



**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

**Submission Number: 14**

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**Submission to:** The Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity on matters relating to environmental volunteerism in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

**Submitters Background:** This is a private submission, informed by my experience over four years as convening/coordinating two urban park regeneration projects in Curtin: Macalister Street Park (MP), and Curtin Environmental Educational Park (CEEP) (Curtin Eco-Park/ Curtin Micro-Forest). Previous experience was 4 years as President of Young Community Landcare Group (YCLG).

**The basic issues:**

1. There are many areas of urban parkland in the ACT that are managed by mowing and occasional tree planting. At present the mowing uses fossil fuels. The management practice often results in the spreading of invasive weeds, the compaction of the soil, and maintaining dry barren areas. These areas often have limited biodiversity, much reduced infiltration of rainfall and dewfall, and illustrate a degraded appreciation of our natural spaces. Many are used as parking places; the banks are often difficult to mow and could easily be planted.
2. There is wealth of scientific evidence of the importance of and “oasis of biodiversity” for cooling cities, improving not only the natural environment but the mental health of the community.
3. At the same time there seems to be no shortage of environmental volunteers, especially retirees and young school aged children inspired by their teachers and curriculum. Especially in the older suburbs, the houses now have very limited yard space and these urban spaces become more important for recreation and meeting spaces, not just as sporting venues.
4. There is thus great scope for ACT Government to commit to use environmental volunteerism to enhance cross-cultural and cross-age community and social engagement while greatly improving the biodiversity of these urban spaces, helping the community to garden in a climate resilient fashion (less water, more habitat, less invasive and toxic plants), while protecting the native plants and animals by building resilient ecosystems.

**Some great successes:**

1. In Young, and the CEEP projects, the involvement of school children led to great enthusiasm with the children, their teachers, and parents in the local community.
2. In CEEP and MP the addition of seating and a table encouraged the engagement and ownership of the residents’ community.
3. An Environment in the city grant enabled the CEEP project to engage with a horticulturalist, schools, the ATSI community and the residents. It also enabled us to be supported by Molonglo Conservation in managing this engagement and our planning.

**Specific issues and suggestions:**

1. I am waiting for a clear vision statement about the importance and role of the urban open spaces, other than that they are to be kept tidy, with occasional tree planting.
2. Maintain the grant application process with additional support for new groups to work through the application process.
3. Increase the number of community engagement officers – I understand that at present there is one for about 80 groups – impossible. We have found [REDACTED] to be outstanding in this position and we would like it supported and extended.
4. Provide **qualified** support for plant selection, grant applications, ground preparation, water retention, and park maintenance through appropriate funding to the Catchment groups. At present these groups seem to have limited and unreliable funding streams to enable them to employ and retain qualified people who can support the community groups.
5. Select a more suitable name for these “Urban landcarers” with a logo, signage, clothing etc. such as is used in Parkcare, and facilitate their support of each other and access to Parkcare volunteers at crucial times.
6. Employ ATSI people in these supportive roles to facilitate the integration of custodianship values, especially when schools are involved.
7. Actively encourage and support the participation of schools in urban regeneration projects by enabling visits by “Urban Rangers” to schools.

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