



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY  
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## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Environmental Volunteerism in the ACT

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SCULLIN COMMUNITY GROUP  
LOCAL • COLLABORATIVE • CREATIVE

6 May 2022

The Standing Committee on Environment,  
Climate Change and Biodiversity  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
[LAcommitteeECCB@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:LAcommitteeECCB@parliament.act.gov.au)

### **Submission to the ACT Government Inquiry into Environmental Volunteerism**

Scullin Community Group is a group of residents who formed an incorporated association in 2019 with the vision of revitalising Scullin's shops precinct, community facilities (eg Humpy Hall), and green spaces. Since then, the group has led a multitude of initiatives, large and small, ongoing and one-off events, to engage, connect and strengthen the Scullin community.

Led by the group's Green Spaces Coordinator, the Scullin community has mobilised on many occasions since 2019 to revitalise multiple green spaces throughout the suburb. These include the revitalisation and maintenance of the front, rear and courtyard gardens at Scullin Shops, and the establishment of new garden beds in Scullin Park, the Adair/Parer reserve and in the Shiers Place Playground. The working bee events are well attended and have a mix of both new and regular volunteers. There are over 900 members of the Scullin Community Facebook Group so events are easy to promote.

We thank your Committee for the opportunity to detail our experience as a community-based group doing environmental work with volunteers. We provide the following comments for consideration:

#### **1/ Extended delays between funding announcements and funding rounds opening**

The timing of some funding announcements is currently not tied to the opening of the funding round for applications. This has caused confusion and frustration as community members get excited about the possibilities of new projects and then have to wait months for the grant application round to open and further months while grant applications are being considered. This was our experience with the most recent Adopt a Park funding round, where the broad funding announcement was made in September 2021 but the grant application round did not open for applications until around April 2022.

We recommend that funding announcements are made close to when grant applications open.

## **2/ Practical implications of timing of grant application rounds**

The current timing of the Adopt a Park funding means that a planting season is lost between the application being submitted and when the project can begin. Given that Expressions of Interest for the current round close on 6 May and there is a co-design phase to follow before applications are awarded, this means that it will be the end of the year before groups receive their funding. By that time, it will be too hot for new plants to go into the ground and for community members to want to work in the sun. So we will need to wait for the following autumn - almost a year later.

Given the Adopt a Park Program has been secured for three years, we recommend that the grant application and approvals schedule be aligned with the practicalities of effecting the strategic goal of the Program, being landscape resilience.

## **3/ Timeline indications needed for funding applicants**

There are variations in approach within the ACT Government with regard to notifying community organisations that are applying for funding as to the timeline for applications to be processed and successful applications announced.

The current Floriade in the Community application process (closes 9 May 2022) provides an information booklet that includes the full timeline including the closing date for applications to be made, when successful applications will be announced, and when responses are expected from applicants. This is extremely useful for planning events and ensuring volunteer availability.

The current Adopt a Park guide for applicants (closes 6 May 2022) outlines the closing date for applicants and the process but does not commit to a timeline for applications to be considered and outcome announcements made.

The result of this is that as a community group we cannot give any indication to volunteers about whether they will be required this year for Adopt a Park funded projects. This is how we lose regular volunteers - they don't know when they will be required so they find other projects to do in the meantime and then they don't come back on a regular basis. This creates avoidable work for the volunteer coordinator as there are fewer regular volunteers available for maintenance work in between the planting events.

We recommend that each Government department responsible for administering grant funding be required to devise project timelines that can be advertised to applicants, so that applicants can plan accordingly. If the Government seeks to draw upon a volunteer workforce, it needs to ensure that it is making it easy for volunteers to engage.

#### **4. Funding rounds are announced to the public only, not to previous applicants**

There does not appear to be any established process for past applicants to be notified of new grant rounds. We have missed out on applying for new grants in programs that we applied for in previous rounds because we were not aware that the new grant funding was announced. The Government should not expect volunteer community groups to be constantly monitoring the media for funding announcements, especially when the Grant rounds are often not on a regular annual cycle. Monitoring like this is avoidable work for the volunteer grants coordinators. As mentioned above, if the Government seeks to have an engaged volunteer workforce, it needs to make it easy for volunteers to engage.

Given the Government would have a database of previous grant applicants, we recommend that all previous applicants for a particular grant program be notified by email when grant funding is again open for applications.

#### **5. An opportunity to establish an Environment Volunteer Groups Register that includes all environment volunteer groups registered within EPSDD and TCCS.**

Scullin Community Group's Green Spaces Sub-group is registered with the Urban Parks & Places program. We periodically become aware, often after the fact, of various workshops and initiatives undertaken by the Parkcare groups which are relevant and would have been of interest to our group and our volunteers.

We recommend that the Government establish a single/combined register for environmental volunteer groups and individuals so that the Government teams such as Parkcare or TCCS City Presentation can easily communicate with all environmental stakeholders. This could include a webpage where groups and individuals can subscribe to an email mailing list.

## 6. Facilitating connection and collaboration across environmental volunteer groups

Further to the above point, there is scope for the Government to facilitate connection and collaboration of environmental volunteer groups. This would encourage upskilling and retention of the volunteer workforce.

This could be as simple as hosting talks and workshops for groups to come together around a topic, hear an expert talk, and network and share what they have been doing. I believe there is something of this type for Parkcare groups. If the Government adopted a cross-department approach, it could enable the Parkcare and the Urban Parks and Places groups to come together and cross-fertilise ideas and approaches towards greater efficiency and impact.

### Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to outline our experiences and recommendations. We look forward to reading the findings and recommendations of your Inquiry.

Yours Sincerely,

Adele Sinclair  
Green Spaces Coordinator  
Scullin Community Group

