



# Natural Temperate Grassland

## Critically Endangered

**The overall objective of the Action Plan is to conserve Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG) in perpetuity as a viable and well-represented ecological community across its natural geographic range in the ACT. This includes managing and restoring natural ecological and evolutionary processes within the community.**

Specific objectives of the Action Plan are to:

- Conserve all remaining areas of NTG in the ACT that are in moderate to high ecological condition.
- Retain areas of native grassland in lower ecological condition that serve as ecological buffers or landscape connections, or that are a priority for restoration.
- Manage NTG to maintain and improve grassland structure and function, reduce the impacts of threats, improve threatened species habitat, and conserve grassland biodiversity.
- Increase the extent, condition and connectivity of NTG by restoring priority grassland sites.
- Promote a greater awareness amongst all stakeholders of the objectives of the Action Plan and strengthen community engagement in grassland conservation.

## Ecological Community Trend (2017–22): Stable

The ACT has some of the largest remaining patches of NTG in Australia, from the low-lying plains of Canberra's urban area to valleys in Namadgi National Park. However, these areas usually occur as isolated, fragmented remnants and are listed as Critically Endangered both in the ACT and nationally. Many threatened species in the ACT are grassland specialists and rely on this ecological community for their survival. While management actions have been undertaken, conservation outcomes vary across site and species, with broadscale concerns for NTG condition.

**Approximately 5% of the ACT's remnant NTG remains in moderate to good condition. Monitoring has shown general trends of declining grassland quality, with increasing weeds and biomass across most areas, and fluctuations year to year due to rainfall. High-quality sites, however, have in general stayed in good condition.**



Figure 1: Natural Temperate Grassland at Mulanggari Grasslands Nature Reserve in late spring 2020 – showing predominance of Kangaroo Grass and Chocolate Lilies.

Key conservation actions to support the NTG Ecological Community have included:

- Establishment of conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program for Lowland Grasslands.
- Establishing monitoring metrics, benchmarks and offset management results to evaluate and inform management actions in environmental offset sites.
- Establishing Budjan Galindji and Nadjung Mada Grasslands Nature Reserves as well as the ACT portion of the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor (in response to development but has a net conservation gain for the ecological community).

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| Action Indicators                                                                                               | Progress (2017–22)           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Protection</b>                                                                                               |                              |
| All Conservation Significance Category 1 sites protected by appropriate formal measures.                        | Mostly achieved              |
| All Conservation Significance Category 2 and 3 sites protected from unintended impacts.                         | Mostly achieved              |
| Protection measures include requirement for conservation management.                                            | Partially achieved           |
| <b>Habitat Enhancement</b>                                                                                      |                              |
| Extent, condition and connectivity of Natural Temperate Grassland has increased.                                | Not achieved                 |
| <b>Community Engagement</b>                                                                                     |                              |
| Engagement and awareness activities undertaken and reported.                                                    | Partially achieved           |
| <b>Habitat Management</b>                                                                                       |                              |
| Natural Temperate Grassland ecological condition maintained, and management actions are recorded.               | Partially achieved           |
| Threats are identified and management actions taken to reduce impact.                                           | Partially achieved           |
| Herbage mass levels and inter-tussock spaces are maintained at ecologically appropriate levels.                 | Partially achieved - ongoing |
| <b>Research</b>                                                                                                 |                              |
| Research undertaken and reported and where appropriate applied to the conservation management of the community. | Mostly achieved              |

Note: this is a summary of progress for action indicators. For the full Effectiveness Review Report, please contact [OfficeofNatureConservation@act.gov.au](mailto:OfficeofNatureConservation@act.gov.au).



### Outcome:

The overall area of protected NTG has remained stable. However, condition is deteriorating significantly due to weed invasion and increased biomass, exacerbated by fluctuating climatic conditions. Management interventions such as ecological burning can increase native species richness but can also benefit several highly invasive species. Multi-year large-scale weed control has successfully decreased the extent of African Lovegrass and Serrated Tussock across multiple sites; however, St John's Wort remains a persistent and increasing management challenge. Significant progress has been made in understanding the restoration of native understorey cover in NTG.

### What's next for Natural Temperate Grasslands?

- Model the effects of rainfall to disentangle long-term management changes versus short-term climate driven fluctuations
- Undertake restoration activities to increase native cover and floristic diversity
- Develop biodiversity conservation policies to preserve existing conservation values in context of shifting realities due to climate change
- Undertake research with a focus on ecological community characteristics, management at higher elevations, mapping NTG communities, taxonomy of grassland species, and replication of monitoring sites.