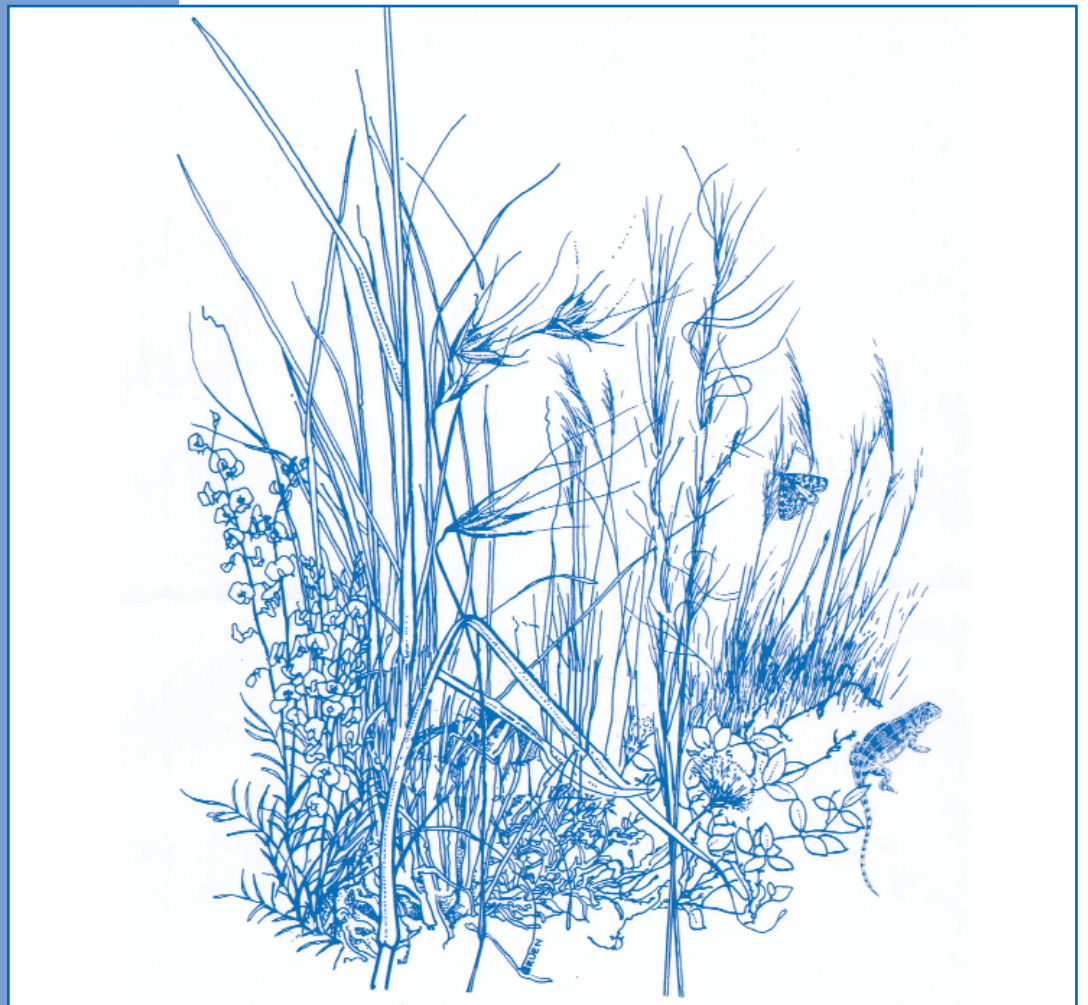


A

Vision Splendid of the Grassy
Plains Extended

ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy



building our city
building our community

ACT Government

environment ACT



A Vision Splendid of the Grassy Plains Extended

ACT Lowland Native Grassland
Conservation Strategy

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Note on the title:

A Vision Splendid of the Grassy Plains Extended

With an apology to Banjo Patterson and the line from his poem 'Clancy of the Overflow':

'And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended'.

(*The Bulletin* 21 December 1889)

Vision

The Australian Capital Territory makes an outstanding contribution, regionally and nationally, to conservation of lowland native grassland and grassland flora and fauna.

Before European settlement, the temperate grasslands of the ACT and region, and their associated flora and fauna, were part of an extensive band of grasslands in south-eastern Australia. Occurring across broad plains and in low elevation areas subject to cold air drainage, they formed a mosaic with lowland woodland and riparian and wetland communities. These grasslands and associated grassy woodlands were the natural resource base for the development of the Australian pastoral industry from the early 1800s. Their accessibility and productivity resulted in their almost complete transformation by the new pastoral economy. In the ACT, the development of Canberra in the valleys and on the plains during the 20th century destroyed most of the grassland that remained.

Natural temperate grassland is one of Australia's most threatened ecosystems. In south-eastern Australia, 99.5% of the estimated pre-European natural temperate grassland has been destroyed or grossly altered. Some form of degrading disturbance threatens all grassland remnants, even those in permanent reserves. Loss of grassland habitat and the fragmentation and degradation of the remaining areas has had a severe impact on plants and animals that are dependent on grasslands. Characteristic species of grasslands such as the Grassland Earless Dragon and the Striped Legless Lizard now survive only in small and disconnected populations. The once extensive 'wildflower' displays provided by species of inter-tussock forbs are restricted to remnants of relatively undisturbed grassland.

The *ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* builds on more than ten years of survey, monitoring, research, conservation planning and management in relation to lowland native grasslands in the ACT and region. From a slim knowledge base in 1990, a good understanding has been developed of the remaining grasslands in the ACT and some of their component species. Some grasslands have been placed in reserves and there are good prospects for conserving other areas. The *Strategy* provides the strategic context for the ongoing protection, management and restoration of this unique Australian ecosystem.

Acknowledgements

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Assistance by contract staff, consultants and researchers in undertaking flora and fauna surveys and analyses over the past 10 years has contributed greatly to the preparation of the *Strategy*.

Kevin Frawley prepared drafts of the report and managed its compilation.

Progress in preparing the *Strategy* was reported to the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee, and individual members provided expert comment and advice.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on this Action Plan or on threatened species and ecological communities can be obtained from:

Environment ACT
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Phone: (02) 6207 2126
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