

ACT ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERS

CONFERENCE | 2025

‘Regeneration’



Landcare
ACT



ACT
Government





Speaker biographies

Welcome to Country:

Richie Allan

Richie is a Ngunnawal Kamilaroi custodian who was born in Ngunnawal Country and raised on both Ngunnawal and Kamilaroi Country.

Richie is the cultural director of Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, where he manages cultural awareness, education and Ngunnawal relationships.



MC: Dr Michael Robinson – CEO, Landcare ACT

Dr Michael Robinson is the Chief Executive Officer of Landcare ACT, with over 20 years' leadership experience across the commercial, public, and not-for-profit sectors.

With a PhD in a scientific discipline, Michael has brought an evidence-based approach to his work in biosecurity, climate change, and natural resource management.

He has held executive and non-executive roles in organisations ranging from startups to national bodies, with expertise in strategy, governance, and innovation. At Landcare ACT, he supports grassroots efforts to protect and enhance the ACT's natural landscapes and is a strong advocate for community-led environmental stewardship.

As MC of this year's Environmental Volunteers Conference, he brings both professional insight and a deep appreciation for the role of volunteers in shaping a sustainable future.




Keynote speaker: **Pip Kiernan – Chair,** **Clean Up Australia**

'Clean Up Australia: Mobilising 23 million volunteers over 3 decades'

Pip Kiernan is a passionate environmental advocate and Chair of Clean Up Australia, a role reflecting both her personal legacy and professional commitment to sustainability. Her journey with the organisation began early, growing up as the daughter of Ian Kiernan AO, founder of Clean Up Australia Day. Pip grew up immersed in environmental action, shaped by her father's hands-on approach and belief in community change. After Ian's passing in 2018, she felt compelled to continue his legacy, stepping into leadership at the same age he was when he launched the first Clean Up event. Under Pip's leadership, Clean Up Australia has evolved from an annual event into a year-round movement engaging schools, businesses, governments, and communities. The organisation now focuses not only on rubbish removal but also on preventing waste through initiatives around single-use plastics, e-waste, and sustainable living.

In her keynote address, Pip will share stories that are both personal and universal—about collective action, environmental responsibility, and the lasting impact of volunteerism. Her message is clear: every individual can make a difference, and together, that impact multiplies.



Conference opening: The Hon Suzanne Orr MLA

Suzanne Orr is the Labor Member for Yerrabi and Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. Born in Canberra and raised in Giralang. Suzanne's family fostered over 200 children, shaping her belief in the importance of strong social support and the role of government in helping people when they need it most. Since being elected, she has worked with the community to deliver a new park in Giralang and secure more green space in Gungahlin. She has advocated for stronger building regulations and helped roll out a reusable coffee cup scheme to reduce plastic waste. Suzanne is committed to environmental action, inclusive community spaces, and supporting the diverse people of Yerrabi.



Government address: Bren Burkevics, ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna/Executive Group Manager, Environment Division, CED

Bren's focus for the role of Executive Group Manager of Environment Heritage and Parks and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna has been to build a system for good environmental management that is unified and collaborative. Bren recognises that the ACT is in a race against time to protect, conserve, and enhance the ACT's environment where we strive to go beyond management to carefully prioritised restoration and investment.

MORNING

Breakout 1 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

Regenerating ACT volunteers: Exploring how different demographics want to engage as volunteers

Location: Seminar Room 1

Room Capacity: 48



Chair: Lauren McQueen
ParkCare Program Coordinator
ACT Parks and Conservation Service

Lauren McQueen leads the ParkCare Program for the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, where she coordinates one of Canberra's most enduring and impactful community environmental initiatives. With a deep commitment to inclusion and community empowerment, Lauren ensures that ParkCare is a welcoming space for volunteers of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Under her leadership, the program has expanded its reach and accessibility, offering diverse pathways for people to connect with nature—whether through hands-on bush restoration, citizen science, trail maintenance, visitor education or cultural heritage projects. Lauren is known for her collaborative style and her ability to bring together government, community groups, and individuals to care for Canberra's parks and reserves.

