

1 Introduction

1.1

A New Focus for Nature Conservation in the ACT

In 2002 the ACT Government introduced a *New Focus for Nature Conservation in the ACT*, which includes a program to establish strategies for priority species/ecological communities. This is to ensure that resources are directed to achieving maximum effect in conservation activities. To implement this program, Environment ACT initiated a three-year review of existing Action Plans for threatened species and ecological communities.

The first review in 2002–03 resulted in *Woodlands for Wildlife: ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy* covering endangered Yellow Box–Red Gum Grassy Woodland, other lowland woodlands and the species dependent upon these woodlands (ACT Government 2004a). This *ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* is the product of the second review covering natural temperate grassland (an endangered ecological community), other native grasslands, and plant and animal species dependent upon these. In 2004–05, Action Plans for aquatic species (and the riparian zone) were reviewed and a new integrated strategy prepared. These three strategies are complementary and recognise that ecological communities are dynamic—evolving and intergrading with each other, and sharing the more mobile of their constituent fauna.

Coincident with this ACT Government program, a *Planning Framework for Natural Ecosystems of the ACT and NSW Southern Tablelands* has been completed (Fallding 2002). The document was prepared through close cooperation between ACT agencies, NSW local and state government agencies and the ACT Housing Industry Association. The framework provides the basis for a more coordinated approach to threatened species conservation in the region. The *Planning Framework* does not cover all the

Southern Tablelands. It includes the ACT and areas to the north-west, north-east and east of the ACT, and south to the southern border of the ACT.

The *Planning Framework* compares the pre-1750 and current distributions of the broad native vegetation types found within the ACT and NSW Southern Tablelands region. About 45% of the region supported grassy ecosystems (native grassland, grassland–woodland mosaic, box–gum woodland) pre-1750, compared to about 13% in 2000. Native grassland has been reduced from 11% of the region pre-1750 to about 1% in 2000. Only a very small proportion of the remaining grasslands are in good condition (i.e. floristically and structurally intact and having a low weed cover). Of the pre-1750 natural temperate grassland in the Southern Tablelands as a whole (i.e. extending south to the Victorian border), there is less than three percent remaining that retains a level of ecological integrity justifying recognition as having high conservation value and warranting protection.

The *Planning Framework* concludes that remnants of many vegetation types in good structural and floristic condition are relatively rare. The grassy ecosystems, including lowland native grassland ‘can be regarded as the most important from a conservation planning point of view because of their extremely restricted extent following development and agricultural land use’ (p. 15). Grassland sites of high biodiversity value are rare, isolated and fragmented, and with the exception of reserves established in the ACT, are poorly represented in the regional reserve network (p. 17).

1.2

Scope of the Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy

Reflecting Government policy, the *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* takes an integrated, territory-wide approach within a regional context, to the protection of the remaining lowland native grasslands.

The *Strategy* seeks to maintain and improve the natural integrity of the remaining lowland native grassland ecosystems. Within the grassland remnants, this means maintaining and improving the viability of the grassy ecosystem. Externally, it means maintaining and improving connectivity to other native vegetation, avoiding further fragmentation, and minimising harmful effects from adjacent land uses.

The *Strategy* recognises that in addition to natural temperate grassland, which has been declared an endangered ecological community, there are also areas of native pasture (see Chapter 2) and secondary grassland (included in the *ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy* as it is derived from cleared woodland). Lowland native grassland also exists as part of the grassland–woodland mosaic that covers about 3% of the region (Fallding 2002, p. 20). The *Strategy* encompasses the conservation of grassland flora and fauna, including those species declared as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘endangered’ under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* (ACT).

The *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* supersedes seven separate Action Plans previously published for the natural temperate grassland ecological community, four threatened animal species associated with lowland grassland, and two plant species—all declared threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* (ACT) (Table 1.1). The statutory requirement for the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna to prepare Action Plans for declared threatened species and

ecological communities remains and this *Strategy* incorporates this requirement in an integrated way. While the legal authority of the *Strategy* is confined to the Australian Capital Territory, management considerations are addressed in a regional context. Should any other species associated with lowland native grassland be declared threatened in the future, the *Strategy* will require amendment to incorporate the details and requirements for that species.

