



Ginninderra Catchment Group
Submission to the
ACT 2025-26 Budget Consultation

January 2025



The Ginninderra Catchment Group (GCG) would like to thank the ACT Government for the opportunity to provide input into the ACT 2025-26 Budget Consultation.

Introduction and Background

GCG is an environmental stewardship organisation based in the Ginninderra region, which spans both urban and peri-urban areas in Belconnen, Gungahlin and extending across the border into NSW. We are dedicated to ecological restoration, community education, and citizen science initiatives, with a focus on the Ginninderra Creek and Yass River catchments - key contributors to the broader Murray-Darling Basin ecosystem.

Through partnerships with the ACT Government, local community groups, and other stakeholders, GCG addresses critical issues in ecological health through coordinated, community-driven efforts. A significant aspect of our work involves supporting volunteers in environmental restoration and monitoring, providing opportunities to actively contribute to the health and sustainability of our local ecosystems.

In alignment with the ACT Wellbeing Framework, GCG's work in environmental volunteering and stewardship promotes positive outcomes across key domains such as Environment and Climate, Social Connection, Identity and Belonging, and Education and Lifelong Learning.

Key Objectives of GCG

- **Supporting Member Groups:** Actively assist urban and rural volunteer member groups in carrying out local landcare initiatives that contribute to the protection and restoration of natural landscapes.
- **Community Engagement and Education:** Enhance environmental stewardship and improve environmental literacy through community activities and education programs.
- **Citizen Science Monitoring:** Engage the community in monitoring local flora and fauna, and habitats through volunteer programs like ACT and Region FrogWatch, Waterwatch and TurtleWatch.

Achievements under Current Funding Programs

In the past financial year, GCG has made significant and lasting contributions to the region:

- **Volunteer Growth and Support:** Expanded to support 33 volunteer groups (up from 19 groups in 2019) providing training, resources, and on-ground assistance.
- **Citizen Science Programs:** Conducted over 50 FrogWatch and Waterwatch activities, involving over 200 volunteers.
- **Community Engagement:** Organised 20+ events, collaborated with 40+ stakeholder organisations (government, non-profit and private), and facilitated education programs reaching hundreds of participants.
- **On-Ground Achievements:** Delivered significant restoration projects, including the protection of culturally significant Ngunawal/Ngunnawal ring trees and woodlands, and critically endangered grasslands.

Challenges with Current Funding Programs

GCG faces increasing financial pressures, limiting our ability to sustain and expand our initiatives.

Currently, GCG, along with the two other catchment groups in the ACT, receives approximately \$150,000 (non-indexed) annually through four-year contracts for the Community Environmental Education and Stewardship Program (CEESP). The current CEESP contract ends on the 30th of June 2025.

ACT and Region FrogWatch receives annual funding of \$94,000 (indexed), with its current contract ending June 2027.

Ginninderra Waterwatch receives annual funding of \$107,000 (indexed), with its current contract ending June 2027.

Landcare ACT (LACT), our peak representative body for community Landcare in the ACT and region, currently receives no ongoing funding from the ACT Government.

Given the imminent end of the current CEESP, and the lack of government funding for LACT, we are highly concerned about the persistence of these programs. Regarding the CEESP:

- **Funding has not been guaranteed** beyond June 2025. The limits of 4-year contracts without an indication of ongoing core funding make forward planning for environmental work and organisational sustainability difficult, and create uncertainty about staff employment.
- **Funding has not kept pace with the increasing scope of core catchment work.** In 2019, we supported 19 volunteer groups, which rapidly expanded to 33 in 2024. These additional groups require time for onboarding, ongoing education, relationship building, and on-ground assistance with their new restoration sites. The increase in volunteering has not been met with a commensurate increase in funding to support it.
- **Funding has not been indexed**, meaning that in an inflationary context, we are operating with less, which impacts the sustainability of our work and our ability to attract and retain staff.

