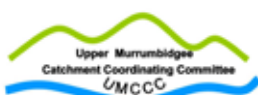


ACT and Region Catchment Management
Coordination Group **Annual Report**
2018–19





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Chair's Foreword

This report is my fourth and final report as Chair of the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group. I have spent three productive and rewarding years in the role during my initial appointment and, at the request of the ACT Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Mick Gentleman, a further year spent facilitating the ongoing work of the Coordination Group and furthering the appointment of a new Independent Chair. I now welcome new leadership into this important role, moving forward.

The Coordination Group was established in August 2015 as a statutory body by amendment of the [ACT Water Resources Act 2007](#) with a legislated charter and membership. My appointment as Independent Chair followed in October 2015, reporting to (then) Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Simon Corbell.

The initiative for the development of the Coordination Group was carried by the (then) Director General of the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate, Dr. Dorte Ekelund, who acted as interim Chair and set up a structure to commence community consultation and strategic planning. Her enthusiasm and support for the activities of the Coordination Group are much appreciated.

Over four years, the Coordination Group has published key water management documents including: the ACT and Region Catchment Strategy 2016–46, a Strategy in Brief document, the Catchment Action Implementation Plan 2016–21 and a series of ongoing action plans. These documents were reviewed and reported on at quarterly meetings of the Coordination Group.

During the last financial year 2018–19, the Coordination Group met four times and the outcomes were personally reported back to Minister Gentleman on two occasions. A further meeting in September 2019 is planned, when the draft Annual Report will be discussed.

There was a vast range of key topics addressed by the Coordination Group, including a number of regional issues, such as options for potable water supply from Yass to Bungendore, looking into a regional waste strategy, reviewing population settlement plans of the Yass Valley Council and providing input into the NSW South East Local Land Services 'Action Plan for Clean Water'.

Other notable projects the Coordination Group addressed included the Murrumbidgee monitoring data acquisition and recording project; water resource planning and water trading; recovery programs for post-disaster action and, together with ACT Natural Resource Management, looking into ways we can incorporate Aboriginal perspectives on water management and biodiversity enhancement in the region.

The Coordination Group has agreed on a shared funding model based on individual business cases, which can also facilitate bilateral and multilateral shared funding for specific projects. For the current year, the Coordination Group agreed to support the H₂O_K Keeping our Waterways Healthy Program, better known as 'Only Rain Down the Stormwater Drain'. This funding will also support further water saving urban design initiatives, the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Network biennial forums, leadership support grants for community, Landcare and regional catchment groups and the ACT's three local catchment groups.

The catchment issues that have involved much discussion and reached some resolution have been the ongoing funding for management of the Lower Cotter Catchment for Canberra and Queanbeyan's drinking water supply- managed by ACT Parks and Conservation Service- and funding for the community catchment groups, provided through the ACT Government Directorates.

Priority issues for future discussion by the Coordination Group include the impacts of Snowy Hydro 2.0, with its significant engineering works in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment; the impacts of population increase in Canberra and environs; the impacts of local warming on the natural environment, especially the predicted increased frequency of floods and fires; promoting decision-making for catchment management based on consolidated monitoring data from the agencies and Waterwatch and Frogwatch community monitoring and progressing regional collaboration on water strategies, management and trading. At an immediate local level the discharge guideline values for the new Queanbeyan wastewater treatment plant have to be defined, as the discharge from the plant flows into Lake Burley Griffin, which is intermittently closed for bathing at the present time due to bacterial or blue-green algal contamination. Both these undesirable effects can be adversely affected by discharge quality.

Ongoing linkages between NSW and the ACT, through the Coordination Group are enhanced by the intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding which is currently being updated and provides strong support for collaboration and mutual benefit. As both Canberra and the region develop and the population rises, the issues of catchment management, land use and water resources will require continuing attention and the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group will have a significant and beneficial role to play.