The focus of the *Strategy* is lowland native grassland, including the endangered natural temperate grassland ecological community, across the ACT, regardless of tenure and land use. In this way, it differs from a management plan applied to a particular area or areas. A central purpose of the *Strategy* is to inform decision-making with regard to land use planning, and the development and management of land in the ACT.

Specifically, the *Strategy*:

- identifies the remaining areas of natural temperate grassland and other important areas of lowland native grassland in the ACT;
- identifies the floristic associations found in lowland native grassland areas in the ACT;
- outlines the values of the remaining lowland native grassland areas focusing on the conservation values of the ecological communities and component flora and fauna (recognising that areas may also have social and cultural values e.g. recreational, aesthetic, Aboriginal and European heritage);

Table 1.1: Ecological Community/Species Included in the *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* and Existing Action Plans

Species/Ecological Community	Status	Action Plan No. Date	Declaration Date (in accordance with section 21 of the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1980</i> (ACT))
Natural Temperate Grassland	Endangered	No. 1, 1997 (ACT Government 1997a)	15 April 1996
Striped Legless Lizard (<i>Delma impar</i>)	Vulnerable	No. 2, 1997 (ACT Government 1997b)	15 April 1996
Grassland Earless Dragon (<i>Tympanocryptis pinguicollis</i>)	Endangered	No. 3, 1997 (ACT Government 1997c)	15 April 1996
Golden Sun Moth (<i>Synemon plana</i>)	Endangered	No. 7, 1998 (ACT Government 1998a)	15 April 1996
Perunga Grasshopper (<i>Perunga ochracea</i>)	Vulnerable	No. 21, 1999 (ACT Government 1999)	19 May 1997
Button Wrinklewort (<i>Rutidosia leptorrhynchoidea</i>)	Endangered	No. 8, 1998 (ACT Government 1998b)	15 April 1996
Ginninderra Peppergrass (<i>Lepidium ginninderrense</i>)	Endangered	No. 25, 2003 (ACT Government 2003b)	4 September 2003

- outlines conservation goals, objectives and actions for lowland native grassland and grassland dependent species, including those declared as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* (ACT);
- outlines principles on which to base conservation actions;
- incorporates the Action Plans for listed species and communities which are required by the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* (ACT);
- provides a basis for planning and land management decisions with regard to areas containing lowland native grassland;
- encourages community participation in the conservation of lowland native grassland and component species;
- satisfies the requirement under section 23(2) of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, that an Action Plan includes proposals for the identification, protection and survival of a threatened species or ecological community, or, in the case of a threatening process, proposals to minimise its effect.

1.3

Definition of Natural Temperate Grassland

Natural temperate grassland is a native ecological community that is dominated by native species of perennial grasses. There is also a diversity of other native herbaceous plants (forbs) present. An important characteristic of the community is that it is naturally treeless, or has less than 10% projective foliage cover (see Glossary) of trees, shrubs and sedges in its tallest stratum (Moore 1964; Kirkpatrick 1993). In the ACT, natural temperate grassland occurs up to an altitude of 625 m.

The ecological community is described in greater detail in Chapter 2.

1.4

Role of the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee

The ACT Flora and Fauna Committee is established under amendments to the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* that were enacted in 1994. It is comprised of seven members with expertise in biodiversity or ecology. It advises the ACT Minister for the Environment in relation to nature conservation.

Since its establishment in 1995 the Flora and Fauna Committee has received and assessed nominations of species or ecological communities that may be threatened with extinction. The Committee is required to make assessments on nature conservation grounds only and is guided by specific criteria set out in its publication *Threatened Species and Communities in the ACT: Criteria for Assessment* (July 1995) (ACT Flora and Fauna Committee 1995). In making its assessment of natural temperate grassland and the listed plant and animal species included in this Strategy, the Committee concluded that each nomination satisfied these criteria.

