



National Parks Association of the ACT 1960 – 2010
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ACT Government turns its back on the environment

A 20% cut in ranger positions is proposed for the ACT's 2010 Budget to be released tomorrow.

"We believe the cut will be achieved by ceasing long term staff contracts" Christine Goonrey, President of the National Parks Association of the ACT said today. "These were introduced after the 2006 ACT Budget to enable the government to shed staff more easily. We warned then that the government was preparing to abandon its responsibilities for our nature reserves and national park and this year we see the plan to slash staffing brought into full operation."

Programs such as feral animal and weed control will be hit hard Ms Goonrey said, putting at risk the native plants and animals in the national park already suffering from drought and worsening climate change impacts. "Rangers need to be on the ground every day in all parts of the reserves and parks and this is not possible even now because of the whittling away of staff. With the loss of more ranger positions, vandalism will increase, weeds and feral animals will take over the most vulnerable parts of the national park and river corridors and our historical heritage will disintegrate because of lack of maintenance."

"It's hard to imagine a more cynical, calculating approach to looking after our natural heritage in this International Year of Biodiversity," Ms Goonrey said. "The ACT government promised that staffing efficiencies and increased services would follow from the amalgamation of its urban and rural conservation programs. Instead they have gutted the conservation service and walked away from their responsibilities to iconic parks and reserves such as Namadgi National Park, Murrumbidgee River Corridor, Googong foreshores and Canberra Nature Park."

The National Parks Association of the ACT is calling on the ACT government to reinstate a separate rural conservation program and to return staffing levels to pre 2006 levels. "Heavens knows 2006 staffing levels were barely adequate but what they are allocating to the natural environment now is a disgrace."

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