

# Our policies – NPA ACT

## Contents

Introduction

1. Wilderness
2. Off-reserve conservation
3. Climate change
4. Biodiversity offsets
5. Weed and feral animal management
6. Rehabilitation and restoration
7. Indigenous heritage and culture
8. Settler and post settler heritage and culture
9. Commercial use
10. Recreation
11. Fire management
12. Walking tracks
13. Exclusion zones

## Introduction

We strongly encourage the community to engage with and enjoy the natural assets in our nature reserves and national parks. This fosters a greater appreciation of these assets and a willingness to protect them. It also strengthens community and personal wellbeing.

We recognise that the ACT Government, through the [Parks and Conservation Service](#) (PCS), is responsible for the management of the Territory's parks and reserves, including [Namadgi National Park](#), but the whole community is responsible for how they are used and enjoyed.

We will work with PCS and other government agencies and organisations with shared interests to develop, refine and review proposals, plans and policies for the protection and enjoyment of ACT parks and reserves.

We will advocate strongly for new or revised policies and management plans for parks and reserves and conservation issues more generally, and for adequate funding and resourcing to manage and protect parks and reserves.

We expect government agencies and planning authorities to apply sound environmental and heritage principles on proposals, reviews or changes relating to parks and reserves, and the environment generally. Agencies and authorities must allow adequate notice and time for comment from the public and largely volunteer environmental organisations, such as the NPA ACT

The following are our broad policy goals.

### 1. Wilderness

Wilderness areas are defined as large areas in which ecological processes continue with minimal change caused by modern development. There is currently one designated wilderness area within the ACT, the [Bimberi Nature Reserve](#), and to ensure that it remains as such, we regard the following as essential:

- vehicles should be permitted only on established access tracks for essential management activities or scientific work under permit

- no new fire trails or upgrading of existing trails or four-wheel-drive tracks or roads. Trails that are no longer required should be removed and rehabilitated with local native species
- structures that are not essential for management nor of historic or cultural significance should be removed and their sites rehabilitated. There should be no new structures or disturbance of land or native vegetation, except for fire prevention work
- fire prevention work should be minimised to cause the least environmental impact (see 11. *Fire management*) and.
- only a limited number of visitors should be given access ‘to enjoy opportunities for solitude, isolation, inspiration and self-reliant recreation’ (see section 5.25 ‘The concept of wilderness’, *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010*) 20), and fuel-stoves only should be used.

## 2. Off-reserve conservation

As significant conservation activities occur in areas that are not designated reserves, NPA supports the introduction of a [land stewardship scheme](#) in the ACT.

Landscape-scale conservation and [connectivity between reserves](#) should be key considerations in urban planning. An inventory of key natural resources, including areas of connectivity and reserves currently not in conservation, should be developed to ensure to prevent their loss to urban development.

## 3. Biodiversity offsets

[Biodiversity offsets](#) should be used as a last resort. Sites with poorer environmental values should be rehabilitated as much as possible to achieve the same values as the habitat they are offsetting. Offsets should be limited to specific areas and not considered where biodiversity assets are threatened.

## 4. Climate change

Management plans for parks and reserves must promote biodiversity resilience and clearly identify mechanisms or efforts to mitigate climate change effects on ecosystems. We recognise that climate change is compounding significant pressures on the ACT region’s ecosystems from pest species, isolation, and visitor demands.

## 5. Weed and feral animal management

We support [ACT Government policy on managing pest species](#) and the eventual eradication of all pest species, including feral animals, insects and birds, weeds and non-endemic vegetation, from conservation reserves. Where this is impracticable, achievable goals need to be set for each pest.

We support the ACT Government’s 2024 initiative to remove dingoes from the pest animal declaration, to being protected as a native animal under the Nature Conservation Act.

Eradication programs and research and development must be adequately funded to allow trained staff and the community to monitor and deal with pest species. Where appropriate, we encourage greater community engagement in weed and feral pest control.