Her work reflects a strong belief that everyone has a role to play in conservation, and she has been instrumental in embedding inclusive practices into volunteer training, program design, and community engagement. Through her guidance, ParkCare continues to thrive as a model of how environmental programs can be both ecologically effective and socially enriching.

MORNING

Breakout 1 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

Regenerating ACT volunteers: Exploring how different demographics want to engage as volunteers

Location: Seminar Room 1

Room Capacity: 48

**Sally Holliday
Landcare ACT**

Sally is a driving force behind Landcare ACT, leading community efforts in environmental restoration and sustainable land care across the region. Sally is also a practising Transpersonal Counsellor and Art Therapist. If wellbeing in nature interests you, Sally will be chairing Panel 8 at 1:30.

**Heather Fitt
Volunteering ACT**

Heather Fitt is Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy at Volunteering ACT, where she champions inclusive volunteering and leads the ACT Volunteering Strategy to ensure everyone can participate and thrive.

**Dr Harjinda Dhindsa
Volunteer Group Convenor**

Dr Dhindsa, a plant pathologist and community leader, champions multicultural inclusion and environmental action through decades of volunteer service.

**Rosie Hughes
ANU Intrepid Landcare**

Rosie empowers young people through ANU Intrepid Landcare, sparking passion for conservation and nurturing future environmental leaders.

**Mina Bui Jones (She/Her)
Bush Heritage Australia**

Mina is national engagement officer and NSW coordinator for BHA's volunteer program. She has a background in heritage studies and community organising, both overseas and in Australia. She volunteers with local DuneCare and WaterWatch as well as climate-action group Rising Tide. Mina lives and works on Awabakal land at Lake Macquarie.

**Greta Stevens
Cleanup Australia**

Greta is the Community Relationships Manager at Clean Up Australia, where she works closely with volunteers, local groups, and partners to support environmental initiatives and promote community-led sustainability efforts across the country.

MORNING

Breakout 2 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

**Regenerating for climate resilience: how to factor into our
volunteer activities**

Location: Main Conference Room

Room Capacity: 75



Chair: Dr. Sarah Milne
Associate Professor, Crawford
School of Public Policy, ANU

Dr. Sarah Milne is an Associate Professor at the Australian National University's Crawford School of Public Policy. Her research explores the politics of environmental intervention, with a focus on community-based conservation, resource rights, and carbon farming.

With over two decades of experience working across Southeast Asia and Australia, Dr. Milne brings a unique perspective on the intersection of environmental policy and local livelihoods. She is currently leading a major research initiative on the political ecology of carbon farming in Australia, examining how climate mitigation strategies intersect with Indigenous rights, rural livelihoods, and land justice. Dr. Milne is known for her collaborative approach, working closely with communities, policymakers, and interdisciplinary teams to co-design solutions that are both ecologically sound and socially equitable.

As Chair, she brings a strong commitment to inclusive leadership and knowledge exchange, fostering dialogue between academic research and grassroots action to shape more resilient and just environmental futures.

MORNING

Breakout 2 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

**Regenerating for climate resilience: how to factor into our
volunteer activities**

Location: Main Conference Room

Room Capacity: 75

Dr. Kaz Kagohashi
Australian National University

Kaz is a Honorary Senior Lecturer at the Fenner School for Environment and Society ANU, an Assoc. Prof. at the Faculty of Global Liberal Studies, Nanzan University, Japan AND a Research Fellow at Nanzan University Institute for Social Ethics and has led the "Social Resilience" research project since 2015. He has also been a Board Member of Global Landcare since 2021.

Kaz's research at ANU explores the conditions of sustainable governance of critical natural capital (such as water, land and forest), and his current research project focuses explicitly on evaluating the impact of Landcare in Australia.

Dr. Brett Howland
Senior Vegetation Ecologist

Brett is a wildlife ecologist with the Office of Nature Conservation. He has led research on kangaroo grazing impacts, fire ecology, and grassland biodiversity. With a PhD in conservation biology from the ANU, Brett's work integrates science and land management to support sustainable ecosystems in the ACT.

Darren Roso
ACT Parks and Conservation Service

Darren is a ranger leading ecological restoration, fire management, and biodiversity protection in the ACT. On weekends, he practices regenerative farming on his property, demonstrating sustainable land stewardship in action.

Liz Adcock
Microforest Collective

Liz co-founded the Microforest Collective and leads the Watson Micro-forest project. She empowers communities to transform urban spaces into thriving microforests that restore biodiversity and build climate resilience.

MORNING Breakout 3 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

Pathways from volunteer to a career

Location: Classroom 1 (22B14)

Room Capacity: 50



Chair: Miranda Gardner

**Director (Complaints and Investigations),
Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability
and the Environment;**

**Chair, Southern ACT Catchment Group;
Convenor, Holder Wetlands Landcare**

Miranda Gardner is a passionate environmental leader and advocate for community-driven sustainability. She currently serves as Director of Complaints and Investigations at OCSE in Canberra, where she works to uphold environmental accountability and promote ecologically sustainable development across the ACT.

Miranda's journey into environmental leadership began through volunteering, a path that has shaped her career and deepened her commitment to grassroots action. Since moving to Australia in 2010, she has been a tireless advocate for Landcare and community conservation, both professionally and as a volunteer.

She is the Chair of the Southern ACT Catchment Group, where she supports collaborative landmanagement and ecological restoration across the region. As Convenor of the Holder Wetlands Landcare Group, Miranda leads local efforts to restore wetland habitats, engage residents in citizen science, and foster a sense of place and stewardship.

Miranda's work bridges policy and practice, demonstrating how community engagement and environmental governance can work hand-in-hand. Her leadership reflects a deep belief in the power of volunteering as a pathway to meaningful environmental careers, and she continues to mentor others seeking to make a difference through local action.

MORNING

Breakout 3 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

Pathways from volunteer to a career

Location: Classroom 1 (22B14)

Room Capacity: 50

Jed Pearson

Southern Inland Environmental

Jed coordinates Waterwatch and contributes to Rivers of Carbon, leading water quality monitoring and riparian restoration. His journey from volunteer to Director of his own environmental business shows the power of how grassroots experience builds leadership skills, expertise and lasting impact.

Ro McFarlane

University of Canberra

Ro began her career through grassroots volunteering with Landcare groups across NSW, ACT, and NT. Her passion for environmental and public health led her to academia, where she is now an Assistant Professor in Public Health at the University of Canberra.

Kathy Eyles

ANU

Kathy began her journey as a volunteer Park Carer in Dune care tackling bitou bush in the 1980's, restoring the Duke St rainforest in Darwin during the 1990's, and joining Mt Taylor Parkcare over 20 years ago. A love of geography, drove this passion for nature and community engagement and a career in environmental planning, network facilitation and research, completing a PhD at ANU about our relationships with nature in urban settings.

Carmen Truong

Intrepid Landcare

Carmen has recently graduated from a Law and Political Science degree and was an active ANU Intrepid Landcare member. She now on the board of the national organisation, Intrepid Landcare. Her volunteer work has shaped her passion for environmental justice and her goal to work at the intersection of law and advocacy.

MORNING

Breakout 4 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

Regenerating Soils for Conservation

Location: Seminar Room 2

Room Capacity: 50



Chair: Dr Katharine Brown CPSS GroundEd Land Management and Education

Katharine is an accredited soil scientist and regenerative land rehabilitation advisor who champions curiosity, conversation, and connection—especially through the act of getting your hands dirty—as essential to restoring the health and function of soils and landscapes. She believes that meaningful change begins with asking questions, engaging openly with others, and building a hands-on relationship with the land. Through her work, Katharine encourages a deeper understanding of soil systems and landscape processes, fostering collaborative efforts that support ecological repair and resilience.

MORNING

Breakout 4 Panel 11.00am to 12.30pm

Regenerating Soils for Conservation

Location: Seminar Room 2

Room Capacity: 50

Dr Martin Henery
ACT Natural Resource
Management

Martin is an ecologist focused on soil microbes and revegetation. His work bridges science and practice to regenerate degraded landscapes

Eli Court
Soils For Life

Eli is CEO of Soils For Life, leading national efforts to support farmers in regenerating soils and landscapes. Under his leadership, the organisation promotes regenerative agriculture as a solution to climate and land challenges.

Fiona Buining
Ainslie Urban Farm

Fiona is the founder of Ainslie Urban Farm and a Churchill Fellow, passionate about regenerative soil practices and creating pathways for urban food growers through education and hands-on training.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 5 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

Effective Storytelling/The Power of Interpretation for land care

Location: Classroom 1 (22B14)

Room Capacity: 50



**Chair: Dr. Louise Curham
Convenor of Urambi Hills
Parkcare Group for 11 years.**

Louise was the convenor of the Urambi Hills Parkcare Group from 2014 until recently. Her time at Urambi has given her firsthand experience of the diverse community engaged in environmental volunteering. In her experience, this has included everyone from family day care providers to super-regular attendees, as well as those who join in just once. Louise has learned that there are many motivations for caring for the environment.

Professionally, Louise has worked with cultural collections as both a public servant and an academic, alongside creative projects such as Kambah Turns 50. A common thread in all of her work is care for the connections that flow from places and objects to people.

Louise's first training was as a filmmaker, so storytelling is close to her heart—for how it shapes our motivations and deepens our understanding of the world.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 5 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

Effective Storytelling/The Power of Interpretation for land care

Location: Classroom 1 (22B14)

Room Capacity: 50



Geoff Puleston **Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association**

Geoff is a long-time volunteer and heritage advocate, known for reviving eucalyptus distilling and sharing Tidbinbilla's rich cultural and environmental history through storytelling.

Wally Bell **Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation**

Wally is a respected Ngunnawal Custodian and cultural leader, sharing traditional knowledge and leading landcare initiatives that connect community with Country through story and practice.

Zoe Stuart McMahon **2024 ACT NextGen Landcare Award Winner**

Zoe is a passionate Landcare advocate who inspires young people through storytelling and education, connecting community with sustainability through her work at Majura Valley Farm as Farmer Zo.

Arran McKenna **Happydance Creative**

Arran transforms complex ideas into engaging visual stories through live illustration and graphic recording. With a background in community engagement and a passion for storytelling, Aaran brings a unique lens to how visuals can deepen understanding and connection.

Millie Sutherland Saines (she/her) **Landcare ACT**

Millie is a Canberra-based ecologist and science communicator known for her work with native wildlife and habitat restoration, including predator reintroduction at Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary. She shares her deep ecological knowledge through public engagement, such as guided nature walks at Red Hill Reserve.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 6 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

Rehydrating the landscape- volunteer case studies in action

Location: Main conference room

Room Capacity: 75



**Chair: Frank Garofalow
CEO, ACT Natural Resource
Management,
ACT Government**

Frank is the CEO of ACT Natural Resource Management, the regional NRM body for the Australian Capital Territory that sits within the ACT Government.

ACT NRM's focus include biodiversity and conservation; First Nations natural resource management; sustainable agriculture; community engagement and facilitation; and citizen science. Within these focus areas ACT NRM carries out a wide range of programs, many in partnership with stakeholders across the community and all levels of government, to conserve and enhance the natural resources of the ACT.

Frank has a long history of working in natural resource management related fields, including with NSW Government and Blue Mountains City Council.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 6 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

Rehydrating the landscape- volunteer case studies in action

Location: Main conference room

Room Capacity: 75

Gordon McAllister Friends of Magpie Hill

Gordon is an active member of Friends of Magpie Hill. He has played a key role in regeneration efforts in the park, including an ongoing coir log erosion control project and a new initiative to restore an eroded desire line.

Lori Gould Rivers of Carbon - Program Manager CEO of Environmental Restoration Design and Planning

Lori has over 25 years' experience in the environmental sector and specialises in practical natural resource management, particularly riparian rehabilitation, landscape planning and community engagement.

Chris Mobbs Bragg Street Park Volunteers

Chris leads a grassroots water harvesting project in Hackett, transforming an urban park into a thriving habitat through swales, citizen science, and storytelling.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 7 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

Citizen science - making a difference to science and volunteers

Location: Seminar Room 2

Room Capacity: 50



**Chair: Daniel Harris-Pascal
Regional Facilitator, Upper
Murrumbidgee Waterwatch,
ACT Government**

Daniel Harris-Pascal is the Regional Facilitator for the Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch program, a flagship citizen science initiative supported by the ACT Government. With a background in environmental science and a passion for community engagement, Daniel empowers local residents to become active stewards of their waterways through hands-on water quality monitoring and ecological education.

A key advocate for citizen science, Daniel has expanded the reach and impact of Waterwatch by developing inclusive programs that make scientific data collection accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. His leadership in Platypus Month, an annual citizen science campaign, has mobilised hundreds of volunteers to monitor platypus populations across the ACT, contributing valuable data to conservation efforts. Daniel's work bridges the gap between science, policy, and community action, demonstrating how citizen science can drive meaningful environmental outcomes and foster a deeper connection between people and place.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 7 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

Citizen science - making a difference to science and volunteers

Location: Seminar Room 2

Room Capacity: 50

Anke Maria
ACT & Region Frogwatch

Anke coordinates Frogwatch, training volunteers to monitor frog populations and track climate impacts. She connects communities to wetland health through citizen science and storytelling.

Ciaran Ernst-Russell
NatureMapr Moderator

Ciaran is a botanist and NatureMapr moderator passionate about alpine flora. His biodiversity mapping empowers others to share sightings and contribute to conservation.

Claudia Schipp
Citizen Scientist & Communicator

Claudia leads local efforts for the Great Southern BioBlitz and mentors new iNaturalist users, showing how shared discovery and storytelling can inspire biodiversity action.

Stuart Harris
Citizen Scientist & Photographer

Stuart is a macro photographer who discovered the peacock spider *Maratus harrisi*. His journey shows how curiosity and storytelling can lead to real scientific discovery.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 8 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

More Love, Less Loss: Cultivating Nature Connection for Personal and Planetary Health

Location: Seminar Room 1

Room Capacity: 48



Chair: Sally Holliday (She/Her)
Program Coordinator,
Landcare ACT

Sally Holliday is a passionate advocate for the transformative power of nature connection. She joined Landcare ACT in 2021 to lead the Wellbeing through Nature program, supported by the ACT Government. Following its success, she has continued to develop and facilitate nature-based community initiatives in the ACT, including roving Landcare groups and the Women in Nature program.

Sally is also a practising Transpersonal Counsellor and Art Therapist. She is a member of the climate aware practitioner network and enjoys stepping away from more traditional clinical settings to facilitate nature-based expressive art sessions outdoors. Embodying what she champions, Sally integrates nature connection into her personal wellbeing practice through basket weaving and photography.

Sally's work continues to inspire and empower individuals and communities to engage with the natural world in ways that are restorative, inclusive, and deeply connected.

AFTERNOON

Breakout 8 Panel 13:30pm to 15:00pm

More Love, Less Loss: Cultivating Nature Connection for Personal and Planetary Health

Location: Seminar Room 1

Room Capacity: 48

Mina Bui Jones (She/Her) Bush Heritage Australia

Mina is national engagement officer and NSW coordinator for BHA's volunteer program. She has a background in heritage studies and community organising, both overseas and in Australia. She volunteers with local DuneCare and WaterWatch as well as climate-action group Rising Tide. Mina lives and works on Awabakal land at Lake Macquarie.

Dr Ro McFarlane (She/Her) University of Canberra

Ro is a public health academic exploring how green spaces, biodiversity, and food systems support wellbeing. She co-leads the ACT HEAL network, promoting nature connection for personal and planetary health.

Charlie Wood (They/Them) Tipping Point & Psychology for a Safe Climate

Charlie is a climate justice campaigner supporting grassroots movements like School Strike 4 Climate. They now help communities process climate grief and reconnect with nature as a source of strength. Charlie also works with Tipping Point Psychology in Canberra, where they support individuals and groups navigating eco-anxiety and building resilience through therapeutic approaches.

**We want your feedback on how
today went.**

**Fill out this quick survey to let us
know what you thought and what we
could do better next time:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HGWKHFM>



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