



## **ACT and Region Frogwatch Submission**

### **Background and Context**

Citizen science is widely recognised as an effective strategy for engaging the community in environmental management. With growing urbanisation in the ACT, programs that improve environmental understanding and engage ACT citizens in wildlife monitoring and restoration are increasingly important.

The ACT and Region Frogwatch Program (Frogwatch) is an award-winning citizen science program. Frogwatch provides the only frog monitoring in the ACT region and facilitates community education to over 3500 people each year. This community education includes 6 training seminars for new volunteers; frog friendly habitat workshops; over 100 school classes (P-Yr12) engaging in *Tadpole Kits for Schools* Program; over 20 presentations to schools, scout groups or other interest groups about frogs; public presentations and workshops.

Frog species are widely recognised as indicators of environmental health. Frogwatch has been operating for 16 years and provides one of the very few long-term studies of frog populations in the world. Based on long-term research, Frogwatch has been able to strategically improve and create frog habitat across the ACT through community revegetation events. The Program is also providing information about impacts of climate change. Frogwatch data has been analysed in international publications and attracted wide media attention. Frogwatch has led to long-term behavioural change of participants, with positive environmental outcomes and well-being benefits to participating individuals and communities. The achievements of Frogwatch over the last 16 years, have been a result of the strong government-community partnership, particularly with the ACT Government.

Frogwatch does not have any secured funding post June 2018. Since 2015, Frogwatch has received only \$20,000 per annum from the ACT Government for the annual FrogCensus. All other Program activities have been supported by numerous small grants (with high transaction costs), volunteer staff, and the three year Climate Change Program. Without core funding for Frogwatch there will be no ACT monitoring of frogs, an ecological indicator species group, and substantially less environmental education and community engagement in wildlife conservation in the ACT.

### **The proposal**

To ensure the program can continue to achieve outcomes of value to the ACT, Frogwatch requires \$90,000 per year over the next 4 years, which equates to \$360,000.

Frogwatch provides a low risk, high return investment from the ACT Government that will:

- Maintain and enhance the only frog monitoring project in the ACT through the annual Frog Census and ongoing frog monitoring



- Monitor the impacts of climate change by comparing current trends in frog call behaviour to historical data across the ACT
- Identify high value frog habitat and areas for protection and restoration,
- Provide extensive community education to over 3500 people annually about frogs and strategies to protect this threatened species group
- Leverage additional funding for frog monitoring, environmental restoration and community education in the ACT
- Provide the opportunity to better integrate Frogwatch data into the relevant ACT government frog data needs under a number of strategies and plans (outlined below)

The key ACT Directorate that will directly benefit from this work will be the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development.

### **Strategic Priorities**

This proposal is strongly aligned with the ACT Government's strategic priorities of sustainability and local services. Frogwatch is recognised as important for the implementation of numerous ACT Government Strategies and Plans and is relevant to the ACT and Region Catchment Strategy 2016-2046, ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-2023 and the ACT Climate Adaptation Strategy 2016, the Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program and the draft ACT Integrated Water Monitoring Plan. The ACT Nature Conservation Strategy (2013) notes: *"The ACT has a wealth of community science to draw upon through established groups and individuals willing to volunteer skills and experience. Community groups such as ...Frogwatch...provide critical monitoring of the ACT's biodiversity... The success of the Strategy will continue to rely on these groups"*.

### **Value for money**

This proposal is a low-cost, high return investment. Core funding will enable Frogwatch to take up additional funds as they become available. It also leverages the skills, knowledge and labour of volunteers and mobilises them to undertake project-specific monitoring and restoration work, which value-adds to ACT Government data and environmental management.

Frogwatch has the capability and capacity to deliver the above with a longstanding proven track record in successful delivery and a high success rate at grant funding from a variety of government, business, community and other agencies.

### **Further information**

Further information about this submission is available by contacting:

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