## 6. Rehabilitation and restoration

Areas in parks and reserves that are disturbed for essential work or approved scientific research should be restored to their pre-disturbed state as much as possible within a 5-year period

Internationally recognised areas such as the [Ramsar-listed Ginini Flats wetlands](#) must be given the highest level of protection and care.

Important ecosystems, particularly grasslands and lowland grassy woodlands, must be protected by being incorporated into conservation reserves,

Preferably, road and utility easements should only be permitted in conservation reserves if there is no alternative, and those already in place should be managed to reflect existing habitat. Where possible, power sources should be replaced with low-impact, alternative sources of renewable energy.

## **7. First Nations heritage and culture**

We recognise the importance of First Nations peoples participating in the management of conservation reserves and of sharing their knowledge of the environment with the rest of the community. We strongly support an Indigenous ranger program.

The land management practices of First Nations peoples should be encouraged in nature reserves to maximise biodiversity benefits. We will work to foster better communication with First Nations peoples, their councils and traditional groups.

## **8. Post-settler heritage and culture**

Homesteads, huts, ruins, yards, fences, gravesites and other structures that contribute to the [cultural heritage](#) of Namadgi National Park and other ACT reserves should be managed in accordance with the [Burra Charter](#) to preserve their cultural significance and keep them in good repair.

## **9. Commercial use**

As a general principle, commercial development should be discouraged in ACT conservation reserves. If allowed, it should be subject to the strictest regulation to ensure that it does not damage environmental values or restrict access to the broader public wishing to enjoy these areas.

PCS should license all commercial activities occurring in ACT parks and reserves. The licence conditions must be easily and publicly accessible.

## **10. Recreation**

We encourage recreational use and enjoyment of ACT conservation reserves on condition such activities are managed to have minimal impact on the environment. There should be restrictions on some activities, including:

- *Motorised vehicles* other than for the purposes of management or research should not be permitted on public roads and fire trails. Management vehicles should be restricted to a speed of 60 km an hour. The current network of roads and fire trails that allows public vehicles in Namadgi National Park and other ACT reserves should not be expanded unless there are exceptional circumstances for doing so.
- [Off-road vehicles](#) and *driving clubs* should have access to vehicle-restricted areas only as part of approved conservation-related activities.

- *Mountain bikes* should be restricted to formed roads and designated cycling tracks and not permitted in wilderness areas.
- *Horse riding* in Namadgi National Park should be restricted to designated management tracks. In other conservation areas there should be no expansion of existing access for horse riding and a permit should be required to manage numbers and use of key access routes.
- Observance of the [Australian Alps Horse Riding Code](#) should be mandatory. We accept the operation of existing facilities for recreational riding camps on [the Bicentennial Trail](#) but would prefer the trail to be rerouted outside Namadgi National Park and any other such facilities closed.
- *Adventure activities* in conservation reserves should be permitted only under the reserve's plan of management. The environmental impact of such activities should be regularly monitored and documented.

## 11. Fire management

We support the [ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan](#) and associated [Bushfire Operations Plans](#) provided they take account of the special conservation and cultural values of all ACT conservation reserves and pay special attention to wilderness areas and [Ramsar sites](#).

We support the contribution of [Indigenous cultural burning practices and knowledge](#) for fuel reduction, ecological management, and caring for country.

## 12. Walking tracks

Walking tracks should be located in areas with notable features and that are accessible through appropriate design and construction, including for mobility impaired people where possible. Walking tracks should allow visitors to experience and enjoy parks and reserves and their values with minimal impact on the natural environment. Tracks that no longer meet management plans should be closed and revegetated.

## 13. Exclusion zones

We support a 15km buffer zone around Namadgi National Park to exclude pests and plants that would threaten the park. We support strict, enforceable measures so that the management of leased areas bordering Namadgi, and other conservation reserves, gives high priority to protecting the reserve's environmental values.

*Revised August 2024*