

NATURE CONSERVATION FORUM

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Canberra is located on Ngunnawal Country and the special relationship and connection that the Ngunnawal people and other First Peoples have with the land as its first inhabitants and Traditional Custodians. We also recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We acknowledge the historic dispossession of the Ngunnawal people and other First Peoples of Canberra and its surrounding regions. We recognise the significant contribution the Ngunnawal people and other First Peoples have made to the ACT and region. For thousands of years the Ngunnawal people and other First Peoples have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to these lands and waters.

We also acknowledge the many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia who have made Canberra their home, and we pay respect and celebrate their culture, diversity and contributions to the ACT and surrounding region.

Mission statement

The Nature Conservation Forum (the forum) brings together community and government to share, consult and collaborate on protecting and enhancing the ACT's natural environment. Through open dialogue, shared knowledge, and co-designed solutions, the scope of the forum aligns with the implementation of the Nature Conservation Strategy and strengthens collective efforts to safeguard nature for current and future generations.

Vision statement

To foster a thriving, resilient natural environment in the ACT through inclusive, collaborative, and forward-thinking dialogue that empowers communities, informs policy, and drives collective action for nature conservation.

Purpose

The purpose of the Nature Conservation Forum is to:

1. act as a mechanism for formal and informal consultation between the ACT community and the ACT Government on issues relating to policy, planning, and management of nature conservation
2. support the ACT's nature conservation community to present and codesign actions to enhance nature conservation in the ACT
3. focus on collective solutions.

Supporting legislation

The Nature Conservation Forum aligns with the Nature Conservation Act 2014 legislation. The forum provides a basis for community engagement and coordinated action to protect and enhance biodiversity across the ACT.

Co-Chairs

The Nature Conservation Forum will be co-chaired by the:

- Executive Group Manager – Environment, Heritage and Parks Division; City and Environment Directorate
- Executive Director – Conservation Council ACT Region
- Chief Executive Officer – Landcare ACT

Membership and attendance

Participation in the forum is by joint invitation from the co-chairs and is voluntary. Membership will be held by organisations, rather than individuals. Member organisations include local nature-related organisations and relevant government agencies ([Attachment A](#)). Members groups may alter their representatives to the forum.

As determined by the co-chairs, additional relevant staff from the City and Environment Directorate, other ACT Government directorates, members of other non-government organisations or individuals may be invited to present information, provide advice, and receive feedback on current programs.

Scope

The forum will canvas a range of topics that are relevant to nature conservation in the ACT, including but not limited to:

Topic Area	Details
Habitats and Species	Local ecosystems Threatened species and ecological communities Urban biodiversity Invasive species Loss of habitat Trees (urban, mature, hollow-bearing) Pollinators Wetlands and waterways
Climate and Ecosystem Resilience	Climate adaptation Landscape and ecosystem management Fire management Environmental offsets
Land Use and Planning	Park and reserve management Agriculture and biodiversity ACT Landscape Plan Planning and development (where it relates to nature conservation)
Community and Volunteer Engagement	Volunteer programs
Governance and Policy	Biodiversity and biosecurity policy Relevant plans and strategies

Frequency and location

Meetings will be called by the co-chairs and will be held quarterly. The need for fewer or additional meetings will be determined and agreed by the co-chairs.

Meetings will primarily be held at the at 480 Northbourne Avenue ACT Government building, with occasional alternate venues. Meetings will run for three hours and include a break for informal discussion.

Formal consultation on issues

Under the *Nature Conservation Act* there are several provisions that require community consultation. For issues deemed appropriate by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, the forum may act as a formal consultative body, providing formal advice from the community to the ACT Government. These issues will be accompanied by a formal meeting paper and presentation by relevant government staff. The forum can provide a range of views and advice to government – it does not need to reach consensus.

The forum's formal advice will be recorded as part of meeting minutes. Members unable to attend the meeting can provide written advice, via the secretariat, prior to the meeting.

Where formal advice is given, a formal response and any ensuing actions will be returned to members.

Out of session issues

At the discretion of co-chairs, special meetings on high priority issues may be held out of session, or via out of session papers. This will only be done for critical issues that cannot wait until the next meeting.

The forum may establish time-limited working groups, or topic specific online meetings as required.

From time to time between meetings the secretariat may circulate relevant information or opportunities to members.

Secretariat and meeting administration

The forum will be supported by a secretariat. [Attachment B](#) sets out timeframes to aid the secretariat's meeting planning. Of particular importance:

- The secretariat will call for agenda items that are for formal consultation at the next meeting, at each meeting, and at least eight weeks prior to the next meeting.
- the secretariat will call for agenda items from members six weeks before meetings, for consideration by co-chairs
- meeting agendas and requests for papers will be circulated to members four weeks ahead of meetings
- Co-chairs will meet four weeks before meetings. All suggested agenda items will be considered and prioritised according to relevance of the issues and time available at the forum meeting.
- Meeting papers and presentations will specify if, and where, confidentiality applies to issues.
- the secretariat will record high level and action-focused meeting minutes
- minutes and communiques will be circulated to members within two weeks meetings

In addition to standard meeting administrative items, agendas will include four key sections:

Agenda section	Description	Supporting material
Administrative items	For standing agenda items including endorsement of previous minutes, update on action items.	Verbal updates or meeting papers, as appropriate.
Items for consultation	Issues the ACT Government is seeking formal community consultation on.	Meeting paper and presentation (verbal or PowerPoint).
Items for discussion	Issues presented for members' advice and discussion, or members raising issues of concern with ACT Government.	Presentation (verbal or PowerPoint).
Items for noting (discussion by exception only)	Issues presented for members' update only, will not be discussed unless specific questions are asked. To be accompanied by a paper, with relevant staff on hand if discussion is required.	Meeting paper only, with staff available to answer any questions.

The City and Environment Directorate must retain official records of meeting documents. All meeting records and related information are considered ACT Government records and are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 2016*, the *Information Privacy Act 2014*, and the Territory Privacy Principles. For any administrative-related queries members can contact: ACTNRM@act.gov.au.

Engagement Principles

As a member of the Nature Conservation Forum, members will:

- Make every effort to attend meetings and notify the secretariat in advance if unable to attend. Where possible, a suitable alternate representative should be nominated.
- Share insights and advice from their organisation's perspective or clearly indicate when views are expressed in a personal capacity.
- Contribute to open, respectful, and constructive discussions, ensuring all voices are heard and valued.
- Maintain confidentiality where required.
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest at the start of relevant agenda items.

If these principles are not upheld, the co-chairs may ask the individual to step down or request that their organisation nominate a replacement.

Terms of Reference currency

This Terms of Reference was endorsed by co-chairs on 20 November 2025. This Terms of Reference will be initially reviewed 12 months after coming into effect, then every two years. The Terms of Reference may be updated by agreement of Members.

ATTACHMENT A – LIST OF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Membership includes, but is not limited to, the following. Other groups or officials may be invited as necessary for the agenda.

Community organisations	ACT Government - City and Environment Directorate
ACT for Bees	ACT Natural Resource Management
ACT Multi Hazard Advisory Council	ACT Parks and Conservation Service
ACT Rural Landholders Association of Farmers	City Services
ACT Scientific Committee	Office of Nature Conservation
ACT Wildlife	Place Management
Australia Native Plants Society	
Canberra Birds	
Conservation Council ACT Region	
First Nations representatives	
Friends of Grasslands	
Ginninderra Catchment Group	
Invasive Species Council	
Landcare ACT	
Molonglo Conservation Group	
National Parks Association	
Southern ACT Catchment Group	
Wombat Rescue	
Woodlands and Wetlands Trust	