



2 February 2026

NPA ACT submission to the 2026-27 Budget Consultation Process

The National Parks Association of the ACT Inc (NPA ACT)'s greatest concern with current and future ACT government budgets is the insufficient funding ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) receives to meet its obligations under the ACT *Nature Conservation Act 2014* and related regulations.

More than 60% of the ACT is designated as national park or reserves. Under the Nature Conservation Act, PCS's obligations include protecting, conserving and enhancing the Territory's biodiversity by:

- promoting and supporting the management, maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity of local, regional and national significance
- encouraging public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity
- recognising and promoting the role and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of biodiversity
- ensuring that the public has (i) access to reliable information in forms to that are appropriate to foster understanding of nature conservation issues, and (ii) opportunities to participate in policy development, nature conservation planning and conservation work

NPA ACT works closely with PCS to help it achieve its objectives and obligations under the Nature Conservation Act. We are therefore greatly concerned by the lack of information in the budget papers on funding for PCS's current and future management responsibilities.

PCS makes a significant contribution to the wellbeing of the ACT community by providing areas for recreation and where they can commune with nature and explore the natural environment.

NPA ACT contribution to wellbeing in the ACT

Since its formation 65 years ago NPA ACT has made a significant contribution to the wellbeing of the ACT community through a program that include walks and work parties in ACT parks and reserves, support for research, and community education and advocacy.

We currently have 440 members and over 14,000 followers on Facebook and Instagram.

NPA funding required

NPA ACT is acutely aware that operational funding from the ACT budget would improve our capacity to engage with the growing diversity of our community, ensure our practical support for conservation in the ACT and advocate for the protection and enjoyment of ACT parks and reserves.

In-kind support provided by NPA ACT in 2024 – 25 for the management of ACT parks and reserves is estimated at over \$300,000 based on nearly 6,400 volunteer hours from members, and the ACT government volunteer rate for in-kind support of \$50.40 an hour. Details are in Attachment A. We provided this support without any ACT Government funding for our substantial operational expenses.

These calculations show that NPA volunteers make a substantial financial contribution to conservation and park management and provide skills and support to PCS that would otherwise need to be met through additional and significant government funding to PCS.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for NPA ACT to sustain this contribution and meet our operational costs, including insurance, IT and office support.

What NPA ACT needs from the 2025 – 26 budget

NPA ACT needs annual operational funding of \$22,000 to continue its significant volunteer work. This would support our compulsory insurance, which is currently over \$5,000, and IT and office expenses.

Dr Rosemary Hollow

President, NPA ACT Inc.

ATTACHMENT A

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION OF NPA VOLUNTEERS TO ACT PARKS AND RESERVES IN 2024 - 25.

Below are estimates of the hours and days contributed by our principal volunteer members to coordinating our activities over the past 12 months. The estimates are based on records, diaries and convenors' reports. The current ACT government volunteer rate used for environment grants in-kind support calculations is \$50.40 per hour.

Walks program - Activities undertaken by outings convenors – 30 days.

Main tasks are:

- organising the weekly walks and works schedule
- updating them on our website and in our quarterly magazine, *NPA Bulletin*
- coordinating with walk leaders and managing the online booking calendar.

Walks/activities leaders – 140 days a year.

Tasks involve:

- organising activities and coordinating with participants. In 2025 NPA leaders ran 100 days of events, such as walks, kayak trips, mountain biking and winter snowshoeing with over 700 participants involved.

Work parties -leaders and participants – 475 hours.

Key tasks include:

- organising and overseeing work parties in consultation with PCS. Seventy members were involved over the year.

Promotions and outreach activities – 580 hours

- *NPA Bulletin* – 4 issues a year. Work involves writing content, design, editing and production – **90 hours.**
- Social media and promotion and outreach events – **350 hours**
- Graphic design and photography – **40 hours**
- Writing for publications and media – **100 hours**

Rosenberg's Goanna research program – 2,725 hours

Since 2017 NPA has partnered with PCS on a research project into Rosenberg's goanna. Volunteers have played a crucial role in:

- trapping, tagging and releasing goannas
- installing and reviewing camera footage
- surveying termite mounds (their burrow sites).
- conducting hatchling patrols
- collecting blood samples for analysis, and more.

Fieldwork has occurred in Namadgi National Park, Ainslie/Majura parks, and areas near the NSW border. During the summer of 2024 – 25 volunteers contributed over 1,525 hours. Program leader Don Fletcher dedicated the equivalent of 30 hours a week over 40 weeks, adding more than 1,200 hours to the program.

Volunteer administration support – treasurer, secretary, public officer – 65 days a year.

Responsibilities encompass:

- financial management, including oversight of book sales, coordination and support of monthly
- committee meetings,
- preparation of comprehensive monthly financial reports, facilitation of the annual audit process and provision of regular reports and updates for the ACNC. T

The role requires an average commitment of 6 days per month over an 11-month period.

President – average 3 days a week over 45 weeks - 135 days.

Key tasks include:

- oversight of an organisation of 450 members, a six-figure budget and total of over 14,000 followers on social media.
- liaison with ACT ministers, Environment Directorate and PCS, including membership of Environment Directorate Biodiversity Conservation Forum.
- applying for grant funding and reporting on funding,
- overseeing a 4-year project on bogs and fens with funding from the Australian Government via ACT NRM
- advocacy work with ACT and PCS,
- representing NPA on National Parks Australia Council
- approving payments prepared by treasurer
- chairing monthly committee meetings and general meetings
- written input to monthly and quarterly reports
- maintaining committee membership including recruiting new members.

NPA ACT volunteer contribution to the ACT economy and to supporting the ACT Government in protecting and managing of ACT parks and reserves.

The time contributed for the activities above total 370 days and 3,780 hours. If we take 1 day to be equivalent to 7 hours, the total number of volunteer hours from NPA ($370 \times 7 = 2,590$ hours) + 3,780 hours is 6,370 hours.

Based on these figures, the total annual value of NPA ACT volunteer contributions in 2024-25 is approximately \$321,648 of in-kind support.

This calculation highlights the significant financial contribution NPA volunteers make in supporting conservation and park management and providing skills and support to PCS that would otherwise require additional and significant governmental funding.