

**COMMUNITY FORUM FOR THE NATURE CONSERVATION ACT REVIEW**  
**1 FEBRUARY 2011 – 6pm – 7.30pm**  
**CANBERRA BUSINESS EVENT CENTRE, REGATTA POINT**

**Participants**

Ian Baird	Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy & Water
Kelly Behrens	Ginninderra Catchment Group
Rosemary Blemmings	
Roslyn Brown	ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
Lisa Chaston	
David Dall	Australian Pest Animal Strategy
Jo Donavon	
Marie Donavon	
Lynne Duckham	
Anne Duncan	
Chris Emery	National Parks Association of Australia ACT
Kathy Eyles	
Em. Prof. Ian R Falconer, AO	Conservation Council ACT Region
Sabine Friedrich	National Parks Association of Australia ACT
Damien Haas	Belconnen Community Council
John Hibberd	Conservation Council ACT Region
Clive Hurlstone	National Parks Association of Australia ACT
Lyn Jenkins	Ginninderra Catchment Group
Martin Lind	SACTCG
Kevin McCue	NPA ACT, NPAC, FoAB, GBRG
Alison McInnes	Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy & Water
Jonathan Miller	Chief Ministers Dept
Peter Ormay	
Ray Polglaze	
Alison Russell-French	Birds Australia
Michael Shanahan	ACT Rural Landholders Association
Sarah Sharp	Conservation Council ACT Region
Agnes Shea	UNEC Ngunnawal
Annette Shea	Ngunnawal
Dr David Shorthouse	
Hamish Sinclair	ACT Rural Landholders Association
Jane Spence	Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy & Water
Tegan Tankey	
Charles Thomas	Belconnen Community Council
Kathy Tracy	Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy & Water
Bindi Vanzella	Greening Australia Capital Region
Dustin Wellbourne	Canberra Reptile Sanctuary
Naomi Wynd	SEE-Change
Andrew Zelnik	

**Facilitator**

Mark Butz	Futures by Design
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## BACKGROUND

The forum was staged to engage the community in the review of the Nature Conservation Act and on related biodiversity and biodiversity issues in the ACT.

A discussion paper was released in December 2010, with submissions due to close on 18 February.

The forum included a panel of key representatives from organisations that had provided, or were expected to provide, submissions.

## SUMMARY OF PROCESS

Welcome address	David Papps, Dept of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy & Water
Acknowledgment of Country	Mark Butz, Futures by Design (facilitator)
Introduction and Outline of Process	Mark Butz, Futures by Design (facilitator)
Introductions	Participants introduced themselves to those on their table
Presentations followed by clarification questions	John Hibberd, Conservation Council ACT Region Dr David Shorthouse Dustin Wellbourne, Canberra Reptile Sanctuary Hamish Sinclair, ACT Rural Landholders Association
Panel discussion	Speakers responding to participant comments and questions
Table group work and personal reflection	Participants invited to discuss issues of concern and to record these as desired on small sheets of paper on tables for personal use, larger sheets (categorised) at side of room, or flipchart sheets at front of room
Closing statements – next steps	Kathy Tracy, Dept of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy & Water Included
Evaluation & Close	Mark Butz, Futures by Design (facilitator)

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## SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

### Harvested from Presentations and Discussion

- Needs objectives – connectivity + regional perspective + research (evidence based management) + resilient landscape
- Need to recognise roles of Indigenous people and Parkcare groups in Nature Conservation Council
- Need to remedy previous separation of scientific advice from policy in the agency
- Clear role for Commissioner for Sustainability & Environment
- Consider one document – Nature Conservation Strategy integration with Bush Capital legacy
- Needs to address the region and be ecosystem specific rather than focus on individual species
- Needs to address market-based systems
- Needs to recognise that the public are not clued into biodiversity
- Biocertification – better than NSW
- (Rural landholders) Understand that covenants over tenure ‘keep greed off’ but do restrict use
- Need to seek sustainable mix of use, with the rural community part of the future (a critical rural mass).
- Use of rural land areas as land bank leads to decline. Landholders invest more in care of land than Government does.

- Need increasing engagement between rural and city people for rural landholders to be valued
- Indigenous participation is core to managing biodiversity
- The Conservator as a public servant has to follow the Government line placing development before sustainability and tourism before conservation
- The Commissioner for Sustainability & Environment has no power but lots of influence and is reasonably independent; the nature conservation agency should be required to respond to the Commissioner e.g. in audits
- The Act is not implemented, sometimes for legal reasons, also Rangers have inadequate powers
- Concern that Government does not really buy in – needs to stop wasting community energy doing what Government ought to be doing
- Namadgi Indigenous Advisory Committee – just do it!
- Indigenous participation is core to managing biodiversity
- Commonwealth is a major land manager through Defence, NCA etc – operates under different rules for grants and in establishing reserves
- Connectivity with the adjacent region is a key issue for the Act
- Population growth is ‘the elephant in the room’; need to target the drivers
- ACT budget dependence on land development works against conservation
- Strategic environmental assessment - need to learn lessons from the Commonwealth experience
- Government has a lot of priorities – job is getting bigger and can outstrip budget. In future, need to increase access to other sources e.g. philanthropy/business
- Mismatch between statutory/political & what happens on the ground – practical, making it happen

### **Written notes from Participants**

- Need to look at the region and not just the ACT
- Should be a statement of objectives for the nature Conservation Act 1980 and an annual report on how objectives are being met
- Need for less diverse coverage across departments of conservation issues
- Need for an independent board for covering conservation issues
- Role of the Conservator and Conservation Officers:
  - Much of the Act covers biodiversity protection – for example, trapping native species.
  - At present the legal position for enforcement of the Act is totally ineffective.
  - The new Act needs clear mechanisms for enforcement of the provisions by the Conservator (Ian Falconer Friends of the Aranda Bushland)
- Community engagement – in particular Indigenous – needs to be thought through very carefully and addressed in the Act (must be included in the objectives)
- Consider setting up an independent Parks & Conservation Board with a CEO to increase community engagement, increase transparency & accountability
- Restore Namadgi Advisory [Committee]
- Ensure what [is] in the Act [is] carried out
- Permaculture
- Co-management
- Increase Indigenous involvement and employment  
[Roslyn Brown, Ngunnawal]  
[I also support Roslyn Brown in these issues – Agnes Shea OAM Senior Ngunnawal Elder]

- The revised Nature Conservation Act needs to recognise
  - Objectives
  - Ecosystem connectivity
  - Connectivity
  - Conservation & off-reserve conservation
  - Ecologically sustainable development
  - A stable long-term agency to implement the NCA

**Land management**

- Efficient updating of management plans
- Cat control – trap free – roaming cats
- Weeds on roadsides – wash down slashers between weedy and native areas
- Retain powers of the Conservator
- Annual report on the environment

**SUMMARY OF EVALUATION SHEETS**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Encouraged & used inputs from everyone			18%	46%	36%
Dealt with the issues that matter most			70%	20%	10%
A worthwhile use of my time			50%	50%	
Encouraged engagement here & beyond			46%	27%	27%

Mark Butz  
 Principal  
*Futures by Design*  
 21 February 2011