region</b>	<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarifying the requirements, available volumes and quality of all water supplies available in the region and define the optimal level of water use</li> <li>developing water trading as an economic tool to increase flexibility, reliability and security</li> <li>improve knowledge of the potential impact of climate variability and extreme events to water volume and quality across the region.</li> </ul>	<p>Clarifying available volumes and the quality of water for regional security will draw on the expertise of local governments and Icon Water and be supported by the relevant policy agencies.</p> <p>Water trading will largely be driven by EPD and NSW Water in consultation with the Murray–Darling Basin Authority.</p>	Partly resourced Medium term
<b>WATER QUALITY AND AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM</b>			
<b>Action 13: Improve water quality, protect and restore aquatic ecosystem health and reduce nutrient, sediment and pathogen loads at key sites across the catchment</b>	<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing our understanding of the source, activities and threatening processes generating nutrient pollutant loads</li> <li>developing and implementing a benchmarking</li> <li>identifying high priority aquatic ecosystems for management interventions including environmental flows and aquatic pest management</li> <li>developing a framework for priority waterways that identified the respective remediation requirements.</li> </ul>	Coordination Group drawing on the experiences of the ACT Basin Priority Project, and previous studies such as Actions for Clean Water (ACWA Plan).	Partly resourced Longer term
<b>INDIGENOUS AND CULTURAL WATERS</b>			
<b>Action 14: Ensure Indigenous and other values are recognised</b>	<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying high priority aquatic ecosystems for management interventions including environmental flows and aquatic pest management</li> <li>embracing the recognition of Indigenous and other cultural values in water planning and use.</li> </ul>	NSW Department of Primary Industry Water and EPD Water Policy in conjunction with community groups, South East Local Land Services, ACT Government, Icon Water, National Capital Authority and Indigenous representatives.	Partly resourced Medium term
<b>GROUNDWATER</b>			
<b>Action 15: Develop a better understanding of groundwater resources (quantity and quality) within the region</b>	<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understanding the impact of current and projected extraction rates on groundwater sustainability</li> <li>encouraging aquifer and groundwater recharge where appropriate.</li> </ul>	NSW Department of Primary Industry Water and EPD in conjunction with local governments, relevant research institutions and NSW and ACT EPAs.	Un-resourced Short to medium term

## Land and biodiversity

**GOAL:** The ACT and Region is a healthy ecological system that is resilient to stress and adaptive to change.

Actions	Who is involved?	Resources	Timing
<b>BIOSECURITY</b>			
<b>Action 16: Implement an approach to biosecurity planning and risk management</b>	EPD and South East LLS in consultation to those involved in Action 8.	Resourced	Short term
<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aligning the ACT Biosecurity Strategy with current NSW planning and regulatory processes focusing on plant health, animal health and environment and social values</li> <li>• incorporating biosecurity management into proposed community education programs</li> </ul>			
<b>BIODIVERSITY</b>			
<b>Action 17: Develop a regional approach to strategic land and biodiversity management practices</b>	Coordination Group with specific input from EPD, TAMS and the local councils, South East LLS, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and NSW Department of Planning and community and Indigenous groups.	Partly resourced	Medium to longer term
<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing a regional approach to land and biodiversity management practices such as revegetation and conservation programs to enhance landscape connectivity</li> <li>• collaboratively identify, protect and strengthen potential climate wildlife refuges (biodiversity refugia) across the landscape of the region</li> <li>• identifying mechanisms and sites for inter-jurisdictional biodiversity offsets and natural conservation areas</li> <li>• building Indigenous engagement in biodiversity management.</li> </ul>			
<b>SOIL HEALTH</b>			
<b>Action 18: Mitigate soil erosion at priority sites</b>	Coordination Group led by South East LLS and in consultation with NSW Environment and Heritage and EPD.	Un-resourced	Longer term
<p>This will be achieved by activities such as identifying and prioritising significant erosion hotspots across the catchment and developing implementation responses as appropriate.</p>			
<b>Action 19: Consider regional approaches to dealing with contaminated land and illegal dumping of contaminated waste</b>	The ACT and NSW EPAs and EPD are responsible for this action. EPD as the secretariat to the Coordination Group will assist in facilitation.	Un-resourced	Longer term
<p>This will be achieved by activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing our understanding of the full range of contaminated sites across the catchment and adopting a regional approach to remediation</li> <li>• coordinating resources to deal with illegal dumping of contaminated waste.</li> </ul>			