As a group of experts in biodiversity, the Committee is asked to draw on its knowledge and experience of the region's flora and fauna during preparation by Environment ACT of draft and final Action Plans and to advise the Conservator of Flora and Fauna on progress in implementing them. These reviews are published in the Committee's Annual Reports. The Committee is also asked for its views on topical nature conservation issues as they apply to the ACT and it regularly provides such advice to Environment ACT. Thus the Committee is a valuable source of technical expertise, independent of Environment ACT and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

ACTION PLAN REVIEWS

The Flora and Fauna Committee conducts annual reviews of progress in implementing Action Plans for threatened species and communities. In 2003 the review comprised assessment of Action Plans for Natural Temperate Grassland, Striped Legless Lizard, Grassland Earless Dragon, Golden Sun Moth, Button Wrinklewort and Perunga Grasshopper, A Leek Orchid, Small Purple Pea and A Subalpine Herb.

The Committee's assessment used the following performance indicators:

- completion of commitments that can reasonably be expected to be finalised within the review timeframe (e.g. introduction of a statutory protection measure for a species; development of a management plan);
- completion of a stage in a process with a time line that exceeds the review period (e.g. design or commencement of a research program);
- commencement of a particular commitment that is of a continuing nature (e.g. design or commencement of a monitoring program for population abundance); and
- expert assessment of achievement of conservation objectives of the Action Plan.

The Flora and Fauna Committee reported in October 2003 to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna

recommending that the species included in the review (with the exception of A Subalpine Herb *Gentiana baeuerlenii*) be incorporated into this *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy*. A Leek Orchid (*Prasophyllum petilum*) and the Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*) are found in grassy woodland and have been included in the *ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy*. The Committee noted that the protection and management of lowland native grassland areas (and associated threatened species) would become increasingly important because of development pressures in areas such as the Majura and Jerrabomberra valleys. The Committee recommended that greater priority be given to education of the Canberra community about grassland conservation, and expressed concern that no Memorandum of Understanding had been negotiated with Canberra Airport in relation to the protection of native grasslands.

1.5

Relevant Legislation

1.5.1 ACT Planning and Land Management

The *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* provides for two categories of land in the ACT:

- National Land—used by or on behalf of the Commonwealth, and managed by the Commonwealth; and
- Territory Land—all the remaining land of the ACT. The ACT Government manages this land on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Important areas of natural temperate grassland on National Land occur in the Majura Valley, Jerrabomberra Valley (HMAS Harman) and at the Belconnen Naval Station.

The *National Capital Plan* (NCA 2003) sets out general land use policies for the Territory as a whole and may specify areas of land that have the special characteristics of the National Capital as Designated Areas. The Plan may set out detailed conditions of planning, design and development in Designated Areas. The National Capital Authority has planning responsibility for these areas, which may be either National Land or Territory Land. This *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* accords with relevant objectives of the *National Capital Plan* (p. 5), and principles and policies in the *Plan* for the National Capital Open Space System (Ch. 8), Rural Areas (Ch. 9) and Environment (Ch. 11).

Planning for areas that are not Designated Area is the responsibility of the ACT Planning and Land Authority and planning policies are set out in the *Territory Plan* (ACTPLA 2003).

1.5.2 Legislation Applying to the Conservation of Flora and Fauna in the ACT and Region

The following legislation applies to the conservation of flora and fauna in the ACT and region:

NATURE CONSERVATION ACT 1980 (ACT)

The *Nature Conservation Act 1980* provides authority for the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to manage Public Land reserved for conservation of the natural environment. Activities that are inconsistent with management objectives for nature conservation are controlled. Special measures for conservation of a species or community of concern can be introduced in a reserved area, including restriction of access to important habitat. Provisions of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* are applicable to National Land (which is land used by, or intended to be used by the Commonwealth).

Part 1 of the Act establishes the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee with responsibilities for assessing the conservation status of ACT flora and fauna and the ecological significance of potentially threatening processes. Where the Committee believes that a species or ecological community is threatened with extinction or a process is an ecological threat, it is required to advise the responsible minister, and recommend that a declaration be made accordingly.

