

Submission to the 2019-2020 ACT Budget Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Budget process.

This submission relates specifically to the role which community based environmental groups play in the ACT. We are lucky in the Territory to have many people with enormous expertise and enthusiasm who voluntarily commit their time to all sorts of environmental projects; monitoring such as Waterwatch and Frogwatch, and a range of activities in Canberra Nature Parks and Urban Spaces.

There are two community-based catchment groups located in the ACT, Ginninderra Catchment Group and Southern ACT Catchment Group. In addition there is the Molonglo Catchment Group which looks after adjoining NSW but also covers parts of the ACT. These groups provide many services to the community and government, including:

- Logistical support for volunteer groups and individuals. One example of this is the ongoing Waterwatch program, which trains and supports volunteers to conduct monthly water quality testing across the catchments
- Advice, support and preparation of grant applications for specific projects
- Representation of ACT issues at a national level
- Connecting and coordinating individuals and groups with a range of interests and expertise in environmental issues
- Facilitating knowledge adoption
- Independent and expert advice across their areas of knowledge

Like other such organisations, the Catchment Groups in Canberra are embedded in their communities, and this makes them valuable. Not only do they provide the above services, but they do so in a very cost effective way.

I urge the ACT Government to commit ongoing base funding to support their core activities which would mean that they could concentrate more of their efforts directly into the work they are there to do. It would also enable better planning for future projects, which benefit from longer lead in times. Supporting the Catchment Groups to support the community and environment is an important and valuable part of the ACT's overall commitment to looking after our environment, something of which I am very proud.

Vera Kurz

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