



Election Commitment – Water Quality – Lake Tuggeranong

Talking points

- For several years the Healthy Waterways team within the Office of Water has conducted research, monitoring, modelling and other data analyses to understand the water quality problems in Tuggeranong and solutions to them.
- This work has led to a report on Options for Restoring Lake Tuggeranong.
- The report provides Government with costed options for mitigating the pollution and algal bloom problems in Lake Tuggeranong.
- Community consultation on options for restoring Lake Tuggeranong is planned for the latter half of this year, after which the *Options* report will be revised and submitted to Cabinet for approval as the *Healthy Waterways Plan for Lake Tuggeranong*.

Background information

- Water quality in Lake Tuggeranong is poor, resulting in potentially toxic blue-green algal blooms for an average of around three months in summer and closing the lake to primary (e.g. swimming) and secondary (e.g. kayaking) contact due to health risks.
- Excessive levels of faecal coliforms sometimes also occur in the lake, leading to closures.
- The main finding for research is that contemporary pollution from the catchment is the primary driver of algal blooms in Lake Tuggeranong. In-lake interventions (e.g. bubblers) will have little impact until the catchment inputs of pollution can be curbed.
- Since 2018, ACT Government has invested around \$40 million to build 11 constructed wetlands and other water quality assets in the Lake Tuggeranong catchment to clean polluted stormwater.
- According to water quality models, seven of the recently built assets are intercepting 13% of the pollution destined for Lake Tuggeranong. The modelling has demonstrated that water quality assets are necessary to intercept unavoidable pollution but are not sufficient to solve the pollution problem on their own.
- The most impactful and cost-effective options for mitigating pollution in catchments are ones that prevent the stormwater from getting polluted in the first place, e.g. increasing the frequency of street sweeping and community partnerships to prevent pollution.

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- Over the past three years, Healthy Waterways has trialled community partnerships to prevent pollution from resident's blocks and road verges and have worked with the Transport Canberra and City Services directorate (TCCS) to improve the management of Government-owned green space.
- Since many catchment pollution mitigation options involve changes to the management of blue-green corridors, Healthy Waterways plans consider how options will also affect other objectives for blue-green space, e.g. flooding, Ngunnawal values, urban heat, biodiversity, amenity and travel, recreation etc.
- The schedule for release of draft Healthy Waterways plans for community consultation is :
 - Lake Tuggeranong – Q3 2025
 - Yerrabi Pond – (initial Q4 2025 targeted stakeholder engagement), full community engagement in 2027/28
 - Lake Burley Griffin – 2027
 - Lake Ginninderra – 2027/28
- The aim is for the Healthy Waterways plans, and similar plans to be living documents that are updated as new knowledge comes to hand.

History

- Healthy Waterways is a program to address water quality and quantity problems in Canberra and the ACT through planning and on-ground actions.
- Stage 1 of ACT Healthy Waterways began in 2014 as a \$94 million joint initiative of the Australian and ACT Governments. It was completed in June 2021.
- In 2020, the ACT Government invested a further \$1 million to build a floating wetland in Lake Tuggeranong, to begin planning for the next stage of works, and to extend the research program.
- From February 2021, a total of \$29.66 million in ACT Government initiative funding was invested in 4 tranches. Most of the funding was for activities to June 2025, with recurrent annual funding from the 2025-26 FY for 7 FTE of staff and \$475,000 for waterway research and monitoring.
- Healthy Waterways funding has been used to:
 - Design and build 27 constructed wetlands and other water quality assets.
 - Run pilot community partnership programs targeting leaves on verges and fertiliser use in residential gardens.
 - Work across Government to adopt water sensitive practices.
 - Build an evidence base—research, monitoring, data analysis and modelling—to underpin planning and on-ground actions.
 - Carry out planning and restoration activities in the rural Naas-Gudgenby River catchment.
 - Draft two of five Healthy Waterways plans for solving water quality problems in selected waterbodies. The remaining plans will be produced over the next two to three years with existing funding.