Emeritus Professor Ian Falconer
Independent Chair
ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group



1. Background

This report outlines the activities of the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group (the Coordination Group) from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 and fulfils the Coordination Group's obligations as per the Water Resources (Catchment Management Coordination Group) Amendment Bill 2015 Part 2 S. 67D:

1.1 67D Annual report by coordination group

1. For each financial year, the Coordination Group must prepare a report about the group's activities during the financial year, including any advice given, or recommendations made, to the Minister
2. The group must give the report to the Minister within three months after the end of the financial year.
3. The Minister must, within 21 days after receiving the report, table the following in the Legislative Assembly:
 - a. the report;
 - b. a statement by the Minister responding to any advice given or recommendations made to the Minister in the group's annual report.
4. However, if there are no sitting days during the 21-day period—
 - a. the Minister must give the report and the statement, and a copy of each for each member of the Legislative Assembly, to the Speaker; and
 - b. the report and the statement are taken for all purposes to have been tabled in the Legislative Assembly on the day the Minister gives it to the Speaker (the report day); and
 - c. the Speaker must arrange for a copy of the report and a copy of the statement to be given to each member of the Legislative Assembly on the report day; and
 - d. despite paragraph b, the Speaker must present the report and the statement to the Legislative Assembly on the next sitting day.

The establishment of an interjurisdictional coordination body to strengthen governance and catchment management in the ACT and surrounding regions was approved by the ACT Government in October 2014. The Coordination Group was established on an interim basis on 25 February 2015. The ACT Legislative Assembly passed the [Water Resources \(Catchment Management\) Amendment Act 2015](#), which amended the [Water Resources Act 2007](#) and established the Coordination Group as a statutory body, on 4 August 2015.

This amendment allowed for the appointment of an independent chair and a community representative, with Emeritus Professor Ian Falconer AO and Dr Fiona Dyer appointed to the respective positions in October 2015.

The Coordination Group is specified in the work plan for the ACT and NSW Memorandum of Understanding for Regional Collaboration (December 2016) (the MoU). Consistent with the intent of the MoU, the considerations of the Coordination Group and the contribution of staff and financial resources are negotiated on a project-by-project basis. The format of this annual report sets out the range of activities undertaken by the Coordination Group, focussing on key priorities, achievements over the period and planned future activities.

The Catchment Management and Water Policy Branch of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) provides secretariat support to the Coordination Group.

1.2 Functions

The Coordination Group is committed to improving governance of catchment management within the region. It works for the long-term benefit of the ACT and region catchments and the people who reside therein. It aims to:

- » be a responsive, dynamic and representative body which aims to work in a fair, open and collaborative manner
- » take a holistic approach to understanding and managing the catchment
- » promote a whole-of-catchment and governmental approach to improving the catchment's health in the long term, using best available science and community engagement to support its work.

The Coordination Group was established to:

- » advise the ACT Minister for the Environment and Climate Change on water catchment management in the ACT and Region catchment
- » improve coordination, cooperation and direction of effort in catchment management across the ACT and region
- » facilitate collaborative problem solving for interjurisdiction and interagency issues
- » provide advice on opportunities to align national, regional and territory investment in the context of integrated catchment management
- » oversee the development of an integrated catchment management strategy with agreed principles and actions
- » provide advice on proposed developments in terms of their likely impacts and strategies and actions to mitigate any risk to catchment health
- » undertake other matters as determined by the Minister.





1.3 Membership

ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group Chair Emeritus Professor Ian Falconer

The role of the Chair is to independently facilitate a collaborative process between jurisdictions to ensure the best outcomes are achieved. Emeritus Professor Falconer has extensive experience in water and catchment-based research and consulting. Prior to coming to the ACT, he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Adelaide and for 25 years, advised universities in Malaysia and Thailand on their development of environmental and pre-medical sciences. This, alongside his experience in staff training and academic administration, has been invaluable in guiding the Coordination Group in developing and executing a regional catchment management strategy.

Community Representative Dr Fiona Dyer, Community Representative, Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Network (UMCN)

The UMCN is a community-based organisation made up of agencies and groups that are responsible for natural resource management in the upper Murrumbidgee catchment. The network operates as a regional cross-border network to enhance communication between agencies and groups in NSW and the ACT and represents the interests of and provides a link to the broader community within the region. Dr Dyer is the immediate past Chair of the UMCN.



Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate Director-General, Mr Ben Ponton

The EPSDD has several roles in managing water in the ACT, including responsibility for high-level strategic water policy development and participating in the national water reform agenda and competition issues relating to water access, pricing and trading. In addition, the directorate regulates the Territory's water resources and monitors and reports on water quality. The directorate also has a role in the demand management of water resources and in developing strategies to address catchment management issues in the ACT and wider region.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate Head of Service, Ms Kathy Leigh

Ms Leigh supports the Chief Minister at intergovernmental forums, notably the Council of Australian Governments. The directorate manages and coordinates the ACT's relationships with other jurisdictions, most significantly with the Australian and NSW governments and Australia's other capital cities and NSW councils surrounding the ACT.

ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) Commissioner, Ms Georgeina Whelan

The ESA comprises the ACT Ambulance Service, ACT Fire and Rescue, the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT State Emergency Service and the ESA Support Services. ESA will play a key role in helping the Coordination Group coordinate risk analysis, and in planning for and managing emergency situations such as storms, floods and bushfires.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate Director-General, Ms Alison Playford

The Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) Directorate is responsible for managing Canberra's urban lakes and ponds, including management of stormwater control. TCCS is also responsible for providing services to manage the Territory's waste and other infrastructure.

ACT Health Directorate Director-General, Michael De'Ath - Represented by the Acting Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Coleman

In respect to environmental health, the Health Directorate protects and promotes the good health of the ACT community by fostering safe and healthy environments. It provides information, policy development, monitoring and enforcement in relation to public health activities including the Guidelines for Recreational Water Quality. The directorate provides a framework for the management of recreational water sites within the ACT, addressing risks from blue-green algae as well as microbial pathogens.

National Capital Authority (NCA) Chief Executive, Ms Sally Barnes

The NCA manages some of Canberra's nationally and culturally significant landscapes and attractions including Lake Burley Griffin and surrounding lands. It is keen to see national land and water bodies used and enjoyed by visitors and Canberra residents for a range of recreational uses. However, it aims to ensure there is an appropriate balance between public access to National Land with the protection of national assets.

South East Local Land Services (LLS) General Manager, Mr Anthony Marshall

The South East LLS brings agricultural production advice, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency management into a single organisation. Its services add value to local industries, enhances natural resources, protects industries from pests and disease and helps communities respond to emergencies like flood, fire and drought. The South East LLS will ensure the natural assets, local industries, landholders and communities of the surrounding tablelands region are represented on the Coordination Group.

Icon Water Managing Director, Mr Ray Hezkial

Icon Water owns and operates the ACT's network of dams for drinking water, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, reservoirs, water and sewage pumping stations, mains and other associated infrastructure. It provides water and sewerage services to the ACT and bulk water to Queanbeyan. Icon Water's interests in healthy catchments include the security, quality and sustainability of water resources for a range of uses, and minimising the impact of its network on the region's waterways.

Queanbeyan—Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) Chief Executive Officer, Mr Peter Tegart

Yass Valley Council Director of Planning, Mr Chris Berry

Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) Director of Environmental Services, Mr Peter Smith

The local government areas of QPRC, SMRC and Yass Valley Council make a significant contribution to the management and protection of the region's natural resources.

Local governments undertake a wide range of activities related to catchment management, including the development and implementation of land use planning, managing public land and regulating private activities. They play a key role in translating the policies of the Australian and state governments into local and on-ground projects. As such, their input to strategic planning, economic development and stormwater management is vital to providing the best outcomes for an interjurisdictional catchment.





2. Highlights

The Coordination Group continues to set a leading example for multi-jurisdictional collaboration in regional catchment management. In 2018–19 it made further progress against actions in the ACT and Region Catchment Strategy. A brief synopsis of these is provided below, together with other key activities undertaken.

2.1 Progress on priority actions from the Catchment Action Implementation Plan (2016–21)

The ACT and Region Catchment Strategy (the Catchment Strategy) identifies 19 actions to promote a healthy catchment region and bring governments, community and industry together to produce a healthy, productive, resilient and liveable catchment region.

The Catchment Strategy's key themes

Governance, policy and planning—a framework for coordination of policy, planning, investment and knowledge processes that provide a foundation for our work.

Communities—acknowledging the outstanding contribution that catchment groups and volunteer programs play in protecting our natural resources, motivating people to connect to their catchment and increasing their capacity to adapt to change.

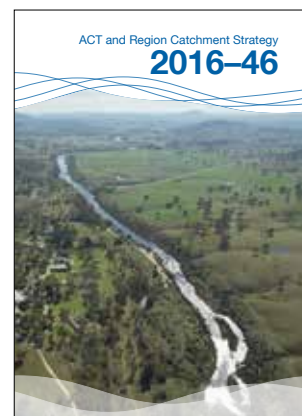
Regional development—recognising that the catchment is a growth area and strategies are needed to support the prosperity of the region with sound catchment management planning principles and technical expertise to support sustainable growth.

