



"Many hands...one voice"

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Chief Minister
Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
By email: budgetconsultation@act.gov.au

Dear Treasurer

Submission to the 2019-2020 Budget Consultation – Community Catchment Groups

Landcare ACT is grateful for the opportunity to make a late submission to the 2019-2020 budget consultation process on behalf of its three community catchment group members.

In Summary

Landcare ACT is seeking funding in the 2019-2020 budget for the Ginninderra Catchment Group, the Southern ACT Catchment Group and the Molonglo Conservation Group of \$390,000 in total, being \$130,000 for each group.

These funds will enable the groups to survive and 'keep the doors open' to continue their critical engagement, facilitation and planning functions in support of the smaller community-based groups, rural land holders and traditional owners with whom they work to undertake nature conservation and sustainable agricultural projects in the ACT. Without such funding support through a transitional period the social capital and environmental stewardship that the catchment groups have built over decades will be lost.

Why:

Landcare is an enduring grass roots Australia-wide movement for community and environmental outcomes. In the ACT the work of 'landcarers' plays an important role in protecting the environment, supporting sustainable agriculture, promoting the value of Aboriginal heritage, improving urban livability and biodiversity, and mitigating the effects of climate change.

The ACT catchment groups have a decades-long history of successfully brokering, supporting and delivering landcare outcomes.

Changes in the National Landcare Program at the national level from 2018 and a reduction in the amount of resourcing reaching the community level have adversely

impacted the groups. In several states, including NSW and Victoria, state governments have responded by increasing their direct support for Landcare groups, thereby providing institutional stability in the current environment.

Notably, the operating environment for the groups continues to shift. The national Landcare context is expected to continue to evolve during 2019-2020. At the Territory level we are aware that the Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate has engaged consultancy services to review its arrangements for the governance of Natural Resource Management and that consultant is yet to report.

Background:

The 2018-19 ACT budget included one year's funding of \$352,000 to allow the three groups to continue, noting their crucial role, the changing Commonwealth funding arrangements, and the need to transition to a stable operating model. This funding was directed through policy development projects which have initiated a pathway to a different model, but not completed it. \$390,000 is sought this year to support the groups' core functions and continue community facilitation, planning and on-ground activities for a further year.

Over 60 smaller groups are members of these three catchment groups, working across land tenures to undertake rural, waterways, wetlands, urban and parkland management. The catchment groups directly leverage at least \$1.5 million (but often more) per annum in in-kind community and volunteer effort and thousands of volunteer hours. They bring external environmental and agricultural funding into the Territory. And as the ACT continues to develop the green and blue infrastructure necessary to support a growing city, the community environmental stewardship, which is the core business of the catchment groups becomes increasingly important.

In this evolving operating environment, support for the groups through 2019-20 would safeguard the considerable social and environmental outcomes they produce for the community while a longer-term arrangement is settled.

Emeritus Professor Ian Falconer AO DSc, Chair, ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group, has advised that he is supportive of this submission and considers that it is essential that the catchment groups' community activities in urban and parkland conservation and community outreach continue with strength. He also advised that he considers that the catchment groups are well established and bring in substantial additional resources for direct activities in nature conservation in the ACT.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Maxine Cooper
Chair,
Landcare ACT

12 April 2019