Why This Matters

Investing in catchment groups and community-led programs is vital to the ongoing success of environmental stewardship and volunteer coordination in the ACT. By maintaining local capacity, we can ensure holistic management of the Bush Capital, fostering both a healthy environment and a vibrant, engaged community.

Budget Recommendations for 2025-26 and Beyond

To sustain our work, build on our achievements and address emerging challenges, GCG recommends the following funding:

1. Ongoing Core Funding for GCG Operations

- **Amount Requested:** \$275,000 annually (indexed)
- **Purpose:** Sustain and expand GCG's capacity to manage waterway health, community education, and volunteer coordination.
- **Alignment with Wellbeing Domains:**

- **Environment and Climate:** Enhancing ecological sustainability and resilience.
- **Social Connection:** Supporting volunteer engagement and fostering community relationships.

Breakdown of Core Funding for GCG Operations:

- Program Coordination (Executive Officer): \$95,000
 - Strategic oversight, stakeholder engagement, project management.
- Volunteer and Community Support: \$75,000
 - Resource provision, funding applications, group support.
- Community Education and Communications: \$75,000
 - Events, partnerships, education programs.
- Administration and Organisational Support: \$30,000
 - Rent for office space and community hub, financial management, reporting, and operational support.

2. Program Funding

- **ACT and Region FrogWatch:** \$110,000 annually (indexed)
 - **Purpose:** Continue biodiversity monitoring and training programs to sustain waterway health.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Environment and Climate, Education and Life-long Learning.
- **Ginninderra Waterwatch:** \$120,000 annually (indexed)
 - **Purpose:** Maintain comprehensive water quality monitoring across ACT waterways.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Environment and Climate, Social Connection.
- **Landcare ACT Core Funding:** \$75,000 annually (indexed)
 - **Purpose:** Support peak body representation for community Landcare in the ACT.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Governance and Institutions, Identity and Belonging.

3. Emerging Environmental Challenges and Opportunities

- **Biosecurity and Weed Management:** \$50,000 annually (indexed)
 - **Purpose:** Early intervention to address invasive species, safeguarding biodiversity and reducing long-term costs.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Environment and Climate, Safety.

- **Aboriginal Cultural Practices Integration:** \$50,000 annually (indexed)
 - **Purpose:** Dedicated funding to support Ngunawal/Ngunnawal and other Indigenous groups to integrate cultural practices in land management.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Identity and Belonging, Social Connection.

Expected Outcomes

With this funding, GCG can:

- **Expand Volunteer Coordination:**
 - Increase capacity to support 33+ groups, engage 150+ new volunteers annually, and improve community participation.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Social Connection.
- **Enhance Citizen Science:**
 - Deliver 60+ annual activities for FrogWatch and Waterwatch.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Environment and Climate, Education and Life-long Learning.
- **Improve Community Engagement:**
 - Organise 25+ events and establish 15 new partnerships each year.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Social Connection, Identity and Belonging.
- **Address Emerging Issues:**
 - Strengthen early biosecurity measures and integrate Indigenous land management practices.
 - **Wellbeing Alignment:** Environment and Climate, Identity and Belonging.

Conclusion

GCG is committed to fostering a resilient and sustainable environment through community-led initiatives. By aligning our objectives with the ACT Wellbeing Framework, we emphasise creating meaningful impacts across key wellbeing domains, ensuring a healthier, more connected, and sustainable future for the ACT community.

Increased and secure funding will enable GCG and its programs to continue delivering critical environmental projects, supporting volunteers, and addressing emerging challenges.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working in collaboration with the ACT Government to deliver shared environmental goals for the ACT and surrounding regions.

Contact

Kathryn McGilp

Executive Officer

Ginninderra Catchment Group Inc. (ABN 75648187515)

Email: landcare@ginninderralandcare.org.au

Phone: (02) 6278 3309

Office: 3/21 Bingle Street, Flynn ACT 2615

Website: ginninderralandcare.org.au