Parts 4 and 5 of the Act provide for protection of native plants and animals. Section 21 of the Act authorises the declaration of (a) a vulnerable or endangered species, (b) an endangered ecological community, and (c) a threatening process, based upon the advice and recommendation to the responsible Minister by the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee.

Native plants and animals may also be declared as 'protected' (s. 17) or as having 'special protection status'(s. 16) in recognition of a particular conservation concern that warrants additional protection. Increased controls apply to declared species and licensing constraints are specified. Species declared as endangered under the Act, or threatened with extinction, must also be declared as having special protection status. This is the highest level of statutory protection that can be conferred on a species in the ACT. Further information on these matters can be obtained from Environment ACT by phoning the Arts, Heritage and Environment Helpline on 6207 9777.

Under s. 47 of the Act, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna may give the occupier of land, directions for protection or conservation of native plants and animals. This provision is relevant to the management of threats to a species or ecological community of concern that occurs on leased land. Conservator's directions were issued in January 2004 to lessees in the Jerrabomberra Valley to ensure that natural temperate grassland and a population of the Grassland Earless Dragon are protected while consideration is given to the pattern of future land use in the valley.

Part 9 of the Act allows the Conservator to enter into a Management Agreement with an agency where its activities have potential to conflict with nature conservation objectives. This provision is relevant to management of conservation threats on unleased land and applies to utilities (e.g. gas, electricity), navigation and communication facilities, and land development.

LAND (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT) ACT 1991 (ACT)

The *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* is the primary authority in the ACT for land planning and administration and establishes the *Territory Plan*. One of the goals of the *Plan* is 'to promote ecologically sustainable development, protect biodiversity, and provide for high standards of environmental amenity, urban design and landscape' (ACTPLA 2003). The *Plan* identifies nature reserves, national parks, wilderness areas and special purpose reserves within the Public Land estate. The Act requires that management plans be prepared for areas identified as Public Land under the *Territory Plan*.

The Act provides for the *Territory Plan* to incorporate a Heritage Places Register. Places of natural heritage significance may be included in the Register and conservation requirements specified. The Act also provides for environmental assessments and inquiries to be initiated in relation to land use and development proposals. This is included in the *Territory Plan* environmental planning policies.

It should be noted that Part IV (Environmental Assessments and Inquiries) and Part V (Land Administration) of the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* apply to all Territory Land. This includes Territory Land within Designated Areas under the *National Capital Plan* (see s. 1.5.1) that is subject to regulations under the Act. In circumstances where the regulations do not apply, collaborative solutions are sought between the Territory and the Commonwealth.

The Canberra Spatial Plan (ACT Government 2004b) was released in March 2004 and provides a clear strategic direction for the development of Canberra

over the next 30 years and beyond, but with the flexibility required to respond to change. It sets the framework for spatially based decision making in the future and outlines the actions needed to achieve the strategic direction for Canberra over the next 30 years. The *Spatial Plan* does not replace the *Territory Plan*, but will inform changes to both the *Territory Plan* and the *National Capital Plan*.

The *Spatial Plan* contains key principles to guide the future growth of Canberra. Protection of the natural environment is one of these key principles. The *Plan* states that the location of future residential development will ensure that areas identified as having significant biodiversity values, such as threatened species and ecological communities and habitat for threatened species, are protected from development. In particular, the *Spatial Plan* notes that development in the new employment corridor in Majura, Symonston and Jerrabomberra, including around the airport, will take into account the areas of native grassland and habitat for threatened species that are of significant nature conservation value.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACT 1999 (COMMONWEALTH)

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the primary Commonwealth legislation for environment protection. Under the EPBC Act, an action will require approval from the (Commonwealth) Environment Minister if the action has, will have, or is likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance and it is not subject to certain specified exceptions. Exceptions include actions taken in accordance with Commonwealth accredited management plans. The Act also promotes ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources, the conservation of biodiversity, and a cooperative approach to the protection and management of the environment involving governments, the community, landholders and indigenous peoples.