Water, land and biodiversity—support the biophysical processes that maintain the resilience and health of natural resources that are essential for thriving communities and ecosystems.

The Catchment Strategy is supported by the ACT and Region Catchment Action Implementation Plan (2016–21) (the Implementation Plan), which sets out the 19 actions under their respective themes and provides additional detail in terms of what each action will achieve, key stakeholders, who should be involved, resourcing status and likely timeframes.

The Implementation Plan includes criteria for determining the project timeframes and an outline of the principles for applying adaptive management based on issues such as ease of implementation, budget availability, existing data, technology and appropriate policy settings.

A copy of the Catchment Strategy can be found at: www.environment.act.gov.au/water



The Coordination Group identified seven priority actions from the Implementation Plan as a focus for its work in 2017–18. Progress against these seven actions is provided below.

Action 3: Promote evidence-based decision making for improved healthy catchments.

ACT Healthy Waterways

ACT Healthy Waterways is a \$93.5 million joint initiative of the Australian Government and the ACT Government to protect and improve long-term water quality in the ACT and the Murrumbidgee River system by reducing the level of sediment and nutrients entering ACT lakes and waterways.

As part of the Healthy Waterways initiative, a major research program on Lake Tuggeranong and ACT urban ponds is currently underway. The research is being undertaken in two phases:

» Phase 1

Automated equipment was installed in the lake and in streams that flow into the lake. This equipment collected water samples to measure pollutant loads, oxygen and water temperature. Researchers also collected weekly manual samples of the lake water.

This research project revealed that the lake suffers from:

- » high loading of pollutants from the catchment during both baseflow and stormflow conditions
- » high 'internal loading' which is nutrient cycling between lake sediment and the water column.

Phase 1 is now complete.

» Phase 2

Trials of three algal management options are being undertaken, as well as further research on light as a factor in algal growth. The trials involve:

- » using a chemical treatment (Phoslock) that was hypothesised to bind phosphorous from the water column to limit the internal release of nutrients
- » adding micronutrients (Diatomix), hypothesised to shift the phytoplankton community composition from cyanobacteria to diatom dominated

- » adding hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) that was hypothesised to kill blue green algae
- » applying shade sections to determine whether light or temperature are promoting growth of algal blooms in Lake Tuggeranong.

The trials have commenced with research for phase 2 to continue into 2020.

Action 7: Strategically support the role and work undertaken by peak stakeholder groups, volunteers, landowners and land managers.

Local leadership support

The Coordination Group is committed to enhancing and developing community capacity and 'knowledge transfer' by supporting community catchment leaders and managers. This includes landholders and land managers (including Indigenous managers). As part of this commitment, the Coordination Group members agreed to contribute \$55,000 per year, for the next three years, to support community leadership forums and leadership support grants.

» UMCN

The Coordination Group agreed to a three-year funding commitment for the UMCN:

- » For 2019–20, \$61,000 was allocated. This included \$16,000 to support a forum of community participants and \$45,000 for administrative support
- » For 2020–21, \$45,000 was allocated for administrative support
- » In 2021–22, the Coordination Group agreed to a total of \$67,000 funding for the UMCN, including \$47,000 for administrative support and \$20,000 for community forums.

Action 9: Build community understanding about catchment health to promote behaviour change through a broad range of communication and education strategies.

H₂OK Keeping our Waterways Healthy – Community Education and Behaviour Change Program

The H₂OK Keeping our Waterways Healthy – Community Education and Behaviour Change Program was developed to encourage actions and behaviours that reduce the inputs of unwanted nutrient into waterways, such as fertilisers, soil and septic sewage systems.

A report on the program was tabled at a meeting of the Coordination Group on 20 June 2019. It highlighted the success of the educational and behaviour change initiatives since the program began in 2016. The program activity included:

- » **Comprehensive seasonal advertising and media campaigns**
Initiated to raise awareness and engage the community through print, radio and social media.
- » **Drain stencilling and DrainART programs**
Facilitated creative artworks in and around drains and waterways to highlight the connection between water quality and people's actions.
- » **Stormwater Road Show**
Introduced to take the stormwater education message to local events in neighbourhoods and schools.
- » **Best Practice Demonstration Sites Grants Program**
- » Provided grants to residential, rural and commercial property owners that demonstrated innovative and best-practice stormwater management practices on their block.
- » **Training**
Provided training to industry in water management subjects including erosion and sediment control.
- » **Ambassadors**
Trained and empowered local spokespeople to promote awareness of water quality and the impact of individual behaviours.
- » **Influencing government**
Additionally, the H₂OK program aimed to influence other ACT Government programs, such as street sweeping.

