



16th February 2011

Senior Manager
Natural Environment and Resource Management
Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

RE: Ginninderra Catchment Group (GCG) submission regarding the review of the Nature Conservation Act 1980 (the Act).

To the Manager,

Thank you for inviting the Ginninderra Catchment Group Inc. (GCG) to comment on the review of the Nature Conservation Act 1980. The Ginninderra Catchment Group works with relevant stakeholders to ensure more systematic, catchment focused outcomes from the activities of volunteer groups including Landcare and Parkcare groups. The GCG has a charter under ACT legislation to advocate for the health of Ginninderra Creek hydrological catchment and to work with stakeholders and the broader catchment community throughout our region to improve water quality. GCG Comments on the review are as follows:

- The Act should shift from single species conservation focus to adopt a whole of landscape approach to protection of the environment. This includes expanding the Act to include special purpose reserves and water supply protection areas, and including a provision to protect endangered ecological communities as well as single species.
- There is going to be greater pressure applied to reserves due to increasing development within the ACT, so better management of such areas, including the development and implementation of management plans, needs to be achieved. Better management of reserved areas could also be achieved through greater enforcement options available to rangers and increased resources to such areas funded through new residential developments. Local environmental groups or organisations should be consulted when developing management plans, as often there are existing Landcare or Parkcare groups working within reserves with excellent knowledge of the local environment.
- The Act needs to ensure that any offsetting policy ensures no loss of biodiversity at a catchment level. Offsets must be considered on a case by case basis, recognising that each development proposal may impact on different species. It may be useful for an offsetting fund to be established to allow the purchase of properties to be managed for conservation. Any offset must also include a provision for that area to be actively managed in perpetuity.
- GCG supports the better integration of Commonwealth and ACT nature conservation law including the ability of the conservator to certify strategic planning exercises as fulfilling Nature Conservation Act license requirements. Strategic assessments may provide for a broader, landscape approach to conservation, and should be undertaken to ensure future development is balanced with the conservation needs of the ACT.

- The existing Act does not have sufficient powers to deal with encroachment onto reserve land. Amendments should include the powers to issue written warnings and Penalty Infringement Notices (PIN's). The conservator should be able to issue orders for restoration works on reserved land and to cover the cost of reserve staff involvement in assessing the activity.
- The Act should address how to determine appropriate uses for reserve lands, and should have the power and resources to regulate the types of activities occurring on such lands. Local environmental groups and organisations should be consulted on management, as they often have the best local knowledge of reserves.
- With regards to removal of fallen timber on reserves, the Act should include a provision to issue an infringement notice for this activity, provided that adequate education and signage for this offence is supplied.

Overall the Act should provide for better management of reserves, approaching this task at a landscape level, and to ensure that not only individual species, but ecosystems are protected. Landcare and Parkcare groups play a vital role in managing reserve areas, and their skills and knowledge should be recognised by consulting with them or their representatives such as Catchment Groups when developing management plans for reserve areas.

I hope that you consider these comments carefully when undertaking your review.

Yours truly



for Lyn Jenkins
Convenor
Ginninderra Catchment Group