Matters of national environmental significance trigger the Commonwealth's environmental assessment and approval responsibilities. The matters are: World Heritage and National Heritage properties, Ramsar wetlands of international importance, nationally listed threatened species and ecological communities, migratory species protected under international agreements, Commonwealth marine environment and nuclear actions.

'Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales and the Australian

Capital Territory' and several of the plant and animal species included in this *Strategy* are listed as threatened under the EPBC Act. There is also potential application of the EPBC Act in the ACT to nationally listed threatened species (see Table 2.4, 2.5), National Land, and in relation to Commonwealth actions (see <http://www.deh.gov.au/epbc/index.html>).

The Commonwealth prepares Recovery Plans for species and ecological communities listed under the EPBC Act (e.g. *National Recovery Plan for Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT): an endangered ecological community* (Environment ACT 2005)). In situations where such Recovery Plans coincide with ACT Action Plans or ACT management responsibilities, every effort is made to ensure coordination, consistency and cooperation between the Commonwealth and ACT governments and their agencies.

Pursuant to s. 23 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, the *Draft ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* was released for public comment on 12 October 2004 for the period to 21 December 2004. Twelve submissions were received and a detailed analysis of these was presented to the Flora and Fauna Committee on 14 March 2005. The *Strategy* has been finalised, taking into account both the submissions and the advice of the Committee.

THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION ACT 1995 (NSW)

The *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) provides for the protection of all threatened plants and animals native to New South Wales (with the exception of fish and marine plants which are covered by other laws). Under the Act, threatened species are classified as endangered or vulnerable. A recovery plan must be prepared for endangered species (other than those presumed extinct), endangered populations, endangered ecological communities and vulnerable species. For each key threatening process that is listed, the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (Parks and Wildlife Division) is required to prepare a threat abatement plan.

One of the important features of the TSC Act is the integration of the conservation of threatened species into development control processes under the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. The effect of a development or activity on threatened species must be considered by a consent and/or determining authority. Where there is likely to be a significant effect on threatened species, the preparation of a species impact statement is required.

The requirements of this legislation, including the preparation of recovery plans by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (Parks and Wildlife Division), apply to four species included in this *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy*. These are the Striped Legless Lizard (Vulnerable, TSC Act), Grassland Earless Dragon (South-eastern Lined Earless Dragon), Golden Sun Moth, and Button Wrinklewort (Endangered, TSC Act). Natural temperate grassland is not listed under the TSC Act, however the ecological community receives some protection under the Act because it provides habitat for threatened species.

FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE ACT 1988 (VIC.)

The *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* is the primary legislation for the protection of Victoria's biodiversity, native plants and animals and ecological communities on land and in water. Species and ecological communities can be listed as threatened under the Act, based on assessments by an independent Scientific Advisory Committee. Threatening processes may also be listed. The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment maintains lists of rare or threatened species in Victoria. Conservation status categories used in these lists (presumed extinct, endangered, vulnerable, rare, poorly known) are also applied to species or communities listed as threatened under the Act.

1.6

Consultation and Community Participation

A community forum was held in March 2004, to enable community groups and interested individuals to provide comment on pre-circulated draft sections of the *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy*. A range of groups and individuals with an interest in grassland conservation was represented at the forum. Matters raised by forum participants included clarification of the concept of a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system; the importance of ecological connectivity and prevention of fragmentation; the need for grassland rehabilitation; increasing the knowledge of native grassland and promotion of its conservation; involvement of the community; and the response to development threats.

The *Draft ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* was released for public comment from 12 October 2004 to 21 December 2004. Twelve submissions were received and a detailed analysis of these was presented to the Flora and Fauna

Committee on 14 March 2005. The strategy has been finalised, taking into account both the submissions and the advice of the Committee.