An evaluation was undertaken to measure changes in householder and industry water-impacting behaviours and awareness of the H2OK initiative. The survey of 332 people found that:

- » 56% of respondents had seen the H2OK messaging
- » 48% of respondents had seen drain stencils or DrainART
- » 37% had seen the promotional construction mesh
- » 13% had seen bus advertising.

When respondents were questioned about the impact of the H2OK messaging:

- » 39% said they had already acted on water management
- » 24% knew more about water quality
- » 22% said it had no effect.

ACT Water Strategy

Work also commenced on stakeholder consultation for the development of Implementation Plan 2 of the ACT Water Strategy.

Action 12: Secure long-term water supplies for the ACT and region.

Water trading

Throughout 2018–19, the Coordination Group continued to investigate the feasibility of water trading to help secure water supplies for the ACT and the region. In August 2018 the Coordination Group formally endorsed the ACT Treasury and EPSDD directorates' plan to undertake a feasibility assessment for water trading. The feasibility assessment will investigate two key enablers:

1. An economic and market analysis of:
 - » interstate trading and the efficiency measures
 - » an analysis of appropriate institutional arrangements that may need to be established to support any interstate water trading.
2. A technical analysis of water trading and efficiency measures including aspects such as river and dam operations including:
 - » hydraulic and hydrologic aspects
 - » administrative requirements
 - » identification of the most cost-effective water savings and water quality works and measures available within the ACT for inclusion in a water efficiency project and associated water security considerations.

Action 13: Improve water quality, protect and restore aquatic ecosystem health and reduce nutrient, sediment and pathogen loads at key sites across the catchment.

ACT Healthy Waterways

As part of the ACT Healthy Waterways initiative (described under Action 3, page 10), multiple water infrastructure projects were constructed during the 2018–19 financial year to improve the health of the ACT's waterways. The project types and their locations are listed in the table below.

Suburb	Project
Curtin	Rain garden
Evatt	Wetland
Fadden	Rain garden
Florey	Waterway restoration
Fyshwick	Wetland
Fyshwick (Jerrabomberra Creek)	Wetland
Holder	Wetland
Isabella Plains	Rain garden
Kingston	Wetland
Kambah	Pond
McKellar	Wetland
Melba	Wetland
Monash	Wetland
Monash	Creek restoration
Mawson	Pond
Wanniassa	Rain garden

Action 14: Ensure Indigenous and other values are recognised.

ACT Water Resource Plan

The ACT Government is currently drafting the ACT Water Resource Plan as part of its commitments under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan. In preparing the draft plan, the ACT Government consulted with local Aboriginal organisations to ensure Indigenous values and issues were carefully considered in how local water resources are managed.



2.2 Progress on other actions

Action 2: Establish an interjurisdictional investment and resourcing framework

The 'selective co-investment framework' for un-resourced or continuing projects was endorsed by the Coordination Group on 21 November 2018. This funding framework would be an 'opt in' or 'opt out' arrangement based on a member organisations interest or perceived benefit from a specific project.

Action 10: Provide an integrated catchment management planning approach for growth and settlement patterns in the ACT and region

The Canberra Region Joint Organisation of Councils has a Regional Waste and Resource Recovery sub-committee which has carriage of regional waste management strategies. The Coordination Group received an update on their work from the committee's coordinator at its meeting in November 2018.

2.3 Stakeholder engagement

To continue to strengthen the coordination between the Coordination Group and community in the ACT and NSW, the Chair and officers met with a number of key stakeholder groups and executives of the key bodies to discuss furthering the priority actions and issues of wide concern to catchment management. Some of this engagement is provided below.

ACT Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainability

In November 2018, the Commissioner's office spoke with the Coordination Group about greater involvement in cross-border discussions. The Commissioner's office briefed the Coordination Group on the progress of the Lower Cotter Catchment report which was being finalised.

ESA

In 2018–19 the key matters raised with the ESA included:

- » An extension of the ACT bushfire season which moved forward to 1 September 2018, rather than 1 October as is customary
- » Short and long-term implications for catchment management and water quality caused by bushfires
- » Drought impacts in the region and the issues facing the ESA
- » The Australian Government's strategic coordination of major works and programs to mitigate drought impacts- the Coordination Group noted that there may be a role or opportunity for involvement.

ACT Health

ACT Health briefed the Coordination Group on commencing seasonal reports on water quality in recreational waterways in the ACT. The reports provide advice that confirms if the water is safe for human contact. An update on the review of regulations for septic systems in the ACT was also provided.

ACT Water Strategy meetings

In August and September 2018, the Coordination Group's chair attended community and ACT Government directorate meetings to discuss and provide input into the ACT Government's Water Strategy progress report.

Icon Water

Icon Water briefed the Coordination Group on several matters including:

- » Increasing public messaging around water efficiency behaviours in anticipation of a dry 2018–19 summer
- » Work on the Googong Actions for Clean Water Plan which is looking at erosion hotspots in Googong catchment
- » The triennial ACT catchments survey which saw a change in approach to focus on health-based indicators. This will help address any water quality concerns identified through treatment upgrades or through catchment interventions
- » Efforts to implement resource recovery
- » Investigations into long term water demands for Yass and Queanbeyan and pushing for regional collaboration on, for example, smart metering.

NCA

In August 2018 the Coordination Group heard from NCA CEO, Sally Barnes who highlighted that the NCA was looking into an approach to oxygenate Lake Burley Griffin to address water quality issues. It was also noted that the NCA was aiming to open the swimming season for Lake Burley Griffin with an event in Water Week which occurs in the third week of October each year. Ms Barnes also provided an update on the NCA's tender for hydrometric services in early 2019 for operations of Scrivener Dam. It was also noted that the NCA has been undertaking maintenance work on the dam and lake walls.

South East LLS

The South East LLS briefed the Coordination Group on the outcome of the tender process conducted for National Landcare Program 2 funding. The South East LLS has received funding for two five-year projects- \$950,000 for Macquarie Perch habitat restoration, and \$500,000 to work with landholders helping them to manage soil acidity in collaboration with ACT Natural Resource Management.

QPRC

The Coordination Group was provided an update from QPRC in August 2018 about activities to reinvigorate the city centre around the Queanbeyan River. The Coordination Group also discussed QPRC's initiative to install water quality monitoring sensors in the river which will measure temperature and turbidity. QPRC also briefed the Coordination Group on a project which is being established with the University of Canberra to monitor platypus in the Queanbeyan River. This will help improve community awareness and understanding of these animals.

In November 2018, The Coordination Group received an update on the new Queanbeyan water sewage treatment plant. This is discussed in more detail on page 18, under Action 13.

Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS)

Mr Stephen Alegria from TCCS tabled a report to the Coordination Group on the directorate's Better Suburbs Statement initiative in August 2018. The Better Suburbs Statement articulated community priorities for services provided by TCCS. It reviewed 14 TCCS services, including lake and pond management. The report identified an increase in services and funding for lakes, ponds and stormwater systems as the priority.

Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC)

In August and November 2018, the SMRC presented to the Coordination Group on a number of key issues that affect the ACT and surrounding region's water catchment including:

- » SMRC's submission to the Snow Hydro 2.0 Environmental Impact Statement
- » a feasibility study for the proposed Canberra to Eden railway
- » NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust's call for expressions of interest from landholders in the Monaro to participate in its grasslands conservation management program
- » mapping of important agricultural lands which will potentially have water quality outcomes.

Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Network (UMCN)

The Coordination Group met with the UMCN in November 2018 to gain an understanding of how ACT catchment groups are working together with the ACT Government through a transition process to move the catchment groups away from their historic Australian Government funding source. The Coordination Group determined that a more strategic effort is needed to understand:

- » what is required in the region in terms of community-based engagement
- » what is already being done
- » what resources are required to sustain and build on this.

Thanks in part to the work of the Coordination Group Chair, the ACT catchment groups and the Waterwatch and Frogwatch programs will receive ACT government funding in 2019–20 for a range of community environment projects agreed with EPSDD and TCCS.

Yass Valley Council

In November 2018, Yass Valley Council provided the Coordination Group with an update on the progress of a regional water strategy with other local councils. The Council also confirmed that all flood studies have been completed for Bowning, Bookham and Binalong. Flood studies for this region are now complete.

In March 2019, the Council reported on the following matters to the Coordination Group:

- » Yass, Gundaroo and Sutton flood plans are in place and works are scheduled
- » The Canberra Region Joint Organisation has employed a biodiversity officer to support councils in the region with the introduction of new planning controls
- » Community concern with a proposed centralised Gundaroo sewage treatment plan



3.4 Advice to the ACT Minister for the Environment and Heritage

The Chair met with Minister Gentleman on two occasions in 2018–19 to present the Coordination Group’s progress in implementing the Strategic Plan and participation in coordinating the Coordination Group members’ relevant activities.

Issues discussed included:

- » The extension of the Chair’s appointment for an additional year
- » Shared funding model for the catchment group community support and project actions including the ACT Healthy Waterways H₂OK drain stencilling and DrainART programs
- » Interjurisdictional issues, including the ‘Best For Region’ joint sewage plant proposal between the ACT and QPRC and location of the new sewage treatment plant for Queanbeyan
- » Sub-regional water strategy between the ACT, QPRC and Yass Valley Council to accommodate water supply for the increasing population in the area, notably, Murrumbateman and Queanbeyan
- » Development of emergency response plans for the region to address fire and flood post-emergency mitigation plans
- » Action Plan progress
- » Further the proposal by Yass Valley Council to create a development-free zone round the ACT.



3. 2019–20 Priorities

The key focus for the Coordination Group in 2019–20 will be to further the actions within the Implementation Plan, with an emphasis on the following priorities:

Action 2: Establish an inter-jurisdictional investment and resourcing framework.

The resourcing framework provides principles on how the Coordination Group will co-invest, align, collaborate and cost-share in resourcing activities for improved catchment management. The co-investment framework for un-resourced or continuing projects was endorsed by the Group on 21 November 2018. For the 2019/20 financial year there will be a focus on efficient and swift distribution of the funds to ensure there is no delay to the great work taking place amongst the Group members.

Action 3: Promote evidence-based decision making for improved healthy catchments.

The Coordination Group will work to promote improved decision-making for catchment management with enhanced data monitoring. This will be effected through the development of an accessible 'data lake' which provides unified and clear results on water quantity and quality. Data from community supported and established water quality management programs including Waterwatch and Frogwatch will also be included.

Action 7: Strategically support the role and work undertaken by peak stakeholder groups, volunteers, landowners and land managers.

The Coordination Group will focus efforts on ensuring there is sustainable and ongoing support for landholders, catchment group members and land and water managers to improve catchment and waterway health.

Action 8: Develop an integrated catchment emergency response plan.

Investigations on this Action commenced in 2017 with the assistance of funding from the Natural Disaster Resilience Program. The EPSDD engaged consultancy firm, Alluvium to develop the ACT and Region Catchment Post-Emergency Recovery Plan. The Recovery Plan is designed to enhance the capability of the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment community, including government, private and civic bodies, to recover effectively from natural disasters and emergency events in a coordinated and cooperative manner. The Recovery Plan identifies:

- » the intrinsic uses and values of each catchment
- » the potential impact of an emergency event on catchment and waterway uses
- » values, objectives and desired outcomes for the catchment and waterways after an emergency event.

The Group has finalised and endorsed the plan and will focus on distributing it to the Coordination Group members and jurisdictions and promoting it more broadly to the general public. Additionally, there will be a focus on establishing a working group to encourage its adoption amongst member jurisdictions.

Action 10: Provide an integrated catchment management planning approach for growth and settlement patterns in the ACT and region.

The Coordination Group will focus on encouraging regional collaboration with NSW South East LLS and reinvigorating the NSW 'Actions for Clean Water' Plan.



Action 12: Secure long-term water supplies for the ACT and region.

QPRC are proceeding with planning to build a new sewage treatment plant at the Oaks estate. For 2019–20, the Group will intensify efforts to develop and implement a workplan to move forward with this initiative.

The second proposed deliverable for this Action is to develop a Business Case for a Yass-Murrumbateman potable water supply pipeline.

Action 13: Improve water quality, protect and restore aquatic ecosystem health and reduce nutrient, sediment and pathogen loads at key sites across the catchment.

QPRC has plans to build a new water sewage treatment plant at Oaks Estate. Discharge from the proposed plant is designed to enter the Molonglo River which has implications for Lake Burley Griffin. The Group is committed to ensuring that the water quality of the lake is not further compromised and will focus on implementing effective water discharge guidelines that can be adopted by the new treatment plant.

Action 14: Ensure Indigenous and other values are recognised.

The Coordination Group will investigate ways to partner with ACT Natural Resource Management to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives in water management and biodiversity enhancement in the region.

