



NPA ACT policies

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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 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’, [Namadji 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

if any environmentally harmful activity is authorised then the harm should be minimised as much as possible, including by an offset arrangement, if available. [Biodiversity offsets](#) should be used as a last resort.

4. Climate change

As the impacts of climate change grow, the effects on every ecosystem will worsen. Management plans for parks and reserves must therefore help our ecosystems to adapt by promoting biodiversity resilience. This includes reducing other stressors, especially invasive species and habitat fragmentation, so that our local ecosystems can adapt in a way that preserves their features as much as possible.

5. Management of invasive alien species

We support and strongly advocate a range of ongoing measures to respond to the [threats to biodiversity, ecosystems](#), and to the economy and human wellbeing, from invasive alien species (IAS)* – animals, plants or other organisms that are introduced, either intentionally or accidentally, into places outside of their natural range. Ongoing response measures include [community and government land managers working together](#), and securing recurrent funding for:

- research into current and emerging threats in a changing climate
- IAS management that is evidence based, adaptive, and prioritises species that are the greatest threat to environmental values
- training and development of ACT Parks and Conservation Service field staff in biosecurity
- expert support for operations, volunteers and the general community
- a publicly accessible interactive online IAS portal with monitoring data, maps and clear explanations about how species are prioritised for control ([EPSDD Biosecurity Portal](#))
- surveillance and early detection measures and capacity to respond rapidly to new incursions
- annual control and containment operations of established IAS
- participation in regional and national biosecurity bodies
- engagement with and regulation of high-risk private sector areas such as nurseries, pet shops, property developers and agriculture
- collaboration with NPA and other volunteer organisations
- community education to enhance understanding of and support for IAS management.

**One in 10 species on the [IUCN Red List](#) are threatened by IAS*

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

Recreational use, adventure activities and enjoyment of ACT conservation reserves are encouraged but should be permitted only under the reserve's plan of management, and their environmental impact monitored and documented.

Non-commercial, open-to-all competitive events like orienteering, regaining, and Inward Bound are also encouraged as promoting low-impact community enjoyment of parks and reserves, except for wilderness areas.

There should be restrictions on some activities, including:

- *Motorised vehicles* – other than for management or research purposes, these should not be permitted on public roads and fire trails and restricted to a speed of 60 km an hour. There should be no expansion of the current network of roads and fire trails that allows public vehicles in Namadgi National Park and other ACT reserves unless there are exceptional circumstances for doing so.
- *Off-road vehicles and driving clubs* – these should have access to vehicle-restricted areas only as part of approved conservation-related activities.
- *Mountain bikes* – these should be restricted to formed roads and designated cycling tracks and not permitted in wilderness areas.
- *Horse riding* in Namadgi National Park – this should be restricted to designated management tracks. In other conservation areas existing access for horse riding should not be expanded and a permit required to manage numbers and use of key access routes.
- Observance of the [Australian Alps Horse Riding Code](#) should be mandatory. [The Bicentennial Trail](#) should be rerouted outside Namadgi National Park and any facilities for recreational riding camps on the current route closed.

11. Research

We support scientific research being undertaken in Namadgi National Park provided it is done with the knowledge and approval of PCS and that a copy of the research results is submitted to PCS for public access.

12. 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.

13. Walking tracks

Walking tracks should be located in areas with notable features and that are accessible through appropriate design and construction. They 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.

We support tracks for mobility-impaired people, where possible, that provide a diversity of scenic and bush experiences close to roads and without many contours.

Overnight camping should be allowed in parks and reserves acknowledging that different standards are appropriate for places that are accessible by road (normally requiring a formed camping area with toilet to manage heavy usage), at offroad huts and in the bush.

14. 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.

November 2024