There is active community interest in the ACT in the conservation of native grassland. Community groups, including the Conservation Council of the South East Region & Canberra, Friends of Grasslands, Australian Native Plants Society, Friends of Aranda Bushland and ACT Park Care and Landcare groups have been involved in advocacy, research, publication and on-ground work in support of the conservation of native grasslands. An objective of the *Strategy* (Table 4.1) is that 'landholders, community groups and others are actively involved in natural temperate grassland conservation'. As a means to further build community involvement, the *Strategy* proposes the formation of a Conservation Management Network as pioneered in other jurisdictions.

1.7

Implementation

The *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* is not a management plan prepared under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*, nor does it propose that management plans be prepared for each grassland area independent from existing management plans and management arrangements. The *Strategy* is a *thematic* document i.e. it deals with lowland native grassland conservation across all land tenures in the ACT. The goals of the *Strategy* will be achieved through a variety of means, relevant to the different tenures. The *Strategy* provides the strategic, ACT-wide and regional context for the consideration of lowland native grassland conservation in planning studies for specific areas of the ACT. It is in such planning studies that issues such as a buffer between native grassland and urban development will be determined.

Environment ACT has responsibility for coordinating implementation of this *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* in partnership with relevant public and private land managers and the wider community. Building upon the existing community interest in native grassland conservation, will be an important part of achieving the goals of this *Strategy*. The remaining lowland native grassland in the ACT is mainly on Public Land (Territory Land) reserved under the *Territory Plan* and National Land, with other areas on leased and unleased Territory Land. Achievement of the objectives of the *Strategy* will require the participation of the managers of these lands, in particular in undertaking the actions set out in Chapter 4.

Primary responsibility for conservation of lowland native grassland and component species on reserved Public Land will rest with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, with the directions of the *Strategy* expressed through management plans. For example, the *Canberra Nature Park Management Plan* (ACT Parks and Conservation Service 1999, p. 18) includes an action 'to provide assistance in the development and implementation of conservation strategies for threatened native plant species and communities and provide for long term monitoring'. Memoranda of Understanding (especially with Commonwealth landholders), Land Management Agreements (with rural lessees), and directions by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna under s. 47 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* in relation to activities on unreserved Public Land in the urban area are also means by which the *Strategy* may be implemented. Cooperation with NSW agencies, especially the Department of Environment and Conservation (Parks and Wildlife Division) is an important element in implementing the *Strategy*, as part of a growing regional effort to conserve the biodiversity of the ACT and Southern Tablelands.

The role of the *Strategy* in land use planning and land management in relation to ACT legislation is shown in Figure 1.1 on page 8.

1.8

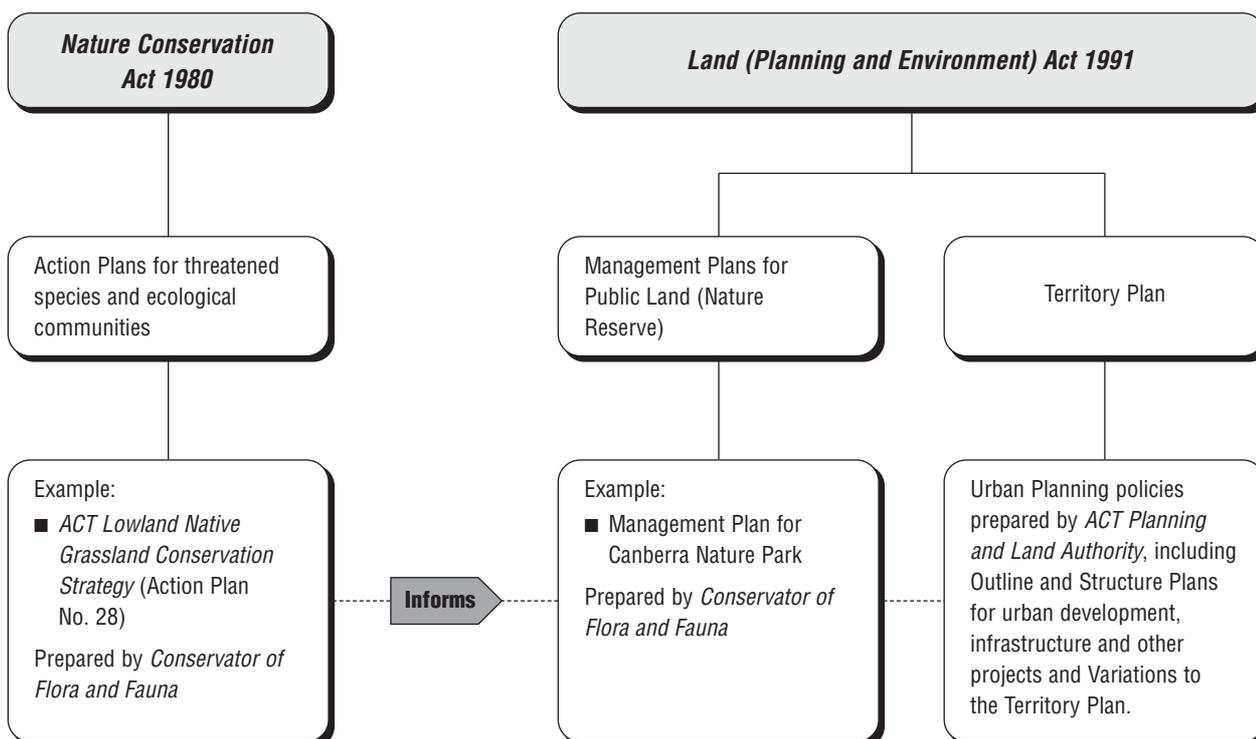
Structure of the ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy

The *Strategy* is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: The Introduction outlines the scope of the *Strategy*, the basis for declaring species threatened in the ACT and the role of the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee. It also includes a brief summary of the structure of ACT planning and land management, an outline of legislation applying to the conservation of flora and fauna in the ACT and region, and sections on community consultation and implementation of the *Strategy*.

Chapter 2: Lowland Native Grassland contains sub-sections on lowland native grassland (including the natural temperate grassland ecological community), grassland flora and grassland fauna. The first sub-section provides a description of natural temperate grassland and places the NSW Southern Tablelands distribution in its south-eastern Australian context. The sub-section outlines the surveys undertaken to compile the vegetation data for the *Strategy*. It describes other

Figure 1.1: The Role of the Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy in Land Use Planning and Land Management in the ACT.



(A brief outline of the broader ACT planning framework including the role of the National Capital Plan is contained in s. 1.5.1.)

lowland native grassland communities, grassland not included in the *Strategy*, and categories of lowland native grassland in the ACT. Changes to natural temperate grassland since European settlement and ongoing threats are outlined.

The second sub-section (Grassland Flora) briefly describes the lowland native grassland flora of the ACT region. It outlines how disturbance tolerant and disturbance sensitive species have been used as indicators of levels of grassland modification. The sub-section sets out specific conservation actions for ACT threatened grassland flora species, and uncommon species found in the ACT, some of which are listed as threatened in other jurisdictions.

The third sub-section (Grassland Fauna) discusses the interdependence of fauna and grassland ecosystems, outlines threats to fauna and briefly describes grassland fauna of the ACT region. The sub-section discusses the conservation of grassland fauna in the ACT, critical habitat features for threatened species, and threats to those species. It concludes with specific actions for the conservation of grassland fauna.

The chapter includes maps showing the location in five geographic areas of the remaining ACT lowland

native grassland and known occurrences of threatened species.

Chapter 3: Lowland Native Grassland: Planning and Management for Conservation considers principles underlying conservation planning for native grassland and criteria for identifying areas of highest conservation significance. Planning and management issues for each part of the ACT are outlined. The chapter also reviews aspects of the management of native grassland.

Chapter 4: The Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy brings the elements of the *Strategy* together, placing the Strategy into the ACT planning and land management context and considering policy guidelines for grassland conservation. The chapter evaluates the state of protection for lowland native grassland in the ACT, outlines actions taken to improve lowland grassland conservation, future actions necessary, and determines priorities. In particular, in support of the *Strategy's* goals, the chapter (s. 4.2) sets out objectives, the actions necessary to achieve those objectives, and relevant